

One Chapter Books of the Bible (2)

PHILEMON

Introduction

- 1) Five books of the Bible have only one chapter – *Obadiah, Philemon, 2 & 3 John, Jude*
- 2) **Philemon** is one of four New Testament books with only one chapter (25 verses)
 - a) Quality or need of an inspired divine message not determined by the length of document
- 3) The epistle to Philemon has been described as:
 - a) A model of Christian courtesy; manifestation of Christian love; monument of Christian conversion

I) **Background**

- A) Author is **Paul**, the apostle (vv. 1, 9, 19)
 - 1) Refers to himself as a prisoner and aged
- B) Written at the same time and from same place as Paul's epistle to the Colossians
 - 1) Paul was a prisoner in chains (Phm. 13; Col. 4:18)
 - 2) Timothy with Paul (Phm. 1; Col. 1:1); fellow-workers same (Phm. 23-24; Col. 4:10-14)
 - 3) Colossians sent with Onesimus and he is the subject of Philemon (Col. 4:7-9; Phm. 10)
 - 4) Both written sometime during AD 61-63 from a Roman prison

II) **Main Characters**

- A) **Philemon** – likely member of the church at Colossae and a convert of Paul (v. 19)
- B) **Apphia** – wife of Philemon?
- C) **Archippus** – minister of gospel (Col. 4:17); thought by some to be son of Philemon
- D) **Onesimus** – slave of Philemon (v. 16) who had run away (v. 15); went to Rome and was converted by Paul (v. 10); became useful and beloved to Paul (v. 11-13; Col. 4:9)

III) **Message of the Epistle to Philemon**

- A) Not considering it right to keep Onesimus, Paul is sending him back to Philemon
- B) Paul appeals to Philemon to receive him back, now as a brother in Christ, and to forgive him of any wrong

IV) **Lessons to Learn**

- A) **Loving hospitality**
 - 1) Provided place for church to meet (vv. 1-2; cf. Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19)
 - 2) Love for all the saints (v. 5; cf. Col. 1:4; 2 Thess. 1:3)
 - 3) Refreshed hearts of the saints (v. 7; 2 Tim. 1:16)
 - 4) Provided a place for Paul to stay (v. 22)
- B) **Tactfully dealing with others**
 - 1) Could have commanded Philemon, but Paul appealed to Philemon for love's sake (vv. 8-10)
 - 2) Would not keep Onesimus without Philemon's consent (vv. 12-14)
 - 3) Offers to pay Philemon for any wrong or debt incurred by Onesimus (vv. 18-19)
 - 4) Believed in the good and righteous nature of Philemon; not suspicious (v. 21; 1 Cor. 13:7)
- C) **Emphasizing mutual relationship in Christ**
 - 1) Basis of love and faith of Philemon (vv. 5-6)
 - 2) Receive Onesimus as beloved brother; more than just returning slave (vv. 15-16 providence)
 - 3) Readiness and willingness to forgive – returning, and now profitable again (vv. 18, 11-12)

Conclusion

Paul's epistle to Philemon is the most personal of all his epistles. We see his joy over the conversion of Onesimus and his confidence in Philemon. We can reasonably assume that it was a joyful and rewarding reunion for Philemon and Onesimus. Both were now servants of Christ, and anticipating eternal life as brethren. Do you have that hope? Will you obey the gospel today?