
Philemon

Authenticity of the Letter

The two earliest extant lists of Paul's letters hold Philemon as part of the Canon of Scripture. These two lists are Marcion's Canon and the Muratorian Fragment. As stated, they both contain Philemon, yet interestingly enough, they both omit the other Pastoral Epistles.

Philemon's place in the Canon was disputed in the 4th century AD; however, its authenticity was not doubted, but it was condemned for being frivolous and inconsequential. "Most scholars, however, have placed a high value on the tact, grace, delicacy of feeling, and Christian affection which adorn this letter, and have regarded it worthy of canonicity in the highest sense."¹

Author, Date, and Occasion of the Letter

The date of the letter is 62 AD, and the author is the Apostle Paul. Paul is immured in his first Roman imprisonment. Thus Paul is in Rome, having been imprisoned by Nero at the behest of Felix. With Paul in Rome are Tychicus, Timothy and Onesimus. Tychicus will soon be leaving Rome and traveling to Colossae to fill-in for Epaphras, who is the Pastor of the church in Colossae. Accompanying Tychicus will be Onesimus; they will deliver the Colossians Epistle (Col. 4:9) to the church, the letter to the church in Ephesus, and the personal letter to Philemon.

Philemon was a wealthy believer in Colossae. In fact, the church in Colossae met in Philemon's home. Onesimus was Philemon's slave; Onesimus stole money from Philemon, and fled to Rome. In Rome, Onesimus quickly ran out of money and began to starve to death. At some point he recalled the name of Paul, who, being an Apostle, would have been mentioned frequently in the home of Philemon, and sought him out in Rome. The great Apostle led Onesimus to the Lord. And the intimation is, that for approximately a year or two, Onesimus voluntarily functioned as Paul's servant while Paul was imprisoned. During this period Onesimus was daily exposed to the doctrinal expositions of Paul with the result that he soon attained spiritual maturity. And the moment arrived when Paul deemed it necessary to return Onesimus to Philemon.

¹Unger, Merrill F. *Survey of the Bible*; page 335.

Regarding the date of the letter, it should be noted that some theologians prefer Ephesus as the place of origin, in contrast to Rome, and date the letter *circa* 55 AD. The argument opposing this period of time and location is eloquently propounded by Dr. Unger, "It is very unlikely that Onesimus would have stayed in proconsular Asia, knowing the stiff penalty which his defection as a slave involved."²

Onesimus means "useful," and Philemon means "beloved."

Outline and Structure of the Letter

The letter to Philemon is beautifully constructed; it is an example of "introverted correspondence." The Greeks called this structure *chiasmus* or *chiaston* because of its resemblance to the letter X (*chi*). And for similar reasons, the Latins called this structure *chiasmus* or *decussata oratorio*, which means "to divide cross-wise," i.e., in the form of an X. "This is by far the most stately and dignified presentation of a subject; and is always used in the most solemn and important portions of the Scriptures. Bengel observes with regard to this form of the Figure, that 'its employment is never without some use: *viz.*, in perceiving the ornament and in observing the force of the language; in understanding the true and full sense; in making clear the sound interpretation; in demonstrating the true and neat analysis of the sacred text.'"³

Dr. Bullinger's presentation of the structure is offered herein:

A/ 1-3, Epistolary {a/ 1,2. Names of those with Philemon.

b/3. Benediction.

B/4-7. Prayers of St. Paul for Philemon. Philemon's hospitality.

C/8. Authority.

D/9,10-. Supplication.

E/-10. Onesimus, a convert of St. Paul's.

F/11,12-. Wrong done by Onesimus. Amends made by St. Paul.

²*Ibid*; page 337.

³Bullinger, E.W. *Figures of Speech Used In The Bible*; page 374.

G/-12. To receive Onesimus the same as receiving Paul.

H/13,14. Paul and Philemon.

I/15. Onesimus.

I/16-. Onesimus.

H/-16. Paul and Onesimus.

G/17. To receive Onesimus the same as receiving Paul.

F/18,19-. Wrong done by Onesimus. Amends made by St. Paul.

E/-19. Philemon a convert of St. Paul's.

D/20. Supplication.

C/21. Authority.

B/22. Philemon's hospitality. Prayers of Philemon for Paul.

