

Philemon Questions and Answers

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS INTRODUCTION

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1. What was Paul's purpose in writing the letter?

This letter was written as the result of Paul's deep interest in Onesimus, a slave who had fled Colossae to Rome, to escape from Philemon his master who was a rich and influential man, of that city.

2. What spiritual change did Paul see in Onesimus, the runaway slave?

Onesimus bosomed himself to Paul as his fellow prisoner, the slave of Jehovah, who could not run away from his master and would not if he could. Onesimus remained with Paul in prison long enough for the Paul to realize that Onesimus was no ordinary criminal, regardless of the fact of his former record. He made himself almost indispensable to Paul as he learned to love and appreciate him as a brother in the Lord.

3. What was Paul's request of Philemon in the letter?

Paul was composing a letter to the Colossian saints from his prison cell in Rome and included this letter to Philemon pleading for him to show grace and mercy to Onesimus. Onesimus was returning of his own volition, seeking to make amends for his wrong-doing toward his former owner.

4. Which prison epistle is Philemon linked to and why?

The Apostle Paul was composing a letter to the Colossian saints from his prison cell in Rome and included this letter to Philemon. In it he was pleading for Philemon to show grace and mercy to Onesimus, a former slave, who was returning to him on his own volition. Onesimus was also seeking to make amends for his wrong-doing toward his former owner. Likewise, the Epistle to Colossian defines divine chastening, as emanating out of the "agape" love of the Heavenly Father toward His children, with the motive of increasing their fruitfulness. Perhaps, the Apostle Paul's motive was akin to the divine chastening of Philemon, with the intent of increasing his spiritual capacity to forgive and restore his runaway slave.

5. Explain the spiritual mystery of the letter to Philemon.

The spiritual lesson set forth in this epistle exceeds a personal request by Paul, a prisoner of the Lord, seeking clemency for a former slave. Clearly the Apostle Paul is typically filling the role of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ in requesting mercy and grace to be extended to an offending brother for his sake and ultimately for Christ's sake based upon His Person and Work. Christ's "**agape**" love is the source and "**phileo**" love is brotherly love.

6. Describe the difference between "agape" and "phileo" love.

We must view this epistle through the "prism" of Christ's "agape" love for His saints and in turn their "agape" love for Him based in His Person and Work. This is always the leverage in extending grace and mercy in the form of "phileo" love, or "brotherly love," toward even an offending brother in need of spiritual restoration. The divine source is always the "agape" love of Christ, first for His saints, and in response, "agape" love for Him that has been worked in their lives. This source of divine love enables saints to extend "phileo" love (or affection for the brethren).

7. What is the “agape” love of Christ’s Person and Work on the cross?

The Lord Jesus Christ sets apart His Person and Work by providing redemption through “agape,” i.e., sacrificial love toward us while we were yet sinners and after becoming saints. Saints are admonished by the Lord to extend “agape” love toward sinners and saints. Extending even to an offending brother, very often this love falls into “phileo,” i.e., affection for Christ’s sake. The love through saints that emanates out of Christ’s “agape” love often reaches the threshold of “agape” love and is considered the “bond of perfection.”

8. Explain the importance of “who is worthy to open the book.”

All saints will be short of Christ’s glory in filling a sacrificial role for sinners and saints because of their identity with the fallen creation of Adam. Therefore, our Lord and Savior, as the God/Man was the only one able to make reconciliation for sin on behalf of sinners and saints. Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one found worthy to open the book and loose the seals in Revelation.

9. Describe the conversation between Jesus and Peter concerning “agape” and “phileo” love.

Clearly Peter, at this juncture in his life, acknowledges that he only possessed “phileo,” i.e., affectionate love for Christ. However, Peter will grow in grace and knowledge of Christ, and will be able to express “agape” love for Christ, i.e., sacrificial love needed to feed His lambs and sheep. Peter will also strive to extend “agape” love to both sinners and saints as the “bond of perfectness.” Peter finally sealed his testimony with the ultimate sacrifice through martyrdom.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PHILEMON CHAPTER ONE

1. What are the meanings of Apphia's and Archippus' names? (vs. 2)

Apphia means "fruitful." She demonstrated the great truth emphasized in the Prison Epistle to the Colossians of "Christ in you." **Archippus** means "master of horses" demonstrated the great truth emphasized in the prison to the Philippians of running to win Christ. The meaning of these two names as stated above and are proof of their laying hold of the great spiritual truths set forth in the other "prison epistles."

