

<p>PHILEMON A short letter by Paul</p> <p>NIV Quest Bible</p> <p>See Lk 23:34</p> <p>Personal comment:</p> <p>Introduction continues:</p> <p>Col 1:7-8; Ac 19:10</p>	<p>(Introduction to PHILEMON, as paraphrased from the NIV Quest Bible.)</p> <p>C. S. Lewis has said that most people believe forgiveness is a marvelous idea, that is, until they themselves have something to forgive. The concept of forgiving someone is wonderful, but the actual laying down the offense and never picking it up again is another matter. Forgiveness is not easy to ask for, nor to give. When we are hurt by someone it takes quite a bit of effort to relieve them of the responsibility of having hurt us mentally, physically or emotionally. We need to swallow that pain of having been hurt. Our Lord, Jesus, certainly showed us how this maybe done, even in the most difficult and painful circumstances.</p> <p>And it is in the way He showed us that we are able to truly relinquish our hurt feelings, and in some cases our hatred, into the capable hands of God—it is then we need the strength of His power—to be able to forgive. And as I have witnessed in my own personal spiritual growth the whole of this phenomenon—forgiving and being forgiven—is the fulcrum upon which we born-again humans continue to balance in this world, for though we are saved, we are yet sinners and forgiveness remains for us to give and receive as our Christian walk requires.</p> <p>This letter which Paul wrote to Philemon is an excellent example of the cost of asking forgiveness and of granting it. Though we freely receive our salvation from Christ Jesus, the living-out of the Christian life is not done without cost of one kind or another. Certainly, He sacrificed His body on the cross for us to be free of our sins—freely given and freely received. But that does not make it easy</p> <p>In addition to Paul's instruction about forgiveness, in this brief letter, he speaks of the necessity for equality and acceptance among people who consider themselves to be Christ followers. In America, the whole phenomenon of slavery and its after effects may never be erased or settled. The same was true in the ancient world at this time.</p> <p>Paul wrote this work while under house arrest in Rome, between AD 60 and 62, where he met Onesimus, a run-away slave. Though Paul could have used the help of this young man, he sent him back to his master, Philemon. In this letter, Paul asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus for having run away. Most run-away slaves, when caught, faced harsh punishment and sometimes even death. Paul hoped that Philemon might be a living example of the grace Onesimus had already received through Christ.</p> <p>Philemon was a wealthy man who lived in the once prosperous city of Colosse, which was of Phrygia in Asia Minor, (now Turkey). It was located on the south bank of the Lycus River. It was on the great east-west trade route leading from Ephesus on the Aegean Sea to the Euphrates River. Colosse is just southeast of Laodicea. Laodicea is one of the Greek cities mentioned in the Book of Revelation, which was the wealthiest city in Phrygia, in Roman times. Colosse, however, had diminished to a second-rate market town by the first century AD. Its neighboring cities, Laodicea and Hieropolis had surpassed it in power and importance by the time Paul wrote this letter, however, it rose in importance in the NT because the gospel had been planted there by Epaphrus. Paul had converted Epaphrus during his three-year ministry in Ephesus then Epaphrus carried the gospel to Colosse. Perhaps because of the efforts of Epaphrus and other converts, Laodicea and Hieropolis had churches established in them also.</p>
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<p>Introduction continues:</p>	<p>The basic point of this letter was for Paul to win Philemon's willing acceptance of the newly confessed and converted Onesimus, who humbly wanted to return to his owner—because it was the right thing to do.</p> <p>(Because this letter is only 25 verses long, there are no chapters, just verses.)</p>
<p>PHILEMON, Verses 1-7 See Ro 16:5 v.4 v.6 v.7</p>	<p>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother. To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church the meets in your house. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.</p>
<p>Footnote: Philemon, verses 1-2</p> <p>(v.1)</p>	<p>Although Paul wrote this letter, together with Timothy, he refers to himself by using the personal pronouns, "I," and "me," rather than "we," and "us," which he most often used. In the context of the editorial "we," Paul does this so that he would not appear self-centered. He was preaching and teaching those to whom he wrote, and to all who read his words, down through the centuries. He may not have realized the great masses of people who would read and learn from his words. Yet, in this letter, he is essentially addressing the entire church at Colosse, even though it is a very personal letter to Philemon, and Paul also includes a greeting to Philemon's wife, Apphia.</p>
<p>(v.2)</p>	<p>Philemon was a Christian man who lived in or near Colosse. He was a wealthy man who owned slaves, one of whom was Onesimus. Onesimus was a young man who didn't appreciate being a slave, owned by another man, so he stole some things from his owner and then ran away. A run-away slave, under Roman law was punishable by death.</p>
<p>Footnote: Philemon, verses 3-4</p>	<p>Paul always gives a reason for his joy. In the "greeting" of his letters he includes such words as "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul also includes prayers of joyful thanksgiving for his reader's response to the gospel and the teaching he has given them, for it came from inspiration of the Holy Spirit and miraculous visitations and instructions from Christ Jesus Himself.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>Having come to faith later in life, after having lived a life that was violently opposed to Christ Jesus and to His followers, Paul was very conscious of the gift of salvation and faith he had received. Perhaps this is a most compelling reason for me to have begun the work the Lord has given me—writing Bible studies—which began with Paul's letter to the Romans. Unlike Paul, I had no driven antagonism against Christ Jesus or the church. My battles were of a different nature. Though blessed by God in many ways, I was angry that I didn't really fit well anywhere. Whatever the reasons were, and how much of it was my own sinful nature causing the unrest and dissatisfaction, I don't know, for I am unable to separate the past into parts. I sincerely wish I could have been a saved sinner earlier. But on the other hand, my history of miss-deeds-done and the effects those actions had on others, now provides fodder for the personal comments I write. My past gives me a variety of experiences through which I can relate to others who are suffering as I once did. I know that one who rambles rebelliously around in life is not happy. I was very unhappy for most of my life—until the Lord God brought me salvation. If not "happy-happy" all the time now that I am saved from the sins that I had live in this life, I am grateful, blessed</p>
<p>See Titus 2:11</p>	