A/23-25. Epistolary. {a/23,24. Names of those with Paul.

b/25. Benediction.⁴

In this structure the beauty of the ancient letter is seen, and the genius of the Apostle Paul is evident.

Colossae

In the Greek the word is KOLOSSAI, and is defined as "punishment." The city was situated on the Lycus River in Phrygia. From its inception, the city was important according to Herodotus and Xenophon. Xerxes halted at Colossae in 481 BC.⁵ And Cyrus the Younger passed through it in 401 BC.⁶

It is apparent that the Apostle Paul never visited Colossae in person. The church's place there was due to Epaphras and Timothy, according to Colossians 1:17, and the church in Colossae was located in the home of Philemon, and Epaphras was the Pastor. Documentation that a church was established in Colossae is found in Colossians 4:12,13; Revelation 1:11; 3:14.

Colossae was the home of many Jews, and the major industry in Colossae revolved around *collossinus*, a type of wool which was purple in

⁴*Ibid.* page 379.

⁵Herodotus. vii.30.

⁶Xenophon. *Anabasis*; i.2.6.

color. The religious trend in the city was Gnosticism, and it was this problem that prompted the writing of the Colossians Epistle by the Apostle Paul.

In the 7th and 8th centuries Colossae was occupied by the Saracens, who were a North Arabian Muslim tribe. In the 12th century, the Turks destroyed the city. The ruins of the city have been excavated. During the Middle Ages the city was known as Chonae and is presently called Chonas.

Phrygia was called Asia Minor by the Romans. For purposes of administration the Romans divided Phrygia into two parts: the northeastern portion to the Galatian Province, the western part to the Province of Asia. Under the Romans, grapes were cultivated extensively in the area, and Phrygian marble was quarried. And from this area originated the 'Phrygian Cap,' which was a cloth head-covering adopted by freed-slaves during Roman rule; it was a symbol of emancipation.

The Issue Behind The Letter

As has already been stated, one of the major problems facing the church at Colossae was Gnosticism; the other problem was a social problem, that of slavery; and the issue of slavery was not unique to Colossae only. Slavery was a major dilemma of the Roman Empire in the year 62 AD. At the time of writing, it is estimated that the number of slaves in the Roman Empire was 60 million. And Roman law asserted that slaves were private property, and as any type of property, were disposable. Additionally, the punishment for run-away slaves was torture and, with governmental permission, death.

Slavery, though, was an accepted feature of all ancient civilizations and was usually essential to the economic health of a nation. For slaves were used domestically, in construction, and in agriculture. And slavery or death was the common destiny of prisoners of war.

In the Roman Empire, slavery was vital to both the economic and social systems. For the educational system of the Romans was operated by slaves, as were most business accounts and most of the administrative functions. Indeed, Imperial conquests and expansion of the Empire so strained the native work force that literally millions of slaves had to be imported just to implement the agricultural needs of the Empire.

And the normal method of procurement was war. Another source of slaves was bankruptcy or the Roman version of 'debtors prison.' Debtors would sell themselves or members of their families into slavery. And, of course, criminals were a further, yet minimal, source of slaves.

The Aim of the Letter

The aim of Paul's letter is quite simple: to return Onesimus to Philemon and to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus' transgressions, all based on an appeal to Philemon's faith, love and grace in Christ. The ultimate aim is to gain not just the forgiveness of Onesimus, but his freedom. But, as will be seen, the appeal is to grace, and coercion is eschewed as the completion backward principle: slavery cannot be removed by bypassing the free-will of others, because this method is precisely the same as that which it results in: more slaves.

The Pauline Principle

The Apostle's presentation provides the following principle: that social problems cannot be solved by force or coercion. Why? Because in seeking to solve problems by coercion, more and greater problems are produced. Remember, legislation and laws are designed to protect and sustain freedom, not destroy it. Paul's stance is this, that neither violence nor legislation can solve the problem of evil. The solution to evil, to life and the problems of life is the use of personal freedom and free will. So Paul's thesis is that the solution resides in mankind's soul in the form of free will. For **if** Paul commands or coerces Philemon into forgiving and freeing Onesimus, then Paul has freed Onesimus but made a slave of Philemon. The problem persists. So Paul recognizes that Philemon must decide on his own, through his own free will, what is right to do.

