



**EPISODE 9B: PHILEMON**  
**MARCH 13 / 14**

Introduction and Context

	Author	Date	Recipient	Place of Writing
Philemon	Paul	62	Philemon; in Colossae.	Rome

**I. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?**

- a. Philemon is about reconciliation and relationships between Christians.

**II. WHAT IS POWERFUL (DOCTRINE)?**

- a. **RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION:** <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

*Key Themes*

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| 1. At the heart of this letter is the theme of reconciliation. Onesimus is reconciled to God, and now he is in the process of being reconciled to a fellow believer.   |
| 2. The basis for Paul's appeal to Philemon is the supreme Christian virtue of love (not Roman social convention). Paul commends Philemon for the love he has shown not only to him but also to all of the believers in that area. <sup>1</sup> |

**III. WHAT IS PROBLEMATIC (CONTROVERSIAL)?**

- a. Slavery: <sup>15</sup> *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,* <sup>16</sup> *no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* (15-16)

<sup>1</sup> Crossway Bibles. (2008). [The ESV Study Bible](#) (p. 2354). Crossway Bibles.

#### IV. WHAT IS POETIC?

- a. <sup>11</sup> *(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)* (11).
- b. **Onesimus' name** means “useful,” representing the type of slave name that expressed what a master wished from his slave.

#### V. WHAT IS PERSONAL?

- a. **Paul's Imprisonment—Paul is himself in bondage, not free.** <sup>1</sup> *Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,...* (1)
- b. **Paul's personal relationship to Onesimus.** <sup>8</sup> *Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—* <sup>10</sup> *I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,...*(8-13)

#### VI. WHAT IS PRACTICAL?

- a. <sup>17</sup> *So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.* (17-20)

#### VII. WHAT IS PRAYERFUL (THE PART HE PRAYS TO GOD)?

- a. <sup>4</sup> *I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.* (4-7)

#### VIII. PASTORAL SUMMARY

- a. <sup>15</sup> *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* (15-16)