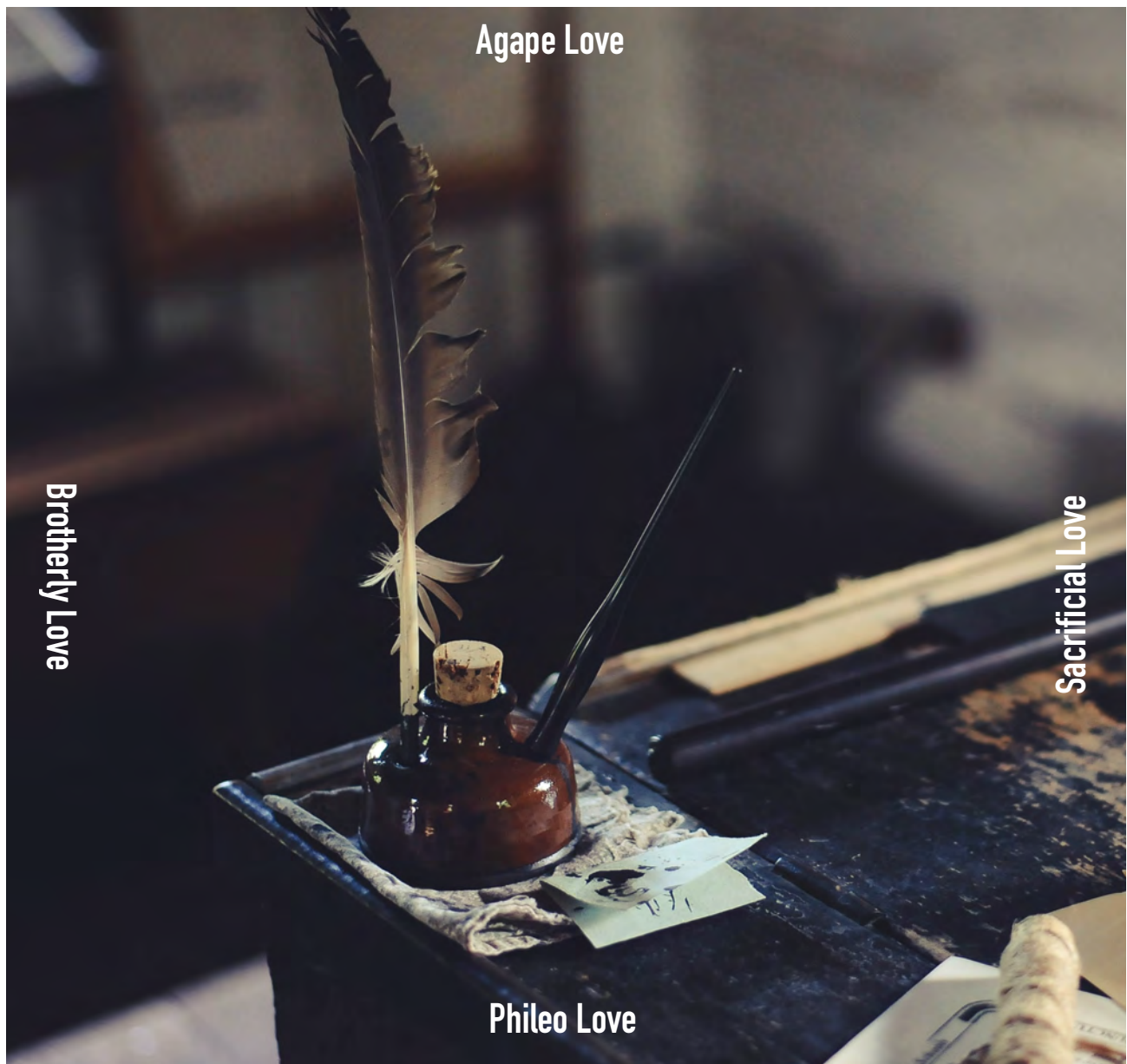


# PHILEMON

Provided by Grace Assembly School of the Bible



# Note from the Publisher

Grace Assembly is privileged to offer Grace Assembly School of the Bible online courses and study tools. We believe these self-paced courses are Biblically sound and will enhance your experience in learning the Word of God. We place a special emphasis on the Epistles of Paul and end time revelations.