Evil

This, then, conjures up the concept of evil. "Two things were here before we were; and two things will still be here after we leave. The Word of God or Bible doctrine and evil. Both can change you, but you cannot change them."⁷ And both sin and slavery are part of evil. Slavery is a social problem; it is evil; it denies free will. The question, then, as posed by the Apostle Paul is, how do you fight evil? And the answer is: with God's Word.

Evil is opposed by salvation and growth in grace; and both these ideas require free will.

So the solution to evil is the gospel and doctrine. Paul discusses slavery in I Corinthians 7:20-22, "Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave."

In Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22, the Apostle Paul says that believer's should not seek freedom from slavery but do the Lord's will. "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey then not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but live as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." (Eph. 6:5-8) "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord." (Col. 3:22) In other words, no matter what your circumstances, slave or free, live your life as unto the Lord, and He will set you free if He so wills it.

And Paul expands on the subject in I Timothy 6:1-2, "All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them." So Scripture's stance on slavery is evangelize and grow in grace.

This attitude demands complete and total faith and trust in God; otherwise, admittedly, it is a difficult concept to grasp. "The church issued no edict sweeping away this custom of the old Judaism, but the gospel of Christ with its warm, penetrating love-message mitigated the harshness of ancient times and melted cruelty into kindness. The equality, justice and love of Christ's teachings

⁷Thieme, Robert. *Colossians*; 1972.

changed the whole attitude of man to man and master to servant. The Christian slaves and masters are both exhorted in Paul's letters to live godly lives and make Christlike their relations one to the other -- obedience to masters and forbearance with slaves. Christ was a reformer, but not an anarchist. His gospel was dynamic but not dynamitic. It was leaven, electric with power, but permeated with love. Christ's life and teaching were against Judaistic slavery, Roman slavery and any form of human slavery."⁸

What is Evil?⁹

Evil is the reasoning and policy of Satan in his desire to become God. And just as the concept of *grace* represents the reasoning and policy of God, *evil* represents the thinking of Satan. And the influence of the souls of mankind are the objective. Evil, then, may be a simple distortion of God's Word and His directives. Evil invades all aspects of thought and life as it pertains to mankind: religion, legalism, socialism, apostasy, etc.

Under the concept of religion, evil includes any system of religious function outside of the 'church,' which church has been ordained by God. This means that certain denominations, movements and organizations within religion can be evil. And one of the most harmful things that can befall any believer is to become influenced by evil -- Satan's system.

Spiritually mature believers are said to be able to differentiate between good and evil, Hebrews 5:14, which says, "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." And according to Romans 7:19-21, *a good thing done in an evil manner is evil*: "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do -- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me."

Philippians 3:2 warns believers to beware of evil men, "Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh." And the

saints are not to keep company with evil, and influence by evil explains why prayers are not answered: Job 35:8,9, says, "He keeps company with evildoers; he associates with wicked men. For he says, 'It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God.'"

Ecclesiastes 9:3 makes the somber and astounding statements that false religious teachings are evil and can lead to insanity, "This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead."

Spiritually mature believers are protected from evil, according to the following verses:

Psalm 21:11, Proverbs 12:12,20,21; 23:4; Genesis 50:20; 48:16; Psalm 37:16-19; 97:10; 119:101; 121:7, and Proverbs 1:33; 2:10-14; 19:23.

Within the souls of believers, the question is: Is the believer influenced by God's Word and grace, or by evil? This question is clearly asked in Proverbs 15:3; 16:6; 22:3, and 24:1-4, which says, "Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company; for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble. By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."

God's Word overcomes evil; Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." And Psalm 54:5 says, "Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them."

Apostasy is shaped by evil, according to John 3:19, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." And Psalm 36:1-4 makes it even more lucid, "An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. Even on his bed he plots evil; he commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong." So here, then, we have the sins of arrogance and hatred included in evil, and helping to form apostasy in the believer's soul.

⁸Rafferty, William Edward. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; volume 4, page 2817.

⁹Thieme, Robert. *The Concept of Evil*; from notes 1971. Revised and altered by R. E. Radic.

