

Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher
Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

AUTHOR:

The writer claims to be Paul (1:1,19). This letter is the shortest of Paul's epistles (only 430 words in KJV), and it is placed last in the collection of Paul's writings in our Bible. Paul probably wrote a number of private letters, but this is the only one that has survived for us to read today.

THE PERSON ADDRESSED:

Philemon was a well-to-do Christian who resided in Colossae in the Roman Province of Asia (vv. 2,23; Col. 4:12,17). His wealth is seen in his being a slave owner and his house being large enough for the church to meet in (v. 2). He was a generous man to the saints (v. 5). All who came in contact with him spoke appreciatively of his hospitality. It is generally assumed that Apphia was his wife and Archippus his son (v. 2).

This book gives a glimpse into a Christian household in the first century. Onesimus was a slave of this household. Slavery was a commonly accepted feature of society in that day. Sometimes both master and slaves were Christians (Col. 3:22-4:1; Eph. 6:5-9).

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING:

It was composed while Paul was in prison (vv. 9-10,13) at Rome (Acts 28:30-31). The date of Philemon is the same time as that for Colossians since they were sent together (Col. 4:7-9; Phile. 12). This was the summer of A.D. 62.

Onesimus accompanied Tychicus on his trip to Colossae with Paul's epistle to the church. Onesimus went with Tychicus to escape the slave-catchers.

THE OCCASION:

Onesimus had robbed his master of some money (vv. 18-19) and fled to Rome to elude the slave-catchers. Some how he came into contact with Paul in Rome. Since Paul was in jail we may wonder how this happened. As a result of his contact with Paul he was converted to Christ (v. 10). As a new creature he was profitable (v. 2), as his name meant. For some short time he rendered highly appreciated service to Paul in his imprisonment (v. 13), and Paul became very fond of him (v. 12). He felt he should return to his master in accordance with the demands of the law. To this Onesimus agreed, showing he was a truly converted man.

THE PURPOSE:

First, to persuade Philemon to receive, forgive, and reinstate Onesimus (v. 16). The granting of the request is to be done as though done to Paul himself (v. 17). Paul points out that he was the spiritual father of Philemon (v. 19), and he agrees to pay the financial loss that Onesimus had caused (vv. 18-19). He believes that Philemon will do more than he asks (v. 21). Grant the slave freedom?

Second, he wrote to ask for lodging when he was freed and was able to come over for a visit (v. 22).

THE CONTENTS:

The epistle is intensely personal rather than theological. It contains the finest picture of the meaning of forgiveness that can be found in the New Testament. Note all elements of forgiveness: the offense (vv. 11,18), compassion (v. 10), intercession (vv. 10, 18-19), substitution (vv. 18-19), restoration to favor (v. 15) and elevation to a new relationship (v. 16). It is a practical lesson in the petition of the prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Verses 1-7 are about Philemon, verses 8-17 are about Onesimus, and verses 18-22 are about Paul.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Note Paul's I.O.U. to Philemon and his U.O. Me

(v. 19). Consider Paul's play on Onesimus which means "profitable" (v. 2). Note also how Paul is a master of Christian courtesy. He truthfully presented the case of Onesimus without offending Philemon.

Pay attention to the mutual relationship of slaves and masters under Christianity. Under Roman law a slave was absolutely at his master's disposal. For the smallest matters he could be scourged, mutilated, crucified, or thrown to wild beasts.

In contrast to Roman law Jewish law required that slaves be treated like household members (Lev. 25:53) and they became partakers of the covenant (Gen. 17:27). They were freed during the sabbatical year (Ex. 21:2). Harming a slave resulted in his freedom (Ex. 21:26-27), and if someone killed a slave he was severely punished (Ex. 21:20). An escaped slave was neither hunted nor returned to his master (Deut. 23:15-16).

Eleven persons are mentioned, five in the salutation (vv. 1-2), five in the greetings at the close (vv. 22-24), and Onesimus is the central figure.