This course is designed to dive deep into the Word of God as we examine the Book of Philemon verse by verse. We do encourage you to read the entire Book of Philemon before you start this course. We hold to the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible as the "preserved text" and have each verse listed for easy reference within the course. Following each verse, you will find commentary provided by Mary M. Bodie and "Further Insight" provided by Gerald and Jolene Cooley, Pastors of Grace Assembly.

Comprehensive questions follow each chapter. Links to relevant articles, charts, and graphs in our ["Special Studies Library"](#) are provided. The Q&A answer key will enable the student to self-correct their answers and enhance the learning process. Please note, special reference to word studies within the scriptural text were taken from the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the KJV.

If you have any questions concerning the online commentaries, need technical support, or wish to contact the Pastors at Grace Assembly, please use the designated email as listed. A [course survey](#) link will be provided at the end of each course for your comments. We value all students' input, as we pursue to the best of our ability, a clear presentation of God's Word with effectual commentary.

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# Introduction

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

## **The Historical Setting**

Paul's letter to Philemon is a supplement to his epistle to the Colossians. The letter was written on behalf of Onesimus, whom the Apostle terms his spiritual son. The author of these notes has captured the epistle and made it the vehicle of some precious spiritual lessons. The Apostle Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter to his friend Philemon. He sent it by the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus, while he sent the epistle to Colossae. Timothy was associated with Paul in writing this letter, as was the case in several of his epistles. Timothy was "likeminded" with Paul.

Philemon was an influential Christian man. The Church at Colossae met in his house; we read in verse two that, his name signifies, "one that kisses." Apphia, the woman mentioned in connection with him, was probably his wife. Her name means, "a dear one" or "one that produces." She was a fruitful, useful saint of that assembly. Archippus, the third character mentioned there, was probably the pastor of the assembly gathered in Philemon's house – at least in the absence of Epaphras – (Colossians 4:12). We would infer this from the meaning of Archippus' name, "governor of the horses, or racers"; also, from the fact that Paul warns him to "take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" – (Colossians 4:17).

## **The Author**

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. We say that was the reason, but only on the surface. The greater reason for this letter lies hidden. The Lord always used circumstances, providences in some assembly, or, as with this case, in some individual life to call forth a letter on a special line or need. It is claimed that the Phrygian slave was the lowest and most debased of all types to be found in heathendom. They displayed the very worst traits of character which their servile condition developed. Onesimus probably was no exception. We would infer from Paul's words that he helped himself to his master's goods when he ran away. Somehow, he reached Rome, the great center of the empire of that time, with a youthful yearning to see the greatest city in splendor and vice that the world had to offer.

But God had His eye on that stripling youth. He might escape Philemon, but he could not get away from the greater Master – the Lord. He came in touch with Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, a prisoner in Rome, for the sake of the Gospel as he declared. Onesimus was cast into the same prison, probably for some crime which he had committed. He received the due reward for his sins; while it may be written of Paul and his imprisonment, even as was said of Jesus on the Cross. "This Man hath done nothing amiss" – Luke 23:41. But God was in all those circumstances. They worked good for Paul and for the repentant Onesimus. The runaway slave of Philemon, no doubt, bosomed himself to his fellow prisoner – the slave of Jehovah – who could not run away from his Master and would not if he could. He was persuaded to accept the Gospel which he had so often heard in his master's house, and he was saved. It is not stated how long Onesimus remained with Paul in prison, but this much is clear, it was long enough for the Apostle to realize that Onesimus was no ordinary criminal, regardless of the fact of his former

record. He made himself almost indispensable to Paul, as we are able to read between the lines. He learned to love and appreciate him as a brother in the Lord, but he did not feel that he could conscientiously keep him without Philemon's consent. Hence, he sent him back to his former master. He also desired his friend to see and appreciate the great change that had been made in his erstwhile slave by his acceptance of Christ. Therefore, he wrote this letter and gave it to Onesimus to deliver to Philemon. That was another strategic stroke on Paul's part.

### **The Purpose of the Epistle**

Of Christ, which demand access to God's grace. We may present them to the Father and receive their fulfillment in our lives. For example, Jesus said in His prayer – "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and though in Me" – John 17: 22, 23.