Thinking evil leads to a complete reversal of standards, Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." And the thinkers of evil destroy themselves (God using evil to destroy evil), according to Psalm 34:21, "Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned."

Evil has no loyalty to anyone or anything, Psalm 35:12, "They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn." And finally, and efficiently, James 1:13 asserts that there is no evil in God, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." And God will judge evil, Isaiah 13:11, "I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless." Here we have sin and evil mentioned as two components of the same system. 'Haughty' thinking (evil) leads to 'arrogant' actions (sin). And 'ruthlessness' (hate as a system of thought or evil) leads to 'pride' (self-esteem and self-sufficiency). "In the present age, man proves his separation from his Creator by his spirit of self-sufficiency and positive rejection of God. The present issue between God and man is one of whether man will accept God's estimate of him, abandon his hopeless self-struggle, and cast himself only on the grace of God which alone is sufficient to accomplish his needed transformation."¹⁰

Paul's aim, then, is to influence Philemon with God's way, *grace*, rather than Satan's way, *evil* and coercion.

Salutation to Philemon

Philemon 1 "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker(,)."

In the Greek, Paul's name is *PAULOS*; and the Latin form of his name is *Paulus*. The Greek term *PAULOS* means "small," or "release from sin." This Roman name was selected by Paul to demonstrate his 'orientation to grace' and the Plan of God, and his place within that Plan, which place was not deserved nor merited.

Note that Paul does not wield his supreme spiritual authority as an Apostle. He refrains from opening the letter with the phrase "Paul, the Apostle." This is because this letter deals with the subject of slavery and free-will, and Philemon's volition must be protected.

So Paul approaches Philemon on the basis of their mutual ambassadorship as the representatives of Christ on earth. Both are royalty, then, and in this instance, equal in rank and privilege. And with Paul in Rome is Timothy.

Paul

The Apostle Paul's name in the Hebrew was *Saul*. Paul was born at Tarsus of Cilicia, according to Acts 9:11, 21:39, and 32:3; and Philippians 3:5 informs us that his parents were Jewish. His father, however, in addition to being a Pharisee, was also a Roman citizen (Acts 23:6). And this meant that Paul himself was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28, 16:37).

Paul was a man of remarkable gifts outside of his gift of Apostleship. At an early age he was moved to Jerusalem where he was trained to be a Pharisee; indeed, his mentor was the famous Gamaliel, according to Acts 22:3, 5:34. As a Pharisee he was the most dedicated of the zealous. For he persecuted the Christians relentlessly and without mercy. He was a murderer of Christians. And it was on the Damascus road that he was converted to belief in Christ by means of a miracle. As a result, that for which he was once most zealous, the persecution of Christians, became that which he defended with equal zeal.

He was the Apostle of grace, not only in his way of life and his lifestyle, but in his teaching. He taught that justification is through faith and its object, Christ, and not the keeping of the law or human works. And the result of this doctrine proved to be his undoing in the end; for he himself became the quarry of the Pharisees.

Regarding his death, there are two primary versions: 1) that in 57 or 58 AD he was imprisoned in Jerusalem and from there transported two years later to Rome, where he was executed in 64 AD; 2) that Paul was freed from his Roman imprisonment and took subsequent missionary journeys to Spain and Asia Minor, and subsequent to a second and third incarceration in Rome, was decapitated in 67 or 68 AD, while Nero was still emperor.

¹⁰Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Satan*; page 49.

Paul is referred to by the Apostle Peter in II Peter 3:15,16, which says, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." Here, Peter acknowledges Paul's great spiritual genius in the phrase "some things that are hard to understand."

There exists no infallible description of the great Apostle. The Acts of Paul and Thecla describe him thusly, "baldheaded, bowlegged, strongly built, a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man and at times he had the face of an angel." This description may not be flattering but would appear to be true based on Acts 14:12, which says, "Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker." Thus Barnabas was much more attractive and physically imposing than Paul to the people of Lystra. And II Corinthians 10:9ff. sustain this picture of Paul's physical attributes, for they compared the power of his letters with the frailty of his presence.

So, although he may have been a man of meager physical appearance, his intellectual and spiritual might can only be fathomed by delving into the Greek of his letters. His use of the language, of metaphors and, most of all, of logical sequences, is architecturally elegant and shimmers with richness of nuance. He was indeed a genius of complexity and tremendous stature; and as yet, we have no basis or foundation for assessment.

