

# Grace Baptist Church

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## The Epistle of Paul to Philemon

### Simple Outline

- Paul, the Beloved Friend (vs. 1-7)
- Paul, the Beseeching Intercessor (vs. 8-16)
- Paul, the Burdened Partner (vs. 17-25)

### Characters

- Paul the Apostle – imprisoned in Rome
- Philemon – a prosperous slave owner who lived in Colosse
- Onesimus – a runaway slave who becomes a Christian (his name means profitable)
- Tychicus – a traveling companion of Paul & Timothy (Colossians 4:7-9)

### Background

The Epistle to Philemon was a private letter written by the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon. Paul was imprisoned in Rome at the time of this writing and probably met Onesimus while in Rome. Philemon was a prosperous slave owner who lived in Colosse. It appears that Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, had stolen some of Philemon's wealth and fled to Rome. Little did Onesimus know that in Rome he would meet Paul and become a Christian. Paul sent Onesimus back to Colosse with Tychicus to make things right with Philemon. A runaway slave would surely be punished or even killed. Paul sends this letter as a true testimony of justice, mercy and forgiveness, and grace.

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## I. The Cautious Approach

### A. Personal Greetings (vs. 1-2)

#### 1. From:

- a) The Apostle Paul, a prisoner
- b) Timothy, our brother  
(All had a relationship with Christ)

#### 2. To:

- a) Philemon
  - (1) Well loved by them both
  - (2) Co-labor with them
- b) Apphia – probably Philemon’s wife or female family member
- c) Archippus
  - (1) Probably Philemon’s son or a male family member
  - (2) Fellow soldier
- d) Church in their house

Suppose that you catch someone stealing your car. After the police have arrived you have three alternatives: You can press charges – that would be **justice** served because he would be guilty of a crime, You could can forgive him for his crime – that would be extending **mercy** to the guilty, or You can give him the car – that would be **grace** – giving him something that he did not deserve.

*Paul is writing this letter to ask Philemon to extend **grace** to Philemon – to grant him that which he does not deserve*

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## B. Grace (vs. 3)

### 1. What is Grace?

~Unmerited favor (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*Philemon was going to be asked to extend grace to Onesimus*

### 2. What accompanies Grace?

~Peace – the war is over (Romans 5:1)

*The conflict between Philemon and Onesimus would be over*

### 3. Who gives Grace?

**a)** God the Father – God is the Father of all who believe (Matthew 6:9; Luke 23:46; John 20:17; Acts 1:4, 7)

**b)** Lord Jesus Christ

**(1)** Lord – emphasizes His power and His authority

**(2)** Jesus – emphasizes His person and his Humanity

**(3)** Christ – emphasizes His position as the anointed one

## C. Gratitude (vs. 4-6)

1. Paul thanked God for Philemon

2. Paul prayed always for Philemon

3. Paul recognized his testimony

**a)** His love for Christ and his faith in Christ

**b)** His love for all saints

*Paul wanted Philemon to show love to Onesimus, a new saint*

4. Paul encouraged him to continue being a witness and an example to others

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## D. Gladness (vs. 7)

1. Paul was happy and comforted by the love shown by Philemon to others
2. Paul recognized the fact that Philemon had encouraged and refreshed the saints by his love and support (possibly generous financial support)

## II. The Comprehensive Appeal

### A. Paul's Desire

1. His motive (vs. 8-9)
  - a) Paul, as an apostle, could have commanded Philemon to forgive Onesimus (*enjoin – command; convenient – befitting*)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Motivations</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Discipline says, "I have to" Duty says, "I ought to" Desire says, "I want to"</p>
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- b) Paul, as an aged man and a prisoner, appeals to Philemon to extend forgiveness
  2. His appeal (vs. 10-11)
    - a) Onesimus was no longer just a slave
      - (1) He was now a Christian brother
      - (2) Paul calls him his own child  
*(Paul evidently led him to the Lord while in prison)*
    - b) Onesimus "profitable" was at one time unprofitable – but now is profitable to both Paul and Philemon

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## 3. His need (vs. 12-13)

a) Paul wanted Onesimus to stay with him in Rome and minister to him

b) Paul sent him back to Philemon to restore the relationship

c) Paul wanted Philemon to willingly send Onesimus back to him to help him if he desired

## B. Paul's Duty (vs. 14-16)

1. Onesimus belonged to Philemon – Paul's duty was to send him back to his owner

a) Paul did not want Philemon to feel pressured to give Onesimus to him

b) In order for Onesimus to be right with God, he needed to be right with man

2. Onesimus would belong to Philemon forever.

*Paul and Onesimus did not meet by chance, it was God's plan.*

3. Onesimus could be received now as a son and not a servant

## C. Paul's Directive (vs. 17)

1. You are my partner

2. Receive Onesimus as a partner as well

## D. Paul's Document (vs. 18-19)

1. Paul would assume the guilty plea on behalf of Onesimus

2. Paul would assume the debt owed by Onesimus

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3. Paul signed his own name as a guarantee of payment
4. Paul reminded Philemon that he once was a sinner whom Paul had led to the Lord

*Grace is love that pays a price – God loved us and sent His Son to pay the price of our sin*

## III. The Concluding Appendix

### A. Personal Words to Philemon (vs. 20-22)

1. May I find profit from you (joy)
2. May I find my heart refreshed
3. I am confident that you will do the right thing
4. I am confident that you will do more than I have asked
5. I hope to see you in person – make a place for me to stay
6. Continue to pray for me

### B. Public Greetings (vs. 23-25)

1. Epaphras – He was probably the pastor at Colosse and while at Rome probably introduced Onesimus and Paul
  - a) Faithful minister of Christ – Col. 1:7
  - b) Servant of Christ – Colossians 4:12
  - c) Fellow prisoner in Christ (vs. 23)
2. Marcus – John Mark  
Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39; Colossians 4:10;  
2 Timothy 4:11

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**3. Aristarchus** – a Thessalonian  
Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Colossians 4:10

**4. Demas**  
Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10

**5. Lucas** – Luke the physician  
Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11

## C. Preferred Closing of Paul

**Romans 16:24** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

**1 Corinthians 16:23** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.

**2 Corinthians 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen

**Galatians 6:18** Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

**Ephesians 6:24** Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

**Philippians 4:23** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen

**Colossians 4:18** The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen

**1 Thessalonians 5:28** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

**2 Thessalonians 3:18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen

**Revelation 22:21** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.