

Philemon

Breakdown

- The epistle to Philemon is the last of Paul's letters that are recorded in the Bible. Paul addressed the letter to Philemon and others who were part of the church in Philemon's house.
- Philemon lived in the Colossae area, and Tychicus and Onesimus delivered this letter at the same time they delivered the letter to the Colossian church.
- Paul wrote this letter around 62 A.D. about the same time as he wrote Colossians.

Main Points

- God had a plan from the beginning of time – for Jesus to suffer the penalty we deserved. God's plan was all about forgiveness. The human race had rebelled and turned away God, but God forgave us. He loved us too much to hold a grudge against us. The only way we can be reconnected with God is by accepting God's forgiveness when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. That is what the word Gospel is all about.
- There is unbelievable power in the Gospel, and when we accept the Gospel as truth, it will change us from the inside out. The power of the Gospel doesn't just change us by making us do something that we don't want to do. It actually changes the things we want to do. Philemon and Onesimus show us that example perfectly.

Did you know?

- Onesimus was a slave who belonged to Philemon, but he did something bad (possibly stole something from his master) and ran away. In those times, punishment for runaway slaves was very severe, even deadly.
 - In Colossians 3:11, Paul wrote about a different viewpoint regarding slaves (servants or employees in our modern times). What did Paul say?
- Philemon obviously considered Paul to be his spiritual elder because Paul said that he could demand that Philemon do the right thing, but he didn't. Why did Paul say he decided to ask Philemon instead of demanding?
- When Onesimus ran away, he traveled from Colossae to Rome. In our modern day, the trip would take about 29 hours by car and would possibly include a 25-minute ferry ride depending on the route chosen. How long do you think it would have taken Onesimus to travel that distance in 62 A.D.?
- Paul was confident that he knew what Philemon's response would be. What did Paul say Philemon would do?

Further Thought

- Important theological truths like the love of God or forgiveness in Christ are not just things Christians should believe or say. Based on the example we see in Philemon and Onesimus, how can we actually do these same things in our own lives?
- Paul asked Philemon to not only forgive Onesimus, but to accept him as a brother in Christ rather than as a slave. It can sometimes be hard to change the way we view other people. What can we do to help us remember to see others as brothers or sisters in Christ?