The term SUNERGEI means "one who labors with another in furthering the cause of Christ; one whom God employs as an assistant, as it were."¹¹ This, then, is a reference to the Ambassadorship of both Paul and Philemon. And remember, this is the keystone of Paul's grace appeal to Philemon concerning Onesimus.

Christian Ambassadorship

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary defines an ambassador as: "1. the highest

¹¹Thayer, Joseph Henry. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; page 603.

diplomatic representative that one sovereign power or state sends officially to another. 2. a special representative: an *ambassador-at-large* is one accredited to no particular country; an *ambassador extraordinary* is one on a special diplomatic mission; an *ambassador plenipotentiary* is one having the power to make treaties. 3. an official herald, messenger, or agent with a special mission."

A Little History of Diplomacy

As people organized into special groups and then into states, the necessity of promoting and standardizing external contact with other groups became obvious. And history relates that even the oldest civilizations had systems and rules for intercourse with other nations. Greece was the first to develop and systematize diplomacy. The Greeks, because of geographical constraints, sent a deputation from one city to another to deliver warnings, messages, and terms. However, the deputations were 'special' in the sense of being formed due to circumstances, and thus were infrequent at best.

Rome's system of diplomacy quickly degenerated into the doctrine of self-interest, for its purposes were conquest and annexation of territory. The Romans were not interested in the 'interests' of other nations. Rome rarely negotiated, especially with those it perceived as weaker.

Our modern system of diplomacy had its beginning in the early 15th century Italian Renaissance. Historical exigencies ushered in the concept of permanent ambassadors who represented the policies and interests of their respective states by participation, notation, and negotiation. And this conception soon expanded into a system of protocol, privileges and immunities. Ambassadors were given free access, free travel rights, and free exit from any nation. Logically, this system of protocol engendered a new concept, that of 'territoriality.' Under this idea, the embassy of any nation was perceived to stand on its native soil, even though located in another country; and within its compound or walls was subject only to the laws of its home nation.

The Analogy to Christian Ambassadorship

The idea of 'ambassadorship' always implies the following mechanisms:

1. An institution in the native country to set down policy and instruct its agents. The analogy here is Christ in His present Session at the right hand of God the Father; He has formulated the policy, which is found in Holy Scripture. He then instructs His agents and representatives through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and certain spiritual gifts, including pastor/teacher and evangelist. The agents, of course, are the saints of the present Church Age.
2. An institution in the foreign nation from which contacts are made. This would be the 'church' under the concept of 'territoriality.' From the local church building the saints go forth to interact with unbelievers, the foreigners.
3. Personnel. Without personnel the system cannot function. Thus without saints who know the policy of our Lord, the system will not work.

It should be noted that ambassadors personally represent the heads of their governments. Thus each and every saint during the present Church Age is the personal representative, not to mention the future Bride, of Christ here on earth. This position connotes not only awesome responsibility, but awesome privileges.

Thus, in Christianity, an ambassador is a member of royalty sent to represent his/her sovereign Lord. And ambassadors do not appoint themselves, or support themselves; an ambassador's instructions are in writing and the ambassador is an 'alien' in the foreign land in which he/she serves; an ambassador does not live in the foreign land to serve his/her personal interests and is precluded from accepting any insult as personal; and finally, the recall of any ambassador is equivalent to an act of war.

According to II Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20, one of the functions of the Christian ambassador is witnessing. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:20). "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should." (Eph. 6:19,20)

And unfortunately all ambassadors are not competent, according to Proverbs 13:16,17, which say, "Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly. A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing."

The ambassador who fails does so because of misapplication, or ignorance of his/her instructions, according to Isaiah 33:6,7, which say, "He (the Lord) will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure. Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly."¹²

So Paul approaches Philemon as one ambassador to another; he recognizes the privileges of Philemon's office, primarily that of free-will. Paul will not coerce Philemon, for this would be a violation of his own instructions from his sovereign Lord.

Philemon 2 "To Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home."

Here Paul says 'hello' and conveys his respects to Apphia, Philemon's wife, and Archippus, who is Philemon's son. "And to the church that meets in your home" is a direct reference to the Colossian Church. Churches in the first century AD met in private homes, not in distinct buildings.

