

## Episode #320 – Philemon 1: The Book of Philemon

I. In the book of Ephesians, we learned that God’s method of dealing with people in our day is to deal graciously. In all ways and in every situation, God will act in grace, and if He cannot act in grace, He will not act at all. God’s call to us is to deal graciously with each other, even as He deals graciously with us. Ephesians 4:32 proclaims this.

II. In the book of Philemon, written shortly after Ephesians, Paul illustrates these great principles in the way he acts towards Philemon and his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul in how he treats these two becomes an example of how God treats us in the dispensation of grace.

III. The man Philemon.

A. Philemon (One Who Kisses) is only mentioned in the book that bears his name.

B. Philemon was from Colossae (Monstrosities), the city to which Colossians was written, as a comparison of the two books shows.

1. Philemon 1:2, Colossians 4:17. Archippus.

2. Philemon 1:10, Colossians 4:9. Onesimus.

3. Philemon 1:23, Colossians 4:12. Epiphra.

4. Philemon 1:24, Colossians 4:10,14. Aristarchus and Mark.

IV. The city of Colossae.

A. Colossae was in the region of Phrygia, which in Roman times had been divided, with half being considered part of Galatia and half part of Asia.

B. Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13) were in the western half of Phrygia that belonged to Asia.

C. “Asia” here is not the giant continent, but a small province in the Roman Empire in part of Asia Minor.

D. When Paul proclaimed the word in Ephesus, all the Jews and Greeks in Asia heard, Acts 19:10. If this included Colossae, they would have heard the word at this time.

E. Paul apparently never visited Colossae during Acts, Colossians 1:4, 2:1. They apparently heard the word from Epaphras, Colossians 1:7.

F. How did Philemon know Paul? He had doubtless met him elsewhere, perhaps in Ephesus, Acts 19:10.

G. Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were all damaged in an earthquake a year or so before Paul wrote this letter (63A.D.), so they were still rebuilding.

V. Outline of Paul’s Personal Letters.

A. I Timothy. Organization. Instruction to leaders and for choosing leaders.

B. II Timothy. What to do when the organization fails. Discipleship. Passing on the truth from one person to the next.

⌘ Titus. Organization. Instruction to leaders and for choosing leaders.

℘ Philemon. What to do when relationships among believers fail. Grace.

Accepting our fellow believers in spite of wrongs done against us.

VI. Introduction of Philemon. Philemon 1:1-3.

A. Philemon 1. The authors introduce themselves.

1. Paul: the author, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Same author as Ephesians, and written about the same time.

2. Prisoner = a bound one of Jesus Christ. It seems God told him to simply stay in Rome. Acts 28:30-31. He stays right in his own house, speaking to all who came to him, but is not allowed by God to leave there.

3. Brother Timothy is with him, and writes the letter with him, probably as the amanuensis (the scribe who wrote it down for Paul).

B. Philemon 1-2. The recipients of the letter.

1. The letter is addressed to Philemon (One Who Kisses).
  - a. Paul calls him “dearly beloved,” Greek *agapetos*. This speaks of God’s kind of self-sacrificial love. This is how Paul loved him.
  - b. He also calls him a fellow-laborer. Means a joint or equal worker.
2. The letter is also addressed to Apphia (Fruitful). She was probably Philemon’s wife. He calls her beloved (with self-sacrificial love) as well.
3. Next to Achippus (Master of the Horse). He was probably the son of Philemon and Apphia. Paul calls him a joint or equal soldier with himself.
4. He also addresses it to the “church” in their house.
  - a. This was *ekklesia*, which means out-called or out-positioned ones.
  - b. This was not a meeting of a home-church, but were members of Philemon’s household who were marked out by their faith in Christ. These could have been various servants and relatives of Philemon.

C. Philemon 3. Paul’s greeting to them.

1. Paul wishes grace, God’s love and favor bestowed without thought of deserving it, to be their portion.
2. Grace, that is to say, peace. (Greek word *kai*.) Peace means “a true union,” and what he wants for them is a true union with God.
3. These things come from God our Father, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. The “and” is the Greek *kai*, indicating apposition. The two are the same!

VII. Conclusion. The book of Philemon is a short letter of Paul to the man Philemon. He was a Colossian, and this letter was written to him at about the same time that the books of Colossians and Ephesians were written and sent. In it, we see the grace of God set forth so boldly in Ephesians illustrated in Paul’s actions towards Philemon. Paul acts towards Philemon and Onesimus much as God acts with all of us in the dispensation of grace. May we all learn more of God’s marvelous grace as we study through the book of Philemon!