Chapter One

I. THE PERSON WRITING (v. 1).

1. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

(1) Paul writes a private letter, as friend to friend, and therefore he does not describe himself using his official title of apostle.

(2) He is writing familiarly, not authoritatively. He does not say, "Paul, the great church builder and theologian." Neither did he say, "the very Right Reverend Paul D.D."

(3) In this case, he can better entreat as a prisoner than as an apostle (Eph. 3:1; II Tim. 1:8). He does not wish to command, but rather to entreat.

(4) Not a prisoner of Nero or Rome, but of Jesus Christ. A captive who is pleading for a slave.

(5) Paul ignores secondary causes, and he sees God's hand in all events (Gen. 50:20).

(6) Paul was a prisoner at Rome according to God's will and in consequence of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

(7) In other epistles, he is Christ's servant; here, he is Christ's prisoner.

2. "And Timothy our brother."

(1) He was there with Paul at the time of this writing. Paul often mentioned Timothy as his assistant in his epistles (II Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1).

(2) He often traveled with Paul and was known to Philemon (Acts 19:22). This letter is not from Timothy; it is Paul's from start to finish.

(3) Paul was concerned about young preachers and often recognized them.

(4) "Our brother" not in the flesh, but as a regenerate man and member of the family of God.

(5) He might have called him son (I Tim. 1:1), but he chose to use a wider relationship: "brother."

(6) Timothy was a brother to Paul and Philemon and to all Christians.

II. THE PERSONS WRITTEN TO (vv. 1-2).

1. "Unto Philemon."

- (1) All we know of Philemon is found in this epistle. He was a Gentile as seen by his name, and he was a Colossian.
- (2) He was married and had a son. He was converted under Paul's preaching.
- (3) He was a dedicated Christian and large-hearted (vv. 5,7). He also seems to be well-to-do.
- (4) He was a member of the Colossian church.

2. "Our dearly beloved."

- (1) The test of discipleship is mutual love of those who believe in Christ (John 13:34; 15:12,17).
- (2) He was dearly beloved by Paul and Timothy. Here is seen tender affection.

3. "And fellow laborer."

- (1) Fellow laborer in building up the church at Colosse while we were at Ephesus.
- (2) This term is often applied to a minister (II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; Col. 4:11), but it certainly is not restricted to them (Rom. 16:3).
- (3) Philemon may have used his wealth and influence to build up the church at Colosse as a layman.
- (4) Time and place do not impair unity of service. We all have the same Master and are all fellow laborers. We will all share in the final reward.

4. "And to our beloved Apphia."

- (1) Some Greek texts read: "to sister Apphia" or "the beloved sister Apphia."
- (2) This is a woman's name, and it seems she is the wife of Philemon, seeing she is placed next to him.
- (3) She has been wronged by Onesimus as much as her husband was. She too must give the run away slave a friendly reception.
- (4) Christianity elevates women and slaves.
- (5) Christian men and woman are brother and sisters in Christ.

5. "And Archippus our fellow-soldier."

- (1) He was a preacher of the gospel in the church at Colosse (Col. 4:17). This may have been Philemon's pastor. Some say he was pastor at Laodicea.
- (2) He was probably the son of Philemon and Apphia. Here is a Christian household: father, mother, and son. This was not a house divided against itself.
- (3) Preachers are fellow soldiers under Christ the Captain of salvation. We fight under His banner against sin, Satan, and the world. We must be good soldiers (II Tim. 2:4; Phil. 2:25).

6. "And to the church in thy house."

- (1) This is a local church, not a universal, invisible church. You cannot put the mystical church in a man's house.
- (2) Philemon's house was the meeting place of the church in this city (Col. 4:15; Rom. 16:3-5; I Cor. 16:19).
- (3) The church would have to receive Onesimus (Col. 4:9).
- (4) The church knows not distinctions of master and slave (Gal. 3:28).
- (5) There were no church buildings before the third century.
- (6) The church was small enough to meet in one house.
- (7) Is there a church in your house? Is your household a church?

III. THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED (v. 3).

1. Grace is one of the greatest words in the Christian vocabulary.

- (1) Paul did not wish silver and gold, but grace and peace to be upon Philemon.
- (2) He could not give these, but he could pray that God would bestow them.
- (3) The favor of God is to be sought for others and ourselves.
- (4) Grace is the free, unmerited favor of God through which salvation is bestowed. It is the unconditional, undeserved, spontaneous, eternal, pardoning love of God.
- (5) Grace is a disposition of the Divine nature exercised only toward the elect.
- (6) The Fountain of all grace is God (I Pet. 5:10). Grace flows from God to us.

2. Peace is another great Christian word.

- (1) Grace brings salvation (Titus 2:11); it does not offer it. Grace bestows salvation, and peace is that salvation experienced.
- (2) Grace designates the Source of salvation, and peace the results of it.
- (3) Peace presupposes a quarrel and the need of reconciliation. Peace is discord turned into concord—harmony restored—a right relationship with God.
- (4) The harmony of Philemon's house had been broken up. A slave had robbed him and run away. Harmony needed to be restored.
- (5) There is peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with our fellows.

3. The order is always grace and peace, and never is the order inverted.

- (1) They are related to one another as root and fruit, as cause and effect, as center to circumference, as foundation to superstructure.

(2) The peace of God never precedes the grace of God.

4. “God our Father”—yours Philemon, mine, and Onesimus. God is the Master of us all.

5. As Christ is also said to be the Source of the grace, we see that Paul regarded Him as of the same nature and equal with the Father.

IV. PAUL’S THANKSGIVING FOR THE LOVE AND FAITH OF PHILEMON (vv. 4-7).

1. Philemon was in Paul’s praises and prayers (v. 4).

(1) “I thank God.”

A. Paul thanked God as the Source and Giver of Christian excellency (Isa. 26:12; I Chron. 29:13-14; Hos. 14:8).

B. Christian praise is not flattery of the person, but it is praise for that person’s God.

C. “Always” is so placed in the Greek as to be put with either thanksgiving or prayers. Thanksgiv-
ing should be a habit.

(2) “Making mention of thee always in my prayers.”

A. A prayerful heart is a thankful heart.

B. Paul was a man of much prayer, frequently at the throne of grace. He prayed for many people.

C. Paul did not forget to thank God for blessing other people. It was thankful intercession.

D. Paul daily spread out before God the needs of multitudes of churches and Christians with whom he was connected (Jas. 5:16).

E. Christ prayed for His people (Luke 22:32; John 17:20).

2. Paul was thankful for His love and faith (v. 5).

(1) Love is put first because Paul wanted Philemon to show an act of love.

(2) Love, though mentioned first, is really the result of faith.

(3) Love is the essence, the strength, and the ornament of Christian character. Without it all other graces are cold and inactive.

(4) There can be no true faith where love is lacking (Gal. 5:6). Neither is there any real faith where there is no love (I Cor. 13:2).

(5) Paul was always thankful to hear of people’s faith (Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:3-4).

(6) Strictly speaking, faith is in Christ and love is toward all the saints.

A. Certainly Christ is to be loved. Christ alone is the true and worthy object of faith.

B. Faith in all the saints would be asking too much. Not all are worthy objects of trust.

(7) In “Lord Jesus” we see divinity and humanity—the two natures of Christ.

(8) Paul probably heard of this by Onesimus or Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12).

(9) “Love toward all the saints.”

A. Love is the manifestation of faith. A loveless faith is cruel, and a faithless love is sentimental.

B. Philemon must love not only Paul but also Onesimus (I John 5:1).

C. Some people are easier to love than others, but it is our duty to love all believers.

3. Paul desired the enlargement of the fellowship of Philemon’s faith (v. 6).

(1) Faith cannot be communicated from father to son or master to servants. The good works which faith produces are communicated to others.

(2) The gem of all Christian excellencies is planted in the heart when we believe in Christ. But this gem must be nurtured into growth by practical benevolence.