2. How is the letter written to the Philadelphia church in Rev 3 relevant to the letter to Philemon? (vs. 4-5)

The letter written to the Church in Philadelphia "brotherly love" proves the intent of the Epistle to Philemon. The Church in Philadelphia furnishes a type of saints who will be ready to be caught up through the open door. They will possess "agape" love for Christ in response to His "agape" love for them, but their commendation as an assembly is revealed out in the name Philadelphia. While they were being commended for "phileo," i.e., brotherly love for the saints, this assembly was still reaching forth to lay hold of the "agape" love of Christ, toward both saint and sinner, as a "bond of perfectness."

3. What commendations did Philemon receive from Paul? (vs. 6&7)

Philemon was commended for his faith and love for the word and saints. Saints are admonished to extend "tender grace and mercy," even to the, saint or sinner, who have offended them for Christ's sake. In the meantime, these saints should seek to lay hold of the greater "agape" love of Christ for both sinners and saints.

4. How does Paul demonstrate agape love as he beseeches Philemon's forgiveness for Onesimus? (vs. 3-10)

The Apostle Paul becomes our example of extending the "agape" love of Christ in his willingness to "stand in the gap" and "make up the hedge" in bearing Onesimus's wrong doing to make restitution. This becomes an example of the greater "agape" love of Christ extended to Philemon and all saints.

5. What is the meaning of Onesimus's name? (vs. 11)

"Onesimus" means "profitable." Paul further stated that Onesimus was not profitable before but is now so changed that he is profitable not only to Paul but will be so in the future to Philemon. He said that Onesimus had not lived up to his name, but now he will be **profitable** or useful in the fullest degree.

6. Explain the significance of "adding the fifth part" to the Trespass Offering. (vs. 17)

Restitution or restoration in the Old Testament was covered under the Mosaic Law by restoring estimated damages and by adding a "fifth part." This was portrayed in the Trespass Offering, where God's government suffered great loss and harm. We should ask ourselves who paid for these trespasses committed by humans, against God's government or kingdom. The answer is our Lord Jesus Christ as the Great Trespass Offering depicted in the Book of Matthew. He also added a fifth part, meaning that He more than compensated for the loss suffered by God's government through the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden. Christ's Person and Work freely provides redemption and restoration for everyone in Adam's race who will receive and believe the gospel and, through a new birth, become partakers in the last Adam.

7. Why did Paul have confidence in Philemon's obedience? (vs. 21)

The Apostle Paul is confident that Philemon will be true to his name in extending "bowels of tender mercy," i.e., brotherly love to Onesimus and that his obedience will exceed expectation. This is likewise, the Lord's expectation of every full-overcomer. In our estimation, this is the spiritual lesson hidden in the Epistle of Philemon that befits it a place among the "prison epistles."

8. Describe how Paul's companions were examples of agape love producing brotherly love. (vs. 24)

Paul delivered this letter of "agape" love emanating the pouring out of brotherly love. Paul's companions had "agape" love towards Christ, and a sacrificial love toward Paul. All men mentioned in this verse, were faithful to Paul in a dark season of prison except for Demas, who was unable to bare the reproach. Mark and Luke wrote the actual Word of God. Mark displayed our Lord as the Ox and Servant and Luke as the God/Man. Both types give us a great understanding of Christ's "agape" love for the world by condescending down to giving His own life.

9. What is the significance of Paul closing this letter with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?" (vs. 25)

The Apostle Paul's reference to **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ** refers to the ample supply of the Lord's provision, i.e., "my grace" and "my strength," which are sufficient for every believer to finish their course. The "agape" love that can be drawn on from Christ, gives grace to suffering affliction, forgiving those who offend us, and faith to believe God in every circumstance.

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