

# NUGGET FROM THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

*Philemon 1:1-25*  
**SUNNY, OGUMOR**

**Nugget:** *small precious thing: any small item or piece, especially of something abstract such as knowledge or information, regarded as very precious.*

The book of Philemon is a letter written by Apostle Paul to Philemon. It has three main characters viz; Paul, who wrote the letter; Philemon, who lived in Colossae to whom the letter is addressed and Onesimus, who was a former slave of Philemon who actually delivered the letter about himself to Philemon. The Book is unique in a couple of important ways that are important and useful to the modern world.

Paul a prisoner for preaching the good news about Christ Jesus considers himself a prisoner of Christ not of the Government of the day, wrote this letter when he was under house arrest in Rome, **Act 28:16-31**.



Philemon lived in Colossae, a city in the southwest region of Asia Minor once known for its soft wool and colorful dyes, a person of note and wealth, he was a slave owner. He was converted by Apostle Paul before now. **Phm v19**. The church in Colossae meets in his house.

Onesimus was the slave of Philemon, having committed a crime of possible stealing of money, **Phm v18**, ran to far away Rome where he was converted into the Christian faith, by Paul, who kept him till his conduct proved the truth and sincerity of his conversion. A decision was reached that he should return to his master. Thus, in company of Tychicus Onesimus departed Colossae bearing this letter. (**Col 4:7-9**)

**Phm 1:1-7** - The apostle's joy and praise for Philemon's steady faith in the Lord Jesus, and his love to all the saints. Phm 1:8-22. He recommended Onesimus as one who would make good amends for the misconduct of which he had been guilty and on behalf of whom Paul (took a surety) promise to make up any loss Philemon had caused.

### **Paul's Plea**

**Phm 1:8-14:** Apostle Paul here argues from the point of love rather than authority. And he wrote, 'I appeal to you on the basis of love.' In other words, Paul appealed on the principles that were foundational to the Christian community rather than hierarchical authority. The Christian principle is love. '*Love one another as I have loved you (Jn 13:34 NIV).*' Paul asked Philemon to submit to the Christian principle of love and accept Onesimus back. Paul could have said, 'I'm the apostle, now do this' instead, he appealed. At a time Onesimus was unprofitable to you Philemon, but he has changed and now profitable. Unholy persons are unprofitable.

When he has not known God, Onesimus stole and ran away, this must have caused his master some concern, but now he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and wanting to return to his duty. God will always give man the time to repent and change from his bad ways. Those with reprobate mind will stay put in their bad ways.

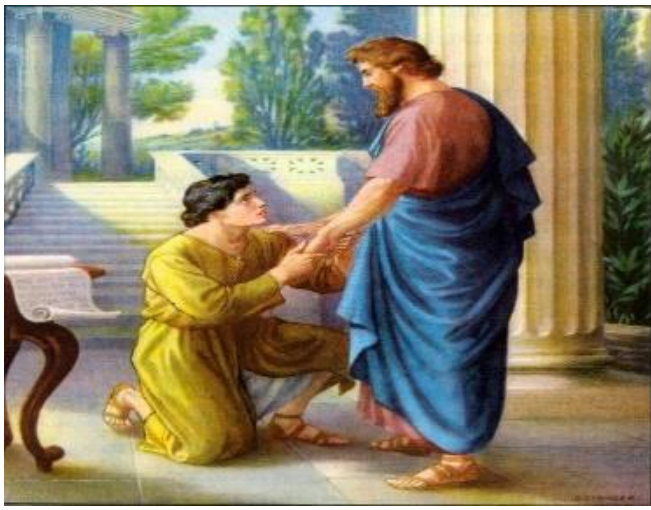
**Phm 1:15-22:** A changed character often become a blessing to all among whom they live. Paul did not want to release Onesimus. Christianity does not remove our duties to others, but directs us to the right way of doing of them. True feeling of regret for sin opens someone to admits his faults, especially in cases of injury done to others. This is the case of Onesimus after he met Paul, upon his being awakened and brought to repentance he admitted to do the right thing.