(3) “Communication of faith” is the liberality or kindness shown to the saints which is the fruit of faith.

(4) “Communication” (koinonia) is always used in the sense of contribution, the imparting of one’s goods to others.

(5) The good in us comes from Christ.

A. By nature we have nothing good (Rom. 7:18). Grace imparts a new principle of holiness (I John 3:9; John 4:14). This must be developed to the glory of Christ.

B. The principle of holiness develops itself into Christian benevolence.

4. Paul rejoiced in Philemon’s good works towards the saints (v. 7).

(1) The bowels are the seat of affection in the Bible.

(2) There is probably a reference to the hospitality that Philemon showed to the ministers of Christ on their missionary journeys.

(3) His kindness cheered them in their work (Tit. 3:15; II John 6).

(4) “Brother” is placed last for emphasis of affection.

V. PAUL APPROACHES THE OBJECT OF HIS LETTER (vv. 8-9).

1. Paul is bold in Christ (v. 8).

(1) “Wherefore”—since I have these evidences of thy faith and love.

(2) You have done well; there remains good to be done.

(3) Paul’s freedom, liberty, and boldness were in Christ.

(4) It was in Christ and by his authority as an apostle that he would dare to come between a slave and his master.

- (5) He prefers to beseech when he might have commanded. It is never wise to use all the power we have.
 - (6) There is a power in gentleness that rarely fails, and it is always best to try that first.
 - (7) “That which is convenient” or ethically suitable. A Christian should do this as a matter of duty. As a Christian, Philemon was under a moral obligation to do what Paul was about to ask.
2. The ruling principle of his entreaty (v. 9).
- (1) “For love’s sake.”
 - A. This is not Philemon’s love for Paul or vice versa. It is love as a Christian principle of action.
 - B. Love is the greatest motive to the noblest of action. It does not stop to calculate the strict requirements of duty, but acts spontaneously.
 - C. Love prompts duty (John 14:15). It is not duty that inspires us to love, but love that moves us to duty.
 - D. A man will do his duty; a Christian will do more.
 - (2) Paul’s first plea is his old age—“Paul the aged.”
 - A. At this time he was about 60 years old, and he was worn out by work and suffering.
 - B. My many sermons and travels have turned my hair gray. I am now an old soldier of the cross. I have fought many a battle for Christ.
 - C. The modern world does not show proper respect to the aged (Lev. 19:32).
 - (3) His second plea is that he is a prisoner.
 - A. He is a prisoner at Rome for the sake of His Master.
 - B. If you would comfort me in my bond and make my chain lighter, grant me what I am about to ask.
 - C. Respect is due to him who endures suffering for an honorable cause.

VI. THE REQUEST WITH REFERENCE TO ONESIMUS (vv. 10-12).

1. Paul asks Philemon to take Onesimus back (v. 10).
 - (1) “My son” (not “your slave”). Onesimus was converted under Paul’s preaching at Rome. He was his son in the gospel (I Tim. 1:2).
 - (2) Paul pleads with fatherly love (I Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19).
 - (3) We are not told how Onesimus and Paul met at Rome. But some how Paul was the human instrument of his conversion.
 - (4) At the time Philemon gets this letter Onesimus is known only as a criminal—an ungrateful and disobedient servant.
 - (5) While God’s servants are bound, His Word is not!

