

Insights From Philemon

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Insights From Philemon

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Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
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Philemon

- The letter to Philemon was written by both Paul and Timothy (Philemon 1:1).
- In Paul's introduction he referred to himself as a prisoner, not an apostle. He was emphasizing the fact that he lacked freedom – just like the slave Onesimus, who he was writing about (Philemon 1:1).
- Paul used military metaphors when discussing spiritual matters. He didn't think that kind of language was unbiblical, pagan, or inappropriate (Philemon 1:2).
- There was a church which met in Philemon's house (Philemon 1:2). In the apostolic era churches met in people's homes. They didn't meet in church buildings. In fact, there's no mention of church buildings anywhere in the New Testament, nor are there any commands to build them or meet in them. The pattern we find in the Bible is churches meeting in small groups in people's homes. No book of the New Testament ever implied that when a church met in a home it was a sign of poverty, or that churches should strive to have their own building as soon as possible.
- Paul regularly prayed for Philemon even though he was suffering in prison at the time. It's Biblical to make regular mention of other people in our prayers (Philemon 1:4).
- Every good thing which is within us is there because of Jesus Christ. He's the one who transformed us and put those good things there (Philemon 1:6). Our faith can't be effectively communicated if we don't acknowledge that every good thing which is within us is the result of Jesus!
- Paul chose to take a very gentle approach when asking

Philemon to set Onesimus free. He could have condemned Philemon, railed against him, or used his apostolic authority to force the matter, but instead Paul entreated him as a brother (Philemon 1:8-10). In doing so Paul set an example of how to handle confrontations in the church.

- The reason Paul chose to be gentle with Philemon was out of love, not fear (Philemon 1:9).
- When Paul met Onesimus he didn't turn him over to the Roman authorities, as the law of the time required. Instead he wrote this letter to Philemon in an effort to set Onesimus free (Philemon 1:10).
- Paul gave Philemon the credit for the help that Onesimus provided to him (Philemon 1:13). When we can't attend to someone's needs ourselves but send someone else in our stead, it's counted on our behalf.
- God wants us to give willingly, not because we're forced to and don't have a choice (Philemon 1:14).
- Paul didn't take the pragmatic approach that "since it's for the sake of the gospel, that justifies whatever I need to do" (Philemon 1:14). Instead he showed tremendous respect and love to others even though he was in prison at the time and it cost him a great deal to do so.
- There may be times when we go through trials in our life that ultimately lead to greater blessings (Philemon 1:15).
- There's an everlasting component to the relationships that Christians have with one another (Philemon 1:15).
- Paul, the apostle that God worked through to write much of the New Testament and plant churches throughout the world, asked Philemon to consider him to be a fellow

partner in the gospel (Philemon 1:17). Paul was showing incredible humility because the acts of Philemon were quite small compared to the acts and sufferings of Paul.

- Paul didn't deny that Onesimus had wronged Philemon. Instead Paul wrote that Philemon should charge those things to him and he would personally pay for them (Philemon 1:18) This is a picture of the way that our sins are put on the account of Jesus Christ, who suffered on our behalf.
- Paul wrote this letter with his own hand so that Philemon would understand he was making a binding promise and would surely keep his word (Philemon 1:19). Paul usually dictated his letters, so this was unusual.
- This letter is an example of what it means for a church to be characterized by love, even in conflict (Philemon 1:21).
- Paul wasn't alone when he was in prison. He had the support of Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas (Philemon 1:23-24).
- At this time this letter was written Demas was considered to be a fellow laborer in Christ (Philemon 1:24). However, Demas eventually revealed his true nature and forsook the gospel (2 Timothy 4:10).