

Philemon – Receive Him as You Would Me

5/3/09

I. Introduction

A. Author – Paul

B. Historical Context – Written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, around 60 A.D.

C. Geographical Context – Colossae

D. Biblical Context – Written at the same time as the letter to the Colossians.

E. Audience – Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and to the church that met in Philemon’s house

F. Summary – While in prison in Rome, Paul met and converted Onesimus. Onesimus is a slave from Colossae who has run away (and possibly stolen) from his master, Philemon, who was earlier converted under Paul’s ministry. Paul is returning Onesimus to Philemon with a letter of appeal to him to accept his slave back as a Christian brother and to forgive any wrong that Onesimus had done to him. Paul’s ultimate desire seems to be for Philemon to release Onesimus to return to Paul to help him with his ministry.

G. Main Theme – Reconciliation Through Changed Relationships

1. Father / Sons / Brothers

3. Co-laborers

2. Slaves / Masters

4. One in Christ

II. Outline correlations and details (see outline)

A. Paul’s Greeting - Verses 1-3 and A’ Paul’s Farewell - Verses 23-25

1. “Fellow”- ship – Philemon = “One who kisses (in friendship)”

2. Grace and Peace

B. Philemon’s Love - Verses 4-7 and B’ Philemon’s Obedience - Verses 20-22

1. Spleens refreshed

2. Joy

3. Prayers

C. Paul’s Appeal for Onesimus - Verses 8-10 and C’ Paul’s Intercession for Onesimus – Verses 18-19

1. Authority - v. 8-9

2. Sacrifice - v. 18 – 1 Jn 3:16, Mk 10:45

3. Rights yielded – v. 19 – Ps 103:8-10, Ex 34:6-7

D. Onesimus, Paul’s Heart -Verses 11-13 and D’ Onesimus, Philemon’s Brother Verses 15-17

1. “Profitable”, who was unprofitable, has now become profitable – v. 11

2. Onesimus, Paul’s heart – v. 12

3. Sovereignty, even over sin – v. 15

4. Onesimus, Philemon’s beloved brother – v. 16

5. Forgiveness to fruitfulness / Propitiation to profitability – v. 13 – Ep 2:20

6. Onesimus, one with Paul (and Philemon) – v. 17 – 1 Co 12:12-14, 26-27

E. Paul’s Appeal to Philemon - Verse 14 – Jn 10:17-18

Philemon – A Chiasm¹

- A. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, To Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer,² to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. ⁴I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,⁵ hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,⁶ that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.⁷ For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.
- C. ⁸Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,⁹ yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains,
- D. ¹¹who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.¹² I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.
- E. ¹⁴But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.
- D' ¹⁵For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever,¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.¹⁷ If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me.
- C' ¹⁸But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.
- B' ²⁰Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.²¹ Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.²² But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.
- A' ²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1. Heil, John Paul; “The Chiastic Structure and Meaning of Paul’s Letter to Philemon”; *Biblica* 82 (2001) 178- 206