2. Onesimus is now worthy of his name (v. 11).
 - (1) “Onesimus” means “useful” or “profitable.” Once he had belied his name. He had been unprofitable—a good-for-nothing and a bad-for-everything.
 - (2) Since his conversion he had lived up to his name. He had served Paul well and he will serve Philemon better than before.
 - (3) All out of Christ are unprofitable persons (Rom. 3:12; Matt. 25:30).
 - (4) Nothing is really profitable that does not serve the Divine purpose.
 - (5) The gospel had made a great change in Onesimus. Now he will answer to his name.
 - (6) Conversion makes evil good—unprofitable useful (Eph. 2:12-13).
 - (7) Christianity knows nothing of a hopeless case—not even a run away slave.
3. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon (v. 12).
 - (1) Onesimus accompanied the letter (Col. 4:9). No evidence he was sent back against his will. The slave wanted to return to his master.
 - (2) Paul had no civil authority in this matter.
 - (3) Not just “receive him” as he formerly was. “My own bowels” would better be rendered “mine very heart.” The Hebrews said the bowels were the seat of emotions, the Greeks the heart.
 - (4) Receive him whom I love so tenderly that he seems to carry my heart with him wherever he goes.
 - (5) Receive him as my son, but he did not say free him as your slave.
 - (6) In Paul’s day the law sanctioned slavery. Paul respected the law.
 - (7) Think of it. A slave, a criminal, deliberately going back to the master he had robbed and from whom he had run away—not knowing what might happen to him.
 - (8) Here is proof of his conversion.

VII. PAUL’S DESIRE TO KEEP ONESIMUS (vv. 13-14).

1. His decision to send Onesimus back reflects a struggle in his own heart (v. 13).
 - (1) “Whom I would have retained with me.”
 - A. He was not sending him back because he wanted to get rid of him. Far from it!
 - B. It was not easy to part with this youth who had been converted under his ministry.
 - C. There is a strong affection on Paul’s part to Onesimus. He was a beloved brother in Christ.
 - D. Justice demanded that he be returned to his master, who could not but receive kindly the slave of whom his friend Paul spoke so highly.

- E. We are all Christ's Onesimuses.
- (2) "That in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel."
- A. Onesimus would have been useful to Paul for--
- He was chained to a Roman soldier, and thus restricted in his movements.
 - Paul was old and run down and needed loving care.
 - "Might serve me." The word "serve" in the Greek does not mean to serve as a slave. It means to serve as a deacon. Fain would Paul make Philemon's slave his deacon.
- B. "In the stead" means Paul would have accepted Onesimus as Philemon's substitute.
- He would do what you would do if you were here.
 - Philemon could hardly fail to think more favorably of Onesimus.
2. He hesitates to claim what he believes the slave's master would have cheerfully rendered (v. 14).
- (1) "But without thy mind I would do nothing."
- A. Paul was a Christian gentleman. He would do nothing with another man's slave without the consent of his master.
- B. Grave penalties were denounced by Roman law upon those who received fugitive slaves.
- C. He would not keep back something which was due Philemon to his injury.
- D. Onesimus chose to go back that he might show his conversion.
- E. If Paul did not send him back the gospel might be slandered. People would say it permitted slaves to run away from their masters.
- F. Christianity teaches us to respect the rights of others.
- G. He would not act on the mere assumption of Philemon's willingness. Then his kindness might have seemed forced rather than freely bestowed.
- H. There is a difference between Paul's wishing and willing. If we are true to God we may often will what we do not wish.
- (2) "That thy benefit should not be of necessity, but willingly."
- A. Here are two great words: "necessity" and "free will." One is law; the other love. One is the dictates of duty, and the other a desire of delight.
- B. Paul did not want Christian service to even appear to be by constraint.
- C. The service that we yield must be glad and free, the spontaneous expression of our heart's love.
- D. Good deeds are acceptable to God and man when done with the most freedom.
- E. Jerome says of this verse, "Nothing in moral action is good which is not done voluntary."

F. God delights in willingness of service (Ex. 35:5; Deut. 16:10; I Chron, 29:14; II Cor. 8:12; 9:7).

VIII. PAUL BIDS PHILEMON TO ACCEPT THE SITUATION (vv. 15-17).

1. The way of Divine providence (v. 15).

(1) God permitted the flight of Onesimus with Philemon's own interest in view. The worthless slave would become worth something now that he was converted.

(2) God works out His plan in the midst of sin and suffering. His purpose is accomplished by the most unlikely methods and the most unexpected manner. It is always beneficial in its aims and results (Gen. 45:5; 50:20).

(3) He is ever making the wrath of man to praise Him. The Divine purpose may be discerned shining through questionable human acts (Ps. 76:10).