Scholars claim that this little letter is a masterpiece of dictation, as well as of diplomacy. Politeness is here combined with a naturalness which is truly captivating. It's manly and a straightforward statement of facts, with its marvelous expression of appeal, charms, and persuades as a breath of perfume from a garden of flowers. It is a beautiful example of Christian love. All these facts are interesting, but it is when we see the spiritual value of this little letter that it assumes some real importance.

### ***Further Insight: Grace Assembly***

### **The Historical Setting**

The Apostle Paul spent more than two years during his third missionary trip ministering among the people in the surrounding area of Ephesus with many converts. One of those converts was Philemon, who lived in a city near Colossae. He was a wealthy Christian man and possibly a bishop of his house church. This Prison Epistle was a personal letter addressed to him and therefore bears the name of Philemon. The Apostle Paul referred to him as a "fellowlabourer," as this was generally the title given to those who served alongside him (Philemon 1:1).

### **The Author**

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.

*Philemon:* (G)5371, 5368 and 5368; friendly; from (G) 5384; to be a friend to (fond of) have affection (brotherly love).

*Onesimus:* (G)3682 and 3685; profitable; beneficial or profitable.

### **The Purpose of the Epistle**

*Theme Verse* – (I John 3:16 KJV) "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Love (G)26 and 25 agape, ag-ah'-pay; love, i.e., affection or benevolence; a love-feast: --(feast of) charity ([-ably]), dear, love (divine sacrificial love).

There is a mystery as to why this epistle was esteemed worthy to be among the three "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, though it was authored by the Apostle Paul from the same prison cell in Rome. Therefore, we must assume that 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 from his master. Clearly, in type, Paul is typically filling the role of our Lord Jesus Christ as our "Great High Priest," in requesting mercy and grace to be extended for his sake to an offending brother. Therefore, Christ's "agape," or sacrificial, love for His saints and their response of "agape" love to Him is the source "phileo" love, i.e., brotherly love.

Therefore, we must view this epistle through the "prism" of Christ's "agape" love for His saints, and in turn, their response of "agape" love for Him. This becomes the leverage in extending grace and mercy in the form of "phileo" love, or "brotherly love," toward even a brother, even an offending brother in need of spiritual restoration. The divine source is always the "agape" love of Christ for His saints and their response of "agape" love to Christ worked in their lives. This source of divine love should enable saints to extend "phileo" love, or affection for a brother, even an offending brother.

The Person and sacrificial Work of Christ was based in His "agape" love for us when we were yet sinners and now "much more" as saints. His love is the origin of the saint's response, "love first to Christ and then to the brethren for Christ's sake." While saints are admonished by the Lord to extend "agape" or sacrificial love toward a brother, even an offending brother, most often this love falls into "phileo" love as mere affection for Christ's sake. However, the Love expressed through saints for the brethren emanating out of Christ's "agape" love within them should always be striving to reach unto Christ's "agape" love, as the "bond of perfection" for the saints.

*Christ the Only One Worthy to Make Reconciliation for Sin* - There were examples of Individual saints, both in the Old and New Testaments, who extended "agape" love, i.e., sacrificial love only unto the measure of Christ's love. However, these saints, and all saints, find themselves short of Christ's glory as only able to fill a sacrificial role for sinners and saints. This is because all believers were first partakers in redemption because their identification with the fallen creation of Adam. Therefore, our Lord and Savior, as the God/Man, will be the only one worthy and able to make reconciliation for sin on behalf of sinners and saints. This explains why our Lord Jesus Christ will be the only one found worthy to open the book.

*Who is worthy to open the book?*

(Rev 5:2 KJV) "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

(Rev 5:4-5 KJV) "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

**Special Documents Link: [Covenant Week](#)**

*A Conversation Between Peter and Christ Contrasting “Agape” Love vs “Phileo” Love - (John 21:15 KJV) “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”*

*Lovest (G)25 and 26 agape love: -- affection or benevolence; a love-feast: (feast of) charity, dear, love (sacrificial love).*

*Love (G)5368 and 5384 phileo; -- to be a friend to (fond of [an individual or an object]), have affection (brotherly affection).*

Peter, at this early juncture in his life, acknowledges that he only possessed “phileo,” i.e., brotherly love for Christ. However, Peter will go on to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ and able to express “agape” love, i.e., sacrificial love, for Christ in response to His love. This was clearly needed to feed His lambs and sheep. We believe that Peter eventually was able to express “agape” love, in a measure, to sinners and saints which reached unto the “bond of perfectness.” Peter finished well, sealing his testimony as a full overcomer with martyrdom.

