

UNIT 2

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

I/ The Story of Philemon



II/ Secondary Lessons from Philemon

A. The art of persuasion

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. (Proverbs 25:11)

B. The power of fellowship

And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. (1 Samuel 23:16)

C. The need for obedience

“Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will. As one of the humans has said, active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able to ever act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel.” –Screwtape

D. The issue of slavery

“About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but failing that, as a means to anything—even to social justice. –Screwtape

E. The sovereignty of God

GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY

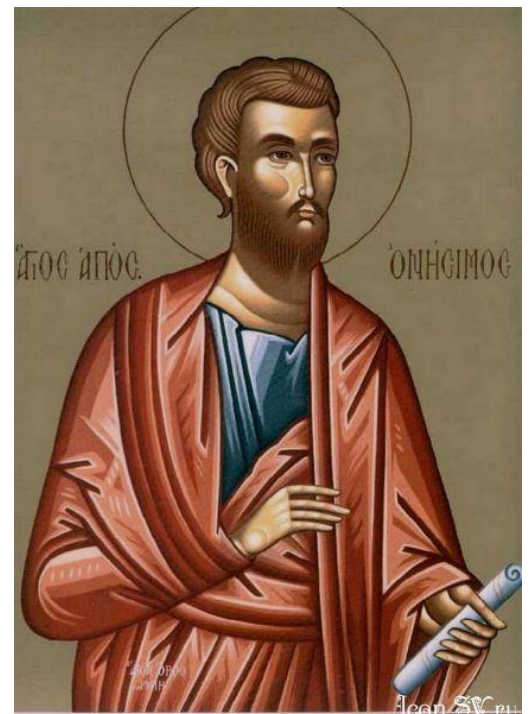
1. God moves in a mysterious way,
 His wonders to perform.
 He plants his footsteps in the sea
 And rides upon the storm.
 Deep in the dark and hidden mines,
 With never-failing skill,
 He fashions all his bright designs
 And works his sov'reign will.

2. Oh, fearful saints, new courage take:
 The clouds that you now dread
 Are big with mercy and will break
 In blessings on your head.
 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust him for his grace.
 Behind a frowning providence,
 He hides a smiling face.

3. God's purposes will ripen fast,
 Unfolding every hour.
 The bud may have a bitter taste,
 But sweet will be the flower.
 Blind unbelief is sure to err
 And scan his work in vain.
 God is his own interpreter,
 And he will make it plain.

-William Cowper, 1774

III/ The Gospel According to Philemon



English Standard Version	J.B. Phillips New Testament
<p>¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>¹⁻³ Paul, prisoner for the sake of Jesus Christ, and brother Timothy to Philemon our much-loved fellow-worker, Apphia our sister and Archippus who is with us in the fight; to the church that meets in your house—grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.</p>	<p>⁴⁻⁷ I always thank God for you, Philemon, in my constant prayers for you all, for I have heard how you love and trust both the Lord Jesus himself and those who believe in him. And I pray that those who share your faith may also share your knowledge of all the good things that believing in Jesus Christ can mean to us. It is your love, my brother, that gives us such comfort and happiness, for it cheers the hearts of your fellow Christians.</p>
<p>⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)</p>	<p>⁸⁻¹¹ And although I could rely on my authority in Christ and dare to order you to do what I consider right, I am not doing that. No, I am appealing to that love of yours, a simple personal appeal from Paul the old man, in prison for Jesus Christ's sake. I am appealing for my child. Yes I have become a father though I have been under lock and key, and the child's name is—Onesimus! Oh, I know you have found him pretty useless in the past but he is going to be useful now, to both of us.</p>
<p>¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing</p>	<p>¹²⁻¹⁴ I am sending him back to you: will you receive him as my son, part of me? I should have dearly loved to have kept him with me: he could have done what you would have done—looked after me here in prison for the</p>

<p>without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.</p> <p>¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.</p> <p>²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.</p> <p>²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.</p> <p>²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.</p>	<p>Gospel's sake. But I would do nothing without consulting you first, for if you have a favour to give me, let it be spontaneous and not forced from you by circumstances!</p> <p>¹⁵⁻²¹ It occurs to me that there has been a purpose in your losing him. You lost him, a slave, for a time; now you are having him back for good, not merely as a slave, but as a brother-Christian. He is already especially loved by me—how much more will you be able to love him, both as a man and as a fellow-Christian! You and I have so much in common haven't we? Then do welcome him as you would welcome me. If you feel he has wronged or cheated you put it down to my account. I've written this with my own hand: I, Paul, hereby promise to repay you. (Of course I'm not stressing the fact that you might be said to owe me your very soul!) Now do grant me this favour, my brother—such an act of love will do my old heart good. As I send you this letter I know you'll do what I ask—I believe, in fact, you'll do more.</p> <p>²² Will you do something else? Get the guest-room ready for me, for I have great hopes that through your prayers I myself will be returned to you as well!</p> <p>²³⁻²⁵ Epaphras, here in prison with me, sends his greetings: so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, all fellow-workers for God. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, amen.</p>
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