(4) Onesimus would not now be always running away or stealing from his master. God often brings gain to His people out of their losses.

(5) As overruled and ordered by God it was a departure, but in itself it was a criminal act.

(6) The temporary loss was an everlasting gain—"for an hour...eternally" (Greek text).

(7) The brief separation had resulted in Onesimus's salvation. God brings good out of evil.

(8) They now both have eternal life and were eternally related to one another. Spiritual bonds are indissoluble. Death does not dissolve our relations in Christ.

(9) When we return to God, we return to one another in all relations that are true and abiding. We have a place in the heart of the Eternal.

2. The new bond of Christian relationship (v. 16).

(1) Not now as a servant" (*doulos*—"bond-slave").

A. "Not now" means "no more, no longer."

B. It implies that before he had been in that condition. Onesimus had been a slave in Philemon's house.

C. Now for the first time Onesimus is referred to as a slave.

D. Onesimus so far as his civil standing is still a slave, but spiritually he is Christ's freeman (1 Cor. 7:20-22).

E. Conversion does not release men from civil, social, and commercial bonds. It enables a person to accomplish these tasks from new motives and in a better manner.

(2) "A brother beloved, specially to me."

A. Onesimus is a brother in Christ. There is a spiritual brotherhood between all true believers.

B. Paul had been the human instrument of Onesimus's conversion. He was Paul's joy and crown.

- (3) “But how much more unto thee, both in flesh, and in the Lord.”
- A. Paul would gladly welcome him back as a beloved brother in Christ and as the Lord’s servant.
 - B. Christianity makes slaves and masters to be brothers—a common fellowship—one big happy family.
 - C. “In the flesh” means in earthly and personal relations of common life.
 - D. “In the Lord” points to the spiritual and religious relationship of worship and the church.
 - E. Some professed Christians look upon employees on Sunday as “in the Lord” and during the week “in the flesh.”
 - F. Brotherly love is kept in the same closet with their Sunday clothes!
 - G. Philemon and Onesimus were both Gentile brothers in the flesh.
 - H. Some have suggested that Onesimus was the natural brother of Philemon, the child of the same father, by a different mother, a slave.

3. Paul urges him to recognize the equal rights of Christian fellowship (v. 17).

- (1) “If you count me therefore a partner.”

- A. In modern English we might have said, “If you hold me to be a comrade.”
- B. Partners in business have common ideas and aims. Paul and Philemon were sharers of the faith of Christ.
- C. Here Paul claims for the converted slave the same partnership in Christian blessings as he and Philemon enjoyed.

- (2) “Receive him as myself.”

- A. Love overleaps all minor distinctions, and admits its object into a full participation, on equal terms, of its holiest fellowship.
- B. Paul does not say “reinstate” him, but “receive” him, a much more tender word.
- C. Paul does not at any time exercise his apostolic authority.

IX. VICARIOUS RESPONSIBILITY (vv. 18-19).

1. Paul becomes willingly chargeable for the debt of Onesimus, (v.18).

- (1) Paul is about to present a credit and debit account.

- (2) “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought.”

- A. The fellowship of the saints does not destroy distinctions of property.
- B. Onesimus’s sin is admitted and described. The slave had confessed all to Paul after his conversion.

C. Sin is a violation of God's law, an unjust act, and an injury done to someone—a negation of right (Acts 4:19).

D. A slave in that day could not be a debtor or creditor, properly speaking. Paul is going beyond legal requirements here.

(3) "Put that on mine account."

A. This is quite a promise. Paul was a prisoner and dependent on the gifts of others.

B. We are God's Onesimuses, and Christ paid our sin debt to the justice of God (Heb. 7:22; II Cor. 5:21).

2. Paul's I. O. U. voucher to Philemon (v. 19).

(1) "I will repay it."

A. A prisoner would pay the debt of a runaway slave!

B. I will be a surety for his debt. Not all suretyship is wrong.

C. Onesimus probably had spent the money he stole.

(2) "Thou owest unto me even thine own self."