Paul calls Archippus *SUSTRATIOTES*, an associate in labors and conflicts for the cause of Christ: Phil. ii. 25; Philem. 2."¹³ By using this term Paul is telling us that Archippus was a pastor, the Pastor of the church at Laodicea, and Scripture confirms this in Colossians 4:17, which says, "Tell Archippus: 'See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.'" Here in Colossians, Paul is reprimanding Archippus the Pastor for not doing his job as unto the Lord.

Pastors in the Church Age: Their Functions and Responsibilities

Because in the present Church Age each and every saint is a Royal-Priest, it is necessary to outline and comprehend the system that God has

¹²Thieme, Robert. *Doctrine of Ambassadorship in Scripture*; from notes, 1972. This doctrine was originally compiled by Robert Thieme; appended and altered by R. E. Radic.

¹³Thayer, Joseph Henry. *Ibid*; page 608.

ordained for the spiritual advancement of the saints. There are two kinds of authority in the present dispensation, the Church Age: 1) the Word of God as contained in Holy Scripture, and includes the concept of pastor/teacher; 2) the authority of the free-will of every saint. And the pastor/teacher brings together these two forms of authority to the saints.

To do this, the pastor/teacher has had bestowed upon him a spiritual gift that he does not deserve and cannot earn. The gift of pastor/teacher provides the individual with the talents and strength necessary to communicate the Word of God. The gift is given at the point of salvation and, as already stated, is not based on merit of any type. The gift is given by God the Holy Spirit, and it would be presumptuous to attempt to document his criteria for assigning the gift.

I Timothy 2:11,12 is one of the most controversial passages in Scripture. The question revolves around this: Does God the Holy Spirit give the gift of pastor/teacher to females? Opinions abound, the discussion is endless, and connections too tenuous to be defined are cited. Based on a grammatical, syntactical and etymological analysis the passage, the author asserts that the answer to the question is 'no, God the Holy Spirit does not bestow the gift of pastor/teacher on women.' The author also asserts that the question, aside from Scriptural analysis and its acceptance or dissension, should be directed to God the Holy Spirit, not the author. As Paul with Philemon, the author refuses to impose his exegetical conclusions upon others, other than to state that the tumult that the question arouses is beyond belief.

The concept of 'pastor/teacher' is based on four Greek words from the New Testament:

1. PRESBUTEROS, which means leader or ruler and stresses the pastor's spiritual authority.

According to Titus 1:5 and I Peter 5:1 there is one such PRESBUTEROS per local church.

2. POIMENAS KAI DIDASKALOS, which means "pastor and teacher;" the pastor part refers to caring for the sheep and the teacher part refers to communicating the Word of God. The reference is found in Ephesians 4:11, which says, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be

evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."

3. EPISKOPOS, which means "overseer or foreman;" this is the function of the pastor as the spiritual policymaker, which policy must be based upon Scripture and the concept of grace. Some Scripture references are Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:7.
4. DIAKONOS, which means "minister" but is usually transliterated 'deacon.' Citations are I Corinthians 3:5 and Colossians 1:7,23, which say, 7 "You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow minister of Christ on our behalf."

This brings up the next idea: Why does the position/gift of pastor/teacher exist? The answer is found in Ephesians 4:12,13, which say, "To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." In other words, without a pastor/teacher, the saints cannot attain spiritual maturity. This is a remarkable and, to some, a shocking statement.

Now that we have the 'why' of the pastor/teacher, 'how' does the pastor/teacher perform this sensitive and vital function? The answer is found in Ephesians 4:20,21, which say, "You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus." In other words, the pastor/teacher is to teach what the Word of God says; only by doing this may the saints become spiritually mature. And this 'teaching' presupposes the spiritual gift of pastor/teacher, human maturity, education and scholarship, self-discipline manifested in good study habits, academic and spiritual honesty, and the courage to teach what Scripture says without being afraid of insulting or offending the saints.

Thus, it may be seen that the pastor/teacher must be careful to stay within the bounds of the gift. This means not intruding on the spiritual privacy of the saints, not judging the saints, nor making private and personal decisions for the saints. This does not, however, preclude normal social and/or human intercourse such as friendship, interest, or even love.

