

**General Topics :: Philemon Question****Philemon Question - posted by ravenmolehil, on: 2007/5/23 12:13**

Philemon Question

As reading through the letter of Philemon, I had a sense of missing some of the major theological points.

Does anyone have any suggestions of reference for further study or is there another area of the Bible that seems to parallel

(I have heard Harry Ironsides sermon on the letter, its rather short and seems to just scrape the surface)

**Re: Philemon Question - posted by JaySaved, on: 2007/5/23 13:16**

I asked a similar question a few years ago, 'Why is Philemon in the Bible?'

It is a book that speaks of the need to forgive. Onesimus was the slave of Philemon. For whatever reason Onesimus was separated from Philemon (He might have ran away.)

While Onesimus was away, he met Paul and became a believer. Paul could have really used Onesimus in his ministry, but knew he must do the right thing. So, Paul wrote the letter to Philemon requesting that he accept him back as slave and most importantly as a brother.

The key verses are:

"15Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— 16no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord."

The themes are the need to do what is right, the power of forgiveness and the remembrance that God has forgiven us more than we can ever pay back.

**Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2007/5/23 15:01**

must have received forgiveness from Philemon since church tradition says that Onesimus became one of the leaders of the early church, a bishop I believe.

**Re: - posted by HomeFree89 (), on: 2007/5/23 15:23**

I find it interesting that Philemon had slaves. He seems to have been a very godly man, but he had Onesimus as one, which most people say is morally wrong. I personally wouldn't have slaves, but this is a thought that I keep having as I read Philemon.

Jordan

**Re: - posted by ravenmolehil, on: 2007/5/23 15:37**

I think I'll see what Dr. J Vernon McGee has to say about it;

[http://www.thrutheBible.org/site/c.hvKSLdMYIsG/b.959781/k.F3FC/MP3\\_Download\\_of\\_the\\_Complete\\_5Year\\_Bible\\_Study\\_By\\_Dr\\_J\\_Vernon\\_McGee.htm](http://www.thrutheBible.org/site/c.hvKSLdMYIsG/b.959781/k.F3FC/MP3_Download_of_the_Complete_5Year_Bible_Study_By_Dr_J_Vernon_McGee.htm)

**Re: - posted by Koinonia2 (), on: 2007/5/25 21:37**

JaySaved, the very verse you quoted (Philemon 16) shows quite clearly that Paul's heart was for Philemon to completely turn away from his idea of Onesimus' status as a "slave" ("...NO LONGER as a slave..."). Later on in verse 17, Paul is even more explicit, calling on Philemon to accept his new brother-in-Christ Onesimus just as he would receive the Apostle Paul himself. To take him back into slavery? Doesn't sound like it.

For this reason, I would suggest that the book of Philemon speaks of much deeper realities than just "doing the right thing." Re-studying this epistle myself this evening, I see it as a demonstration of Paul's beautiful humanity and gentleness. This is not a theological polemic; it shows the manner in which Paul conducted himself vis-a-vis his fellow believers. An

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d what truth of Christ does it put forth? I do not feel qualified to get into these kinds of discussions, but I do have a suggestion that I feel may be from the Lord. In re-reading the epistle this evening, I feel that this book has much to show us regarding the CHURCH, namely - the equal position of believers as brothers. In the old creation, there is slave and master. In the new creation, there is brother and brother, mutual brother - Christ, and mutual Father - God.

Amen!

### Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2007/5/25 22:41

Actually the bible says alot about slavery without saying anything specific as to wether or not one should have slaves or own slaves. It does lay down some precepts and principles concerning the treatment of ones slaves so I guess you could conclude that God acknowledges the fact of christians owning slaves. In American christianity there is so much of American culture in "our" bible thinking it tends to hurt us when we approach a subject like this. Slavery in recent years has been such a "hot" topic in America we have people running around asking forgiveness and apologizing for things that happened 200 years ago, trouble is it's a manipulative practice since its main purpose is to cause a cross section of society to re-act or conform a certain way.

### Re: - posted by Koinonia2 (), on: 2007/5/28 1:06

Yes, I would agree that the subject of this book is not about slavery. However, I would disagree with anyone that the subject is about forgiving Onesimus. Think of it this way - here is Onesimus, a member of Philemon's own household, who was apparently not a Christian until happening upon the Apostle Paul somewhere hundreds of miles away from home. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon "as a brother," meaning that he was not a brother before. Paul obviously preached the Gospel to him. What do you think Paul thought upon encountering this slave (perhaps in prison?) and finding out that he served in the house of Philemon, in whose house met the church in Colossae, but that he was unregenerated? If you will read the letter again in this light, I believe you might see that Paul's way of dealing with Philemon is quite strong. I think it merely skates the surface to say this is about "doing the right thing" or forgiving Onesimus. In my view, it seems much more that Paul is charging Philemon, in very strong language on a couple of occasions, to take a very strong turn away from his old concepts.

### Re: Philemon Question - posted by rowdy2 (), on: 2007/5/28 7:12

I see Paul giving Onesimus a letter from Paul asking Philemon to treat Onesimus as a fellow minister and requesting that Philemon no longer treat Onesimus as a child or unprofitable servant to the ministry because during the time spent with Paul, Onesimus had been prepared for the ministry.

Onesimus had been sent by that congregation to bring human necessities and comfort to Paul and Timothy and their fellow Christians in a Roman prison

Paul goes on to say that although Onesimus was ready to have been sent by Paul to the Ministry that He Paul was returning Onesimus to His congregation with a letter from Paul thanking them for their generosity and returning a minister, not a child who though a heir of all is treated as a servant.

Eddie