This passage is teaching us how one person agreed to mediate in a dispute between two persons that the criminal could be set free from the punishment. Paul wrote, you can now have him back forever no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother, if you consider me a partner welcome him as you would welcome me. If he owes you anything charge it to me, I will pay back. I trust your obedience; I know you will do more than I said. Christ is our mediator.

The scriptures taught us that Christ of his own will, bore the punishment of our sins, that we might receive the reward of his righteousness. By His grace.

Onesimus was a poor slave, yet Paul pleaded for him as if seeking some great thing for himself. Christians should do what may give joy to the hearts of one another. In this world Christians are not free from trouble, they should find comfort and joy in one another. The example of Onesimus should encourage the most wicked sinners to return to God, but it is disgusting, if any man has a reprobate mind and persist in evil courses.

### **Welcome back.**



### **Let us consider more of the nugget in this book.**

#### **Christian Ethics:**

Paul in his character always remember his friends and converts in his private prayers. We should likewise remember our brethren much and often, as their cases may need, committing them to God.

Doing the right thing: Paul and Onesimus were convinced that the right thing to do is for Onesimus to return to his master as a right step to settle the offence. The law permits Philemon to do anything to the slave if he sees him, but to the godly men it is not what is the safest thing to do or what is best for us but what is the right thing to do?

Love your neighbor as yourself;

**Philemon's love for the saints**, commended. *'Philemon 1:5,7 I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. ...I have indeed received much joy*

*and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. (NRSV).*

From Useless to useful: Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. In other words, he used to be against Christ and useless, but now he is for Christ and useful. Now a Christian, all the drama of a runaway slave trying to save his life, Paul was able to bring him to faith in Jesus, and everything changed. A new man in Christ and now would be contented for ever in his position.

*'Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good, no 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. Phm 1:15-16 NIV).*

Restitution: (paying back: compensation for a loss, damage, or injury)

If an appeal to love was not going to move Philemon, the promise of Paul personally paying restitution might make the difference. *If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I will pay it back-- not to mention that you owe me your very self (v18-19 NIV).* 'You owe me your very self', means that Paul led Philemon to the Lord. If you have a mentor and things become good for you as a result you should know that you are owing your mentor allegiance, not in cash but in kind.

Courage is the ability to face uncertainty it came to play here, for a runaway slave, a fugitive, anything could happen to him when found, but for the new convert, a Christian minded went ahead with courage. It is better to face the reality.

Social influence: The tag 'a slave' is not a good one. For a slave to be free and become a free born is a serious issue. Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus no longer a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother. If you refuse to baptize you remain an unbeliever.

*One Bertrand Russell a British philosopher acknowledged that Christianity paved the way for the end of slavery. Be a Christian, free yourself from mental slavery.*

Providence: In everything give thanks to God. He may be working in circumstances of which we have not dreamt of. **Phm 1:15** *Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever.* You can run but you cannot hide from God if he has a mission for you. Onesimus ran away to faraway Rome but never knew that is where he will embrace Christ. How heaven is able to organize human events while honoring man's freedom of choice is a mystery no person can understand. For Onesimus 'ran away', 'for God separated'.

Dialogue, Persuasion no use of force; The letter is a masterpiece of the art of gentle persuasion, no use of authoritarian force. Paul did not wish to flex his apostolic muscles but used his godly mind to put Philemon in the right direction. **Phm 1:17** *So if you consider me your partner, give him the same welcome you would give me if I were coming.*

Trusted and accommodating:

There is indication that Paul is well acquainted with Philemon and he knows his capability and trusted that he can go extra mile. **Phm 1:21** Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. (NKJV)

**Phm 1:22** But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted (released) to you. This will encourage us to also Pray for our leaders. **1 Thess 5:25** *Brethren, pray for us.*

### **Conclusion:**

The book of Philemon is a metaphor of what Jesus did, sinner would be set free from the bondage of sin.

Faith in Christ and the love for Him should unite saints more closely than the world can provide. We see how Paul stood by Onesimus a new convert, beating his chest.

Onesimus embraced Christianity which changed his life and accepted repentance.

Those who embrace Christianity freed themselves from mental slavery.

May the good Lord add blessing to his word, in Jesus' name, amen.