According to I Corinthians 12:11,28, pastor/teachers are provided the gift at the

moment of salvation. "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues."

I Peter 5:1,2 outlines the function of the pastor/teacher and seems to assert that God provides just the right pastor for each church: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve."

Ephesians 3:7, I Corinthians 15:10 and I Timothy 1:12-16 declare unequivocally that all pastor/teachers are the products of grace; they have no claim to entitlement. And further documentation concerning the concept of pastor/teacher may be found in Ephesians 3:7-13; 4:11-13, Colossians 1:23-29, I Timothy 2:24-26, I Timothy 3:1-9, and Titus 1:6-9.

The pastor/teacher's spiritual sanction is found in the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, verses 7 and 17, which say, 17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority (in the teaching of spiritual matters). They keep watch over you (their function as pastor) as men who must give an account (to Christ). Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. 7 "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."

And Hebrews 13:17 compared with Hebrews 6:10 tell us that pastor/teachers are responsible to God, our Lord Jesus Christ, for their correct and appropriate function: "God is not unjust; he will not forget you work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." (Heb. 6:10)

Finally, according to Philippians 4:10-20, the saints are to provide for their pastor/teachers' physical needs and wants. This enables the pastor/teachers to fulfill their functions without having to be concerned about food, clothing, shelter, transportation. Here in verse 10 Paul uses the very delicate word translated "concern for me;" in the Greek the term is PHRONEO, which is "to direct

one's mind to a thing,"¹⁴ i.e., to direct their minds to Paul's provision. 10 "I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had not opportunity to show it. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account."¹⁵

Philemon 3 "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In verse 3, Paul desires that Philemon receive grace and peace (spiritual prosperity and material prosperity) from God. And God the Holy Spirit is not named because His purpose and capacity during the present Church Age is to glorify Christ.

Philemon 4 "I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers."

Here Paul states that he 'makes mention of Philemon' whenever he prays; Paul also 'thanks' God in prayer for Philemon. And the underlying principle is this: you are motivated to pray for people for whom you are thankful. This principle is contained in the Greek word MNEIA, which means "remembrance or memory."¹⁶ Thus Paul has warm and tender memories of Philemon, so much so that he expresses these memories while in prayer to God -- he gives thanks to God for Philemon's friendship. This is quite a statement, quite a feeling, quite an emotion, and quite an honor -- to be remembered in prayer to God.

Philemon 5 "Because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints."

In verse 5, Paul acknowledges Philemon's spiritual maturity. And spiritual maturity is made up of two items: the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit and knowledge of God's Word in the soul of the believer (saint). In the succeeding verses we will see that Onesimus, too, is acknowledged by Paul as a spiritually mature believer. Thus, both Philemon and Onesimus are spiritually mature; both are filled with the Holy Spirit and both have comprehended God's Word as taught from Scripture. And remember, that one

¹⁴Thayer, Joseph Henry. *Ibid.*

¹⁵Thieme, Robert. *Doctrine of Pastor-Teacher*; from notes on UHebrewsU, 1972. Appended and revised by R. E. Radic.

¹⁶Thayer, Joseph Henry. *Ibid.*

is a slave owner and the other is a slave, yet both are spiritually mature.

Paul uses the causal participle of AKOUO, which means "because I hear;" and of what has Paul heard? Of Philemon's faith and love, i.e., his spiritual maturity. And Paul has had this information related to him by Epaphras, the Pastor of the Colossian Church. Epaphras had come to Rome, where Paul was imprisoned, to consult with Paul about the 'Gnostic' issue in Colossae.

The two attributes ascribed to Philemon by Epaphras are "faith" and "love," PISTIS and AGAPEI in the Greek. These two attributes together describe spiritual maturity. And Philemon has "faith" in our Lord, which faith leads to "love" for "all the saints."

Romans 5:5 and Galatians 5:22 assert that *agape-love* is the result, the fruit of, the filling of the Spirit. "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Rom. 5:5) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." (Gal. 5:22)

And concerning the definition of *agape-love*, AGAPAO and not PHILEO, is the word used of God's love to men; AGAPAO is also the word ordinarily used of men's love to God, but