



Outline of the Book of Philemon by [John T Polk II](#)

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

Philemon = Affectionate

[God Is Profitable]

I. Paul's Common Bond **Philemon 1-3**

A. Between **v.1**

1. Apostle (Paul)
2. Preacher (Timothy)
3. Fellow laborer (Philemon)

B. Toward **v.2**

1. Apphia [maybe Philemon's wife?]
2. Archippus, "fellow soldier" [preacher?] **Colossians 4:17**
3. Church in Philemon's house [Colossian church?]
 - a. Though providing place and labor, IT WAS NOT "Philemon's church" nor did Paul address it as such! **Acts 12:12; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:9; Colossians 4:15**
 - b. Major contributors to a local church should NEVER claim "power or authority" over that congregation **Mark 10:42-45**

II. Paul's Common Compliment **Philemon 4-7**

A. Philemon's Christian Character **v.4-5**

B. Philemon's Christian Cause **v.6-7**

III. Paul's Common Plea **Philemon 8-22**

A. Paul's "Slavery" Is Similar To Onesimus' **v.8-10**

1. "Appeal" rather than "command" **v.8-9a**
 - a. Paul, the aged **v.9-10; Acts 9:38; cf Acts 2:40; Romans 12:1; 2 Timothy 4:2; I Corinthians 1:10**
 - b. "command" what is right and proper **v.8 Mark 1:27; 9:25; Acts 23:2**
2. A child of chains **v.10**

B. Philemon's "Mastery" Is Like Christ's **v.11-12**

1. Like sinners, unprofitable now profitable **v.11**
2. Slaves returning their master's love **v.12**

C. Make A Decision, Not Wear A "WWJD" Is Taught **v.13-22**

1. Paul commends Onesimus' "slavery" for Jesus **v.13**

2. "What **W**ould **J**esus **D**o" **NOT** to be **worn**, but **done** **v.14**
3. Onesimus more valuable having become a Christian **v.15-16**
4. Treat Onesimus like Paul
 - a. like an "equal" **v.17**
 - b. "put it on your tab" to Paul **v.18-19**
 - c. Paul expects "better-than-average" service **v.20-21**
 - d. "Leave the light on" for Paul **v.22**

IV. Paul's Common Complement **Philemon 23-25**

- A. Fellow prisoner, Epaphras **v.23 cf Colossians 1:7; 4:12**
- B. Fellow laborers **v.24**
 1. Mark - probably John Mark **Acts 12:25; 13:13;**
Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11
 2. Aristarchus **Acts 19:18-19; 27:2; Colossians 4:10**
 3. Demas **Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:10**
 4. Luke - author of **Luke** & **Acts**, companion on Paul's journeys
- C. Fellow Who Gives **v.25**

Philanthropy In Philemon:

- Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, had evidently run away from his "owner" (**Philemon 11, 15-16, 18-19**). He had obeyed Christ's Gospel through Paul's preaching (**Philemon 10, 15-17**), and was being sent back to his "wronged" owner, Philemon (**Philemon 10-15**). He was to be recognized by the church in Colossae (**Colossians 4:9, 17**), and thus we infer that Philemon was also a member there (**Philemon 2, 4-7**).
- **Paul NEVER ABOLISHES SLAVERY as a social condition, but applies the Gospel of Jesus Christ to it**, showing that "neither slave nor free" exist between Christians (**Galatians 3:26-29**), and that the one who becomes Christian should

Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called (**I Corinthians 7:20-24**).

Spartacus led a revolt of slaves causing harsher treatment upon them in the western Roman Empire in 73 B.C., but by Paul's day most Roman slavery was strict but not cruel. Since about 20% of Rome's Empire consisted of slaves (for all defeated nations became their slaves), and since such numbers mitigate against too harsh a treatment of subjugated peoples, slavery as such, often was more a matter of household servant hood, where the "slaves" enjoyed most privileges shared with their "masters." Even under Moses' Law, servants purchased with money when circumcised, were under the same law as Israelites born under it (**Exodus 12:43-49; Numbers 15:16, 29**).

- **Christ changes hearts thus influencing social actions**, so, in **Colossians**, Paul wrote to Christian slaves to do their duties well (**Colossians 3:22-25; Cf Ephesians 6:5-8**) AND to Christian "masters" to treat their slaves with dignity

(**Colossians 4:1**; Cf **Ephesians 6:9**) -- AND IN **PHILEMON** HE APPLIES THIS TEACHING TO A SPECIFIC CASE IN POINT!

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God (**1 Peter 2:18-20**).

- Abraham Lincoln is credited with making a proclamation "freeing slaves" in the United States in the 1800's, but Paul "freed" one slave, Onesimus, by appealing to his owner's heart in obedience to Christ. Lincoln forced an issue creating war and his own assassination, Paul appealed to Philemon's and Onesimus' better natures as Christians to resolve the matter. **IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, WHO TRULY "FREES SLAVES?"** One seeks social changes without heartfelt conversion, the other heartfelt conversion leading to social changes. **WHICH IS BEST?**
- At this writing, Paul is in chains (**Philemon 9-10**; **Colossians 4:18**), mention is made of "Archippus" in Colossae (**Philemon 2**; **Colossians 4:17**), **Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas** are with Paul (**Philemon 23-24**; **Colossians 4:10, 12-14**). Obviously, this letter was written before **2 Timothy** because Demas had not yet "forsaken" Paul (**2 Timothy 4:10**). **Colossians, Ephesians** and **Philemon** may be easily said to have been written and delivered at the same time, a time while Paul was himself in chains. **Tychicus** was to deliver two letters and report to churches about Paul's conditions (**Ephesians 6:21-22**; **Colossians 4:7**), thus **Onesimus** may have been sent back to Philemon in Colossae on the same trip.
- People are not mere "property" and should never be considered so, but have "souls" worth more than all the property of the world (**Matthew 16:26**). Christians are people for whom a purchase price has been paid and they should live for their owner as "freedmen" (**Romans 6:16-22**; **I Corinthians 6:19-20**; **1 Corinthians 7:23**). Keeping "sovereignty" over one's own life in order to be able to serve Christ is the struggle of a Christian (**Mark 4:2-9, 14, 18-19**; **Galatians 5:16-26**).

ONE MUST ALWAYS CONSIDER WHO HAS PAID THE MOST FOR HIM/ HER BEFORE SURRENDERING HIS/ HER MIND AND JUDGMENT.

PERSONAL SOVEREIGNTY SHOULD ONLY GO FOR THE HIGHEST PRICE!

**For how much have we sold ourselves to the Devil:
drug-induced "highs" (including alcohol)?
ego and pride (includes "saving face")?
headlines and box office returns?
power and prominence?
hormonal thrills?
"guts and glory?"**