

### *A Study Outline of Philemon*

A brief letter written by Paul about a slave, Onesimus, who ran away from his master, Philemon. Paul writes this letter as a loving plea for Philemon to receive Onesimus, not as a run-away slave, but as a brother in Christ.

Does the letter of Philemon condone slavery?

- “Christianity made its advent into the world in an age of slavery. Europe and Asia had tremendous populations of slaves – more slaves than free persons; but, the gospel message was not one of rebellion and revolt. It did not immediately cut down the tree of slavery, but it did begin immediately severing and destroying the root system. The gospel emphasized love, peace, equality of human beings, honesty, and justice...It did set out sacred principles for both masters and slaves, which – when and where applied – would bring slavery to an end.” ~ Roy Deaver
- The NT regulates the behavior of both slave and master – Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22; 4:1.

Philemon 1-3 – Paul’s greeting.

Philemon 4-7 – Paul’s love and appreciation for Philemon.

- Verse 6 – The knowledge that others might have had of Philemon’s faith could cause others to see the “good things” which are in Christ.
- Matthew 5:13-16.
- Bowels (v. 7) = hearts, inward parts.

Philemon 8-9 – Paul states the purpose of the writing.

- Because of his apostleship Paul could have *enjoined* (NKJ – commanded) Philemon to do what he was about to ask.
- Paul, as he often does, appeals to love instead of authority.
- The terminology that follows shows the love that Paul had for all involved in this situation: my son, profitable, receive him as you would receive me, a brother beloved, let me have joy, confidence.
- Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes an emotional appeal to Philemon based on the principles of the gospel.

Philemon 10-16 – Paul’s appeal to Philemon for Onesimus.

- Under Roman law it was a crime for a slave to run away from his master.
- Paul now emphasizes the usefulness of Onesimus, both to himself and Philemon.
- He did not want to do anything without consulting with Philemon first (v. 14).
- Verse 15 touches on the providence of God with “perhaps.”

Philemon 17-21 – Paul makes an emotional request of Philemon.

- The tone of Paul's words would make it hard for Philemon to ignore him.
- Paul reminds him of his own indebtedness to him (v. 19).
- We are indebted to those who brought us to Christ.
- It can be very encouraging to others if we express our confidence in them of doing the right things.

Philemon 22-25 – Closing statements.