A. This is a reference to Paul being the instrument of Philemon's conversion.

B. His conversion was to be traced to Paul's labors.

C. Modesty in self-praise is true praise. Philemon owed Paul more than money.

D. We can never repay the man or woman who led us to Christ.

E. The whole thought as Lightfoot says is that: "I will repay it though indeed you cannot fairly claim repayment, for you owe me much more than Onesimus owes you, and, over and above that, your own self."

X. PAUL'S CLAIM AND CONFIDENCE OF LOVE (vv. 20-21).

1. The entreaty of a brother on behalf of a brother (v. 20).

(1) There is a brotherhood of the race and a brotherhood of grace.

(2) "Joy of thee" is better translated "profit of thee." It is a form of the slave's name, which means "profitable" (v. 11).

(3) He is your Onesimus; will you be mine?

(4) It is as if he said: "I send Onesimus (the profitable one) to thee; do thou, by thy Christian reception of him, send an Onesimus (profit) to me."

(5) "In the Lord"—not carnal but spiritual profit was what Paul desired.

(6) "Refresh my bowels"—refresh my heart in preparation for the renewal of labor and suffering.

- (7) Some fugitive slaves when they returned were tortured or maimed at the command of angry masters.
- (8) The Lord's honor and service are a Christian's chief aim in all things.

2. Paul has confidence in the generous response of Philemon (v. 21).

- (1) The Christian heart cannot withstand the appeal of unselfish love!
- (2) Men will do much to fulfil generous expectations.
- (3) "I wrote unto thee"—I have written unto thee (vv. 19,17).
- (4) Good persons will be ready to do good works (Isa. 32:8).

XI. THE CLOSING DIRECTIONS AND SALUTATION WITH THE BENEDICTION (vv. 22-25).

1. Paul expected to visit Philemon and the church at Colosse when he got out of prison at Rome (v. 22).

- (1) Here is a request for hospitality (Rom. 16:25; II Tim. 1:16,18).
- (2) Paul believed the prayers of the church in Philemon's house might be the means of his liberation.
- (3) Paul had a high regard for the prayers of others (Rom. 15:30; II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-19; I Thess. 5:25).
- (4) How many times have we been blessed because others prayed for us? Preachers get credit for conversions that are really the result of private prayers.
- (5) The greatest service we can do for others is to pray for them.
- (6) "For I trust"—he did not know if prayers would get him released from Rome. In prayer we do not get God to do what we want.
- (7) The will of God is the ground of prayer. I hope I shall be given to you as a most gracious gift of God.

2. The salutation of Epaphras (v. 23).

- (1) He was a Colossian (Col. 4:12-13). Some say he was pastor of the church at Colosse, but he was most likely an evangelist (missionary) in the church (Col. 1:7).
- (2) He was sharing Paul's imprisonment. He was sent by the Colossian church to minister to Paul's wants.
- (3) Compare with Col. 4:10-14 here.
- (4) It was Christ who made him a prisoner, not Nero.

3. Four fellow laborers (v. 24).

- (1) Marcus—John Mark, the author of the second gospel. He was a cousin of Barnabas and accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Col. 4:10).
- (2) "Aristarchus"—a Thessalonian who was with Paul when he returned from Corinth from Asia and accompanied him to Rome (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10).

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(3) “Demas” –at this time an honorable associate of Paul at Rome. During his second imprisonment he deserted Paul (II Tim. 4:10).

(4) “Lucas”–Luke author of the third gospel and the Book of Acts. The beloved physician (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11).

(5) “Fellow laborers”–the large body of assistants who labored with Paul in different parts of the world.

4. Closing prayer and benediction (v. 25).

(1) “Your spirit” means Paul and the church (vv. 1-2).

(2) Paul invoked the rich favor of Christ and all the fullness of blessing He brings.

(3) Grace is the source of all blessings. All grace comes to us through Christ.

(4) Grace is the spirit that spiritualizes the whole man.

(5) “Amen”–“surely it shall be so.”