

The Letter to Philemon

12

Morning Devotions

Select a passage in God's Word. Talk with the Lord as you read the passage, then go back and find one or two verses which the Lord has impressed on your heart and meditate on them.

Morning Study

Today we read the brief letter to **Philemon**. The recipient of the letter, Philemon – a resident of Colossae and a slave owner (like many of the wealthy in his era) – had become a Christian under Paul's ministry.

What occasioned this letter is an extraordinary set of circumstances. One of Philemon's slaves, Onesimus, had apparently stolen from his master (**verse 18**) and run away, an offense punishable by death under Roman law. But Onesimus had met Paul and become a Christian himself. Since he was willing to return to his master, Paul was now writing a personal appeal to Philemon to accept Onesimus back as a brother in Christ.

Paul writes tactfully and in a personal manner. He does a wordplay with the name Onesimus (which means "useful") in **verse 11**. The structure of the letter is organized according to classical Greek and Roman style: to establish rapport (**verses 4-10**), to persuade the mind (**verses 11-19**), and to move the emotions (**verses 20-21**).

Read through the letter to **Philemon** in one sitting, then answer the following questions:

Read Philemon 1-7

- Where did the church that Philemon, Apphia and Archippus attended meet? (**verse 1-2**).
- What did Paul pray for Philemon and the church? (**verse 6**).

Read Philemon 8-25

- How could Paul have been bold? (**verse 8**).
- Instead, how did Paul appeal to Philemon? (**verse 9**).
- How did Paul ask Philemon to treat Onesimus? (**verses 16-19**).
- If any wrong was to be charged against Onesimus, what did Paul ask Philemon to do? (**verses 18-19**). How is this like what God has done for you?

Memory Verse

I pray that you may be active in sharing
your faith, so that you will have a full
understanding of every good thing
we have in Christ.

Philemon 6

Here are a few suggestions that may help you to memorize your memory verse:

- ➡ Ask the Lord to help you remember his Word (see [John 14:26](#)).
- ➡ Use the version of the Bible you are most familiar with. What you normally read in your Bible is what you need to be memorizing.
- ➡ Don't just memorize the contents of the verse; memorize its "address" (the verse reference) as well. You can do this by following this pattern: Step 1: **reference**; Step 2: **verse content**; Step 3: **reference**. Then repeat steps 1-3. Note that you are quoting the reference twice as many times as you quote the actual verse content. This gives the verse a clear "reference tag."
- ➡ After you have read your memory verse out aloud several times, try going through your memory verse *without* reading your computer screen.
- ➡ Look up your memory verse in your Bible. Look at its immediate context and read the verses that come before and after your memory verse.
- ➡ Print out your memory verse or jot it down on a piece of paper. Take this paper with you when you go to work or do other daily activities. Meditate on the meaning of the verse throughout the day.
- ➡ During your noon appointment with the Lord, take out your memory verse and go over it again. Talk to the Lord about what this verse means to you personally.
- ➡ In the evening (at either your evening study or your evening devotions), see if you can quote your memory verse from memory. Then, without looking at the memory verse itself, see if you can find it in your Bible.
- ➡ The next day, before you begin committing a new verse to memory, rehearse your previous day's memory verse and see if you can remember it (without cheating!).
- ➡ Finally, at the end of the week (possibly on the Sunday), collect all your week's memory verses, rehearse them and see if you can recall them without reading them. Spend a little extra time on any verses you have difficulty recalling.
- ➡ Remember: Don't just memorize a verse. Put it into practice ([James 1:22](#)). It is not being able to quote a verse from memory that counts. It is His Word *abiding* in your heart that counts ([John 15:7](#)). When you actually apply a verse consistently to your daily life, that is when you *truly* know that verse!