Therefore, the Epistle of Philemon becomes an expose of “phileo,” i.e., “brotherly love” extended for Christ’s sake clearly in response to His “agape” love, first for them and their response of “agape” love to Him. Clearly, the Apostle desired more from Philemon based on his own example and the greater example of Christ. (Col 3:14 KJV) “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

## Study Questions: Introduction

1. What was Paul's purpose in writing the letter?
2. What spiritual change did Paul see in Onesimus, the runaway slave?
3. What was Paul's request of Philemon in the letter?
4. Which prison epistle is Philemon linked to and why?
5. Explain the spiritual mystery of the letter to Philemon.
6. Describe the difference between "agape" and "phileo" love.
7. What is the "agape" love of Christ's Person and Work on the cross?
8. Explain the importance of "who is worthy to open the book."
9. Describe the conversation between Jesus and Peter concerning agape" and "phileo" love.

**Special Documents Link:** [Introduction Answer Key](#)

# Chapter One

- 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,**
- 1:2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:,**
- 1:3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

***Commentary (v 1-3): Mary M. Bodie***

As was a custom of the Apostle, he pronounced grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ upon those to whom he wrote, for Apphia and Archippus were also mentioned at the open of the letter. Paul was always profuse in his thanksgiving to God for the grace shown to him, as well as His blessings upon others, as is the case here.

***Further Insight (v 1-3): Grace Assembly***

*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.” He demonstrated the great truth emphasized in the Prison Epistle to the Philippians of running to win Christ.

The meaning of these two names, as stated above, are proof that these saints were first in laying hold of the great provisional truths set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians.”

- 1:4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,**
- 1:5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;**

***Commentary (v 4-5): Mary M. Bodie***

Paul was also a man of prayer, mentioning the saints always before the throne of grace, especially when he heard of their “love and faith” which they had “toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.” We naturally would think that such overcoming fold, filled with love and faith, needed no prayers, but not so did our dear spiritual father Paul infer. He knew the wiles of Satan. He had experienced something and somewhat of his darts. He realized that his power is exerted, and his devilish hate manifested in great measure against those that are going in the way of victory; hence he prayed for all these at all times.

### ***Further Insight (v 4-5): Grace Assembly***

The Apostle commended Philemon for his “agape” love toward Christ in response to Christ’s “agape” love for him. Please note the Apostle Paul only requests an extension of “phileo,” i.e., brotherly love toward Onesimus, and that for his sake and ultimately for Christ’s sake. The forgiveness of unjust behavior towards us by saint or sinner often requires a special grace for Christ’s sake who has forgiven multiplied times. Remember, Philemon had done nothing wrong and is being asked to forgive and restore one who offended him and caused him pain and suffering.

*Example of saints who became willing to extend “agape” love to their offending brethren.*

*Joseph and His Brethren* - Consider Joseph in forgiving his brothers after they plotted his murder in their hearts and sold him into Egyptian slavery. This love certainly excelled “phileo” love, reaching unto the “bond of perfection” of “agape” love.

*Other Examples:*

Job – becomes an intercessor for his three friends – Job 42.

Moses – willing to be accursed for his brethren’s sake – Exodus 32:32.

Samuel – willing to “stand in the gap” for Shiloh – I Samuel 5.

Jonah – becomes willing to return to Nineveh – Jonah 4.

Apostle Paul – willing to be accursed for his brethren – Romans 9:3.

*The Letter to the Philadelphia Church (Revelation 3)* - Please consider the letter written to the Church in Philadelphia, “brotherly love” in Rev 3. We believe this gives spiritual insight into the intent of the Epistle to Philemon. The Church in Philadelphia furnishes a type of saints who are ready to be caught up through the open door. They undoubtedly possessed “agape” love for Christ in response to His love. However, their commendation as an assembly is revealed out in the name Philadelphia which means “brotherly love.” Herein they are commended for “phileo,” i.e., brotherly love, for the saints for Christ’s sake. We can be sure this assembly were pressing to lay hold unto “agape” love of Christ toward both saint and sinner as a “bond of perfectness.” Individuals in this assembly were likely attaining, and therefore the assembly will be held in high esteem.

