

**Lessons from a runaway slave  
(Philemon 1-25)**

John Percival

**Introduction**

- The essence of Christianity?
- **Three characters** in the story:

**ONESIMUS – a runaway slave**

- From “useless” to “useful” (v11)
  - His escape
  - His conversion
  - His return

**PHILEMON – a dear brother**

- His relationship with Paul (v1-7)
- Paul's appeal for Onesimus: “welcome him” (v17)
  - Not as a slave
  - But as a brother

**PAUL – an agent of reconciliation**

- Paul's love
- Paul's care

**Conclusion**

**Bible references:** Col. 1:13-14, 1:22, 3:11, 4:17

**Philemon 1-25 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow-worker, <sup>2</sup> to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier and to the church that meets in your home:

<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, <sup>9</sup> yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul-- an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus-- <sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. <sup>11</sup> Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

<sup>12</sup> I am sending him--who is my very heart--back to you. <sup>13</sup> I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. <sup>14</sup> But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. <sup>15</sup> Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good-- <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup> If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, am writing this with my own

hand. I will pay it back--not to mention that you owe me your very self. <sup>20</sup> I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

<sup>22</sup> And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.

<sup>24</sup> And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow-workers.

<sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.