

Survey of Philemon

David Rountree

Introduction

1. Written by Paul to Philemon and a church (v. 1, 2)?
2. Notice the love for God and man (v.4-7).
3. This letter is Paul's appeal on behalf of a slave named Onesimus (v.10, 17, 18).
4. Penalties were standard for slaves who ran away. Paul's letter is a plea for leniency.

Outline of Philemon: **Greetings (v.1-3)**
 Thanksgiving (v.4-7)
 The Plea on behalf of Onesimus (v.8-20)
 Conclusion (v.21-25)

Main Points and Application

1. The excitement in Philemon is how God's love and forgiveness are given prominence (v.17-19). Philemon displays the power of the gospel in winning a runaway slave and changing a master's mind.
2. The issue of slavery:
 - a) **Bond-servant/indentured servant:** Lev. 25:39-40; Exod. 22:3; Philemon 18.
 - b) **Man-stealing/kidnapping:** Exod. 21:16; 1 Tim.1:10; Rev. 18:13.

What kind of slave was Onesimus?

3. In light of God's exhortations to slaves and masters in **Col. 3:22-4:1**, what should be our response to slavery today?
4. Why does the Bible not speak clearly to the abolishment of all forms of slavery?
5. Is God in some sense pro-slavery? No, God encourages us to give slaves the gospel and to move them to freed status to increase their effectiveness for the church.

6. What does Philemon teach us about the socialism of our day or about the desire of many to seek everyone's equality?

a) Was Paul seeking a social equality for Onesimus like the politicians of our day are proposing a social equality for all in America?

- Onesimus went from outcast to a "child" (v. 10).
- Onesimus went from Philemon's "bondservant" to "beloved brother" (v. 16).
- Onesimus went from being treated sub-human, to being greeted like an apostle (v. 17)

Is this the foundation for socialism? If not, what is the difference?

b) Some argue for social equality or socialism from Acts 2:44-45. What ways does this text support or not support socialism?

Neither Onesimus or Paul were required to give up their private property when Philemon was saved, though they voluntarily gave up much.