***Special Documents Link: [Order of the Resurrection](#)***

*Philadelphia:* (G)5361, 5384, and 80, fond of brethren, i.e., fraternal: love as brethren (brotherly love).

The Apostle Paul becomes our example of continuing to strive unto the “bond of perfectness,” i.e., able to express “agape” love for saints and sinners in response to Christ’s great love. However, none of the redeemed will ever attain the standard of the Savior’s “agape” sacrificial love expressed through His Person and Work. Therefore, Paul emphasizes his constant apprehension of Christ yet, never fully attaining. (Phil 3:12 KJV) “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

**1:6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

The following tells us to what purpose he entreated for them. *“That the communication (fellowship) of thy faith may become effectual (workable).”* That is, that others may be benefited. “Others” may be written over every page of Paul’s writings. It was his deep-seated desire, yea, the absorbing passion of his life, to do good to others. He insisted that he was a debtor to all men, and he desired to pay all that he owed - Romans 1:14. He also wanted all saints to realize their obligation in this direction. It is good to have faith and love in us, but that is not enough. Paul desired it to be fruitful, or communicated, to others. Thus, their faith and love would not be in word only, but also in deed. The Christian life must make progress, so the Apostle always taught. This comes by way of knowledge of God’s purposes for us, this being accepted and made practical in our life as is here stated by the acknowledgment, or *“acknowledging of every good thing,”* which is in us as well as in you.

**1:7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

The mutual joy and consolation experienced upon this Christian pathway is wonderful. The depths of our being are refreshed when we hear of the uplifting and blessing of the Gospel in the lives of others. The saints comfort one another by their progress, thus growing up into Christ in all things. Paul was strengthened and comforted through the love manifested by Philemon and the other overcomers at Colossae.

***Further Insight (v 6-7): Grace Assembly***

The truth remains that the “agape” love of Christ for His saints and, their responsive “agape” love for Him should find an expression of “phileo” love for a brother, even an offending brother. Therefore, overcoming saints are admonished to extend tender grace and mercy to a saint or even sinner, who have offended them at least for Christ’s sake. In the meantime, overcoming saints should ever be attaining unto the greater “agape” sacrificial love of Christ for saints and sinners. The “perils of Pauline” are a catalog of the Apostle Paul’s sufferings of afflictions, persecutions, expending sacrificial love in making the gospel known as an example to all saints.

***Special Documents Link: [Afflictions of Paul](#)***

*Seventy Times Seven* - (Matt 18:21-22 KJV) “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”

Philemon 1:7 “Because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”

*Bowels:* (G)4698 an intestine, pity or sympathy: bowels, inward affection, tender mercy.

**1:8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,**

**1:9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.**

**1:10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:**

***Commentary (v 8-10): Mary M. Bodie***

Paul declared that he had authority to command the obedience of Philemon and other saints, but he did not use the power. He relinquished the authority he might have insisted upon, and asked Philemon's obedience as a favor to himself. He called attention not so much to his age, as it would appear from the text, but to his dignity as an elder of the Church and an ambassador of Christ (though at the time of writing he says he was His prisoner). He was beseeching that favor be shown to Onesimus, a former slave, by Philemon. Onesimus, he said, was the fruit of his labor while he was in bonds. That is, he was saved in Rome while Paul was in prison there.

***Further Insight (v 8-10): Grace Assembly***

The Apostle Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, by the will of God has become an advocate for a former slave who, because of his wrongdoing deserved to be in prison. He had greatly offended Philemon, as his master. In this narrative, the Paul becomes an example of Christ in extending "agape" love in his willingness to "stand in the gap" and "make up the hedge" not only bearing Onesimus' wrongdoing but willing to make restitution. This love had already been extended to Philemon and all saints by Christ through His Person and Work. Philemon and all saints, having been first extended tender grace and mercy out of Christ's "agape love," should be willing to at least extend "phileo," i.e., brotherly love to an offending brother.