<p>Comment continues: See Jer 29:10-14</p>	<p>and relatively content. My old 76 year old body is at times difficult to live in at times—and its condition does not improve! But my spirit is safe and saved and that makes all the difference!</p>
<p>See Rev 3:20</p>	<p>It is my hope in writing these studies that you, dear reader, will be saved by the miracle of spiritual re-birth. I Pray you will hunger for the Lord—for Jesus says to you, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me." Jesus speaks here of the door to your heart. Open it to let Him in and He will do the rest—He will heal you and cleanse you and save you.</p>
<p>Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:12; 10:17</p>	<p>Paul's letter to Philemon is just a little epistle, only 25 verses in length. But he deals with a most important subject, forgiveness. Forgiveness is for giving—and receiving! The necessary first step, spiritually speaking is for one to humble oneself to the point of acknowledging one's own responsibility in one's own sin. If we cannot see our own choice in our own disobedience, to our own conscience—if to nothing else—we are not ready to accept forgiveness from God. By admitting this, we are humbled by the awareness of our own fault in the mess we make of our lives—even though blame can also be put on others. But at one point, all of us choose to sin and we know we are sinning.</p>
<p>Gen 1:27</p>	<p>God created in us His image. We call this our conscience and we cannot deny our knowledge of an innate comprehension of right and wrong. Basically, we know this. It is in our mental and spiritual "genes."</p>
<p>Footnote: Philemon, verses 5-7</p>	<p>Paul gives Philemon the Christian's special reasons for thanksgiving, which is the very love and faith involved in being a Christ follower. The faith is in the Lord Jesus and the love is directed toward all the saints (Christians). Paul prays that Philemon will recognize the greatness of God's gift of love to men and that with this gift he will be able to share it in true fellowship. One should exhibit in this <i>agape</i> love an understanding of how exalted is the privilege of salvation through Christ. This is the crown and culmination of faith and it involves a comprehension of the deeper mysteries of God. It becomes for the believer, the strength and security against temptation. It encompasses every good thing which is the object of faith.</p>

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