*Paul the Aged* - This description of the Apostle is only recorded in this letter to Philemon. Paul was most likely only in his early sixties. Part of his being "aged" was a result of the physical toll on his body through the many afflictions he endured during his ministry. He had truly become an Old Testament "drink offering" and the New Testament "Living Sacrifice" in "standing in the gap" for those during the dispensation of the Church to lay hold of the gospel of grace and glory committed to Him. (Col 1:24 KJV) "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:"

*God's Great Work of Reconciliation* - The reconciling work of God, through Christ, is herein a scriptural definition of the "agape" love of God revealed through the Person and Work of Christ. God was reconciling the world to Himself, even before they desired reconciliation. Reconciliation was a sovereign act of God, whereby He has judicially done away with the enmity and hostility of the old creation with its sins through accepting the death of His Son on their behalf. God is now able to embrace fallen man simply based

on their embracing or receiving the Person and Work of His Son. More simply stated, it is no longer the sin question, as that has been settled, but now the “Son” question. As ambassadors for Christ, believers have been committed to the wonderful doctrine of reconciliation to the world through preaching the gospel.

***Special Documents Link: [Seven Steps to Glorification](#)***

Consider the reason the gospel is called the “glad tidings” or “good news” and the “gospel of peace with God” to be followed by the wonderful “peace of God” to all who receive. (2 Cor 5:19-20 KJV) “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (Rom 10:15 KJV) “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Christ Through His “Agape” Love “Standing in the Gap” and “Making Up the Hedge” For the Living Church.

(Ezekiel 22:30 KJV) “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”

This will yet prove true of the Latter Church who has fallen into “depths” of apostasy and wandered far from their “first love” and “first works” towards Christ. They have also wandered far from the “old paths” of the “faith once delivered” to the Early Church as couched in the Pauline Epistles. We will yet see a manifestation of God’s great “agape” love and Christ’s great “agape” love in the final “Geshem” outpour of His Holy Spirit in these last days to prepare the living church for translation.

(Jer 6:16 KJV) “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

***Special Documents Link: [Seven Good Years and Spirit Storm](#)***

**1:11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

Paul further stated that Onesimus was not profitable before, but he is now so changed that he is profitable not only to Paul but will be so, in the future, to Philemon. “Onesimus” means “profitable.” The Apostle apparently makes a play upon words here. He said that Onesimus had not lived up to his name heretofore; but now he will be profitable, or useful, in the fullest degree.

***Further Insight: Grace Assembly***

In self-reflection, if the power of the gospel can change someone worthless and unprofitable in the old creation into a new creation in Christ Jesus, we ought to be able to receive others on the same basis. The faith and obedience Onesimus demonstrated by following Paul's admonition to return to his former master without knowing the outcome was a result of witnessing Paul's "agape" love towards Christ in a prison cell and his "phileo" love toward him as a runaway slave. Paul was truly an imitator of Christ.

(2 Cor 5:17-18 KJV) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;"

- 1:12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:**
- 1:13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:**
- 1:14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.**
- 1:15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;**
- 1:16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?**

***Commentary (v 12-16): Mary M. Bodie***

Paul besought Philemon to receive him, even as he Paul, and to deal with him. For, though he desired to keep Onesimus with him, yet he would not do so without Philemon's permission. He did not desire, as he said formerly, to insist on his authority, but wanted Philemon voluntarily to yield and receive Onesimus – no more as a servant but, as Paul had received him, a brother beloved.

***Further Insight (v 12-16): Grace Assembly***

Many criticize the Apostle Paul for condoning the practice of slavery by his admonition for Onesimus to return to Philemon, his former owner. This simply reflected the culture of that day. It should be noted that the Apostle Paul wished for Onesimus to be received, not as a servant, but as a beloved brother. This most likely suggests that Paul was requesting Onesimus' freedom so that he could return and continue to be spiritually profitable.

**1:17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"- Romans 3:23. But grace also levels or makes all men equal. In the new creation, He who believe are brethren, beloved of God and of one another. Hence, Paul wrote, "If thou count me therefore a partner (comrade), receive him as myself." What condescending love and fellowship are exhibited to that erstwhile erring runaway slave! It is Divine. The Apostle also said, in verse 15, that Onesimus probably had "departed for a season" that he might be received back - not for a short time, but "forever."

***Further Insight: Grace Assembly***

*The Law of Restitution (Trespass Offering)* - Restitution, or restoration, was covered under Mosaic Law by restoring estimated damages and by adding a "fifth part." This was especially portrayed in the Trespass Offering. God's government suffered great loss and harm as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve and their progeny. Adam, as the result of the temptation of Eve, transgressed God's commandment for him not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We rarely contemplate the great loss, harm, and damages suffered by God's government as a result of Adam's transgression in the Garden. We should also ask ourselves who paid for these trespasses and damages committed by the human race against God's government and kingdom. The answer is our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Great Trespass Offering described in the detailed Book of Leviticus. Christ as the Trespass Offering is especially set forth in the great Gospel of St. Matthew. He also added a fifth part, meaning that Christ more than compensated for the loss suffered by God's government by freely providing universal redemption and full restoration for everyone in Adam's race. The human race has been reconciled to God through Christ's Person and Work but now they must receive that reconciliation.

*Example of restitution from the Book of Leviticus: (Lev 27:27 KJV)* "And if it be of an unclean beast, then he shall redeem it according to thine estimation, and shall add a fifth part of it thereto: or if it be not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to thy estimation."

(2 Cor 5:19-20 KJV) "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

***The Old Testament Offerings Portrayed in the Gospels:***

- (1) The Trespass Offering - the Gospel of Matthew.
- (2) The Sin Offering - in the Gospel of Mark.
- (3) The Peace Offering - portrayed in the Gospel of Luke.
- (4) The Burnt Offering - portrayed in the Gospel of John.
- (5) The Unleavened Bread - accompanied the above offerings. Unleavened bread typified the 34-year life span of our Lord Jesus lived out in the sight of God in order to become an acceptable blood sacrifice.

*Special Document Links: [Old and New Testament Offerings](#) and [Fourfold Portrait of Christ](#)*

**1:18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;**

**1:19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.**

***Commentary (v 18-19): Mary M. Bodie***

Paul further stated, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." He affirmed emphatically with his own hand in writing, "I will repay it." That was truly grace shown out in a wonderful degree. Paul put Philemon under obligation to obey him - not by authority, but by the constraint of love. "Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides."

***Further Insight (v 18-19): Grace Assembly***

"Put that on mine account" expresses the Great Trespass Offering as set forth in the Book of Matthew and emphasized in the Lord's prayer.

(Matt 6:9-15 KJV) "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**"

*A Messianic* – (Psalm 69:4) sets forth Christ as the Trespass Offering.

(Psa 69:4 KJV) "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty then I restored that which I took not away."

*Note:* There may be an interesting parallel between the account in Philemon and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan, not only, ministered to the man that went down to Jericho and fell among thieves, but left "two pence" at the Inn promising to pay his full debt upon return (Luke 10:30-35).

**1:20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.**

**1:21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.**

***Commentary (v 20-21): Mary M. Bodie***

Paul was writing by the Holy Spirit. He was catching Philemon with guile, but it was Divine guile that does not harm but rather does good. That was the only kind of guile in which the apostle dealt – Holy Spirit guile. "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord," he added. It is always to be courteous. Some people imagine that to be true to God and the Word we should be rough and ready. They think that politeness is not a necessary asset in the Christian life, but Paul did not so think. He said in another letter, "If meat make my brother to offend" – that is, be disturbed or hindered on the Christian racecourse – I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" – (I Corinthians 8:13). He might have added, "If kindness or praise or courtesy make my brother happier or more victorious, I will not spare my words on this line." Paul made himself "all things to all men," that he "might by all means save some" – (I Corinthians 9:22). He labored at his own expense for the welfare of others; hence he could exhort with the authority that comes from the throne above. He courteously entreated. We may often cause people to disobey the admonitions of the Scriptures by our manner of exhortation. The lack of spiritual diplomacy is often keenly felt. Holy Spirit tact is a wonderful mollifier, as Paul learned. It is like unto the ointment that was poured upon Aaron's head, and ran "down to the skirts of his garments." It often heals friction and causes the "brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalms 133:2) It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;"

***Further Insight (v 20-21): Grace Assembly***

The Apostle Paul remains confident that Philemon will be true to the meaning of his name in extending "bowels of tender mercy," i.e., brotherly love, to Onesimus for Paul's sake but more importantly for Christ's sake. He also desired Philemon's obedience to exceed expectation. This is, likewise, the deeper expectation of the Lord for every full overcomer. In our estimation, this is the deeper spiritual lesson that lies hidden in the Epistle of Philemon that befits it a place among the "prison epistles."

**1:22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

Paul was expecting to be set at liberty which he, no doubt, experienced later, but he was again apprehended, as we learn from history, and died under the reign of Nero, a Roman emperor. He was beheaded by the sword outside the city, even as his beloved Lord was taken and died outside the city of Jerusalem.

***Further Insight: Grace Assembly***

The conclusion! One must conclude that the Apostle Paul's "liberty" as a prisoner of the Lord was somehow linked to his effectual intercession on behalf of Onesimus which was rooted into the far greater "agape" love of Christ. The Apostle herein became an example to Philemon, and to all overcomers, to press on unto the "bond of perfectness." The Apostle Paul expressed "first love" for Christ and without a doubt attained unto "first works" in making the gospel known. All ministers willing to carry the "whole counsel of God" will learn that it will be accompanied by sufferings, afflictions, and reproaches and will find it necessary to "press on" to lay hold of the "agape," i.e., the sacrificial love, of Christ in a greater measure.

**1:23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;**

**1:24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.**

***Commentary (v 23-24): Mary M. Bodie***

Epaphras was with Paul in Rome when he wrote to Philemon, but he was not a prisoner in the same sense as was the Apostle. He perhaps voluntarily shared the Apostle's imprisonment by taking his residence with him for a while; hence, he saluted Philemon, as did Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas. Those were his fellow laborers. They shared Paul's sorrows and pain, and they will share in his reward.

***Further Insight (v 23-24): Grace Assembly***

The Apostle Paul delivered this letter stressing that "philo" love, i.e., brotherly love, should be extended for Christ's sake, even to an offending brother. However, his overriding theme was for saints to strive to extend "agape" love not only toward Christ but also toward the brethren. All the men mentioned in these verses were faithful to Paul during the "dark season" of his imprisonment.

*Marcus:* (G)3138 Marcus, Mark is one in the same with John Mark who had a lapse in faith but returned to the Apostle Paul and became profitable and penned the Gospel of Mark

*Aristarchus:* (G)08, 712 and 757; names means "best ruling;" Aristarchus, a Macedonian. His life was at risk in the riot at Ephesus over the Goddess Diana, acerbated by the silversmiths, Acts 19:29. Aristarchus escaped and continued with Paul all the way through his imprisonment in Rome.

*Demas:* (G)1216. Demetrius, the name of an Ephesian was an exception in forsaking Paul in succumbing to the reproach of the gospel. (2 Tim 4:10 KJV) "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

*Lucas:* (G)3065. Loukas, loo-kas'; contr. from Lat. Lucanus; Lucas, a Lucas, Luke. Luke was a physician and a faithful companion of Paul in his missionary journeys. He penned the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

**1:25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.**

***Commentary: Mary M. Bodie***

Then followed the benediction which was customary in so many of his epistles. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

***Further Insight: Grace Assembly***

The Apostle Paul's reference to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ refer to the ample supply of the Lord's own provision, i.e., "my grace" and "my strength," which are now sufficient for every believer to finish their course. The "agape" love of Christ is an inexhaustible provision that can be drawn upon to suffer affliction, forgiving those who offend us, and faith to believe Christ will cause us to triumph in every circumstance. Christ drew upon the inexhaustible resource of the "agape" love of God to finish His course. (2 Cor 12:9 KJV) "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

# Study Questions: Chapter One

1. What are the meanings of Apphia's and Archippus' names? (vs. 2)
2. How is the letter written to the Philadelphia Church in Rev 3 relevant to the letter to Philemon? (vs. 4&5)
3. What commendations did Philemon receive from Paul? (vs. 6&7)
4. How does Paul demonstrate agape love as he beseeches Philemon's forgiveness for Onesimus? (vs. 3-10)
5. What is the meaning of Onesimus' name? (vs. 11)
6. Explain the significance of "adding the fifth part" to the Trespass Offering. (vs. 17)
7. Why did Paul have confidence in Philemon's obedience? (vs. 21)
8. Describe how Paul's companions were examples of agape love producing brotherly love. (vs. 24)
9. What is the significance of Paul closing this letter with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?" (vs. 25)

**Special Document Links:** [Chapter One Answer Key](#)

# Course Evaluation

Course Evaluations are used to constantly improve our content and delivery to provide a positive experience for future students. This 5- minute survey will greatly enhance our efforts in offering a study of God's Word without charge.

**Course Evaluation:** [Book of Philemon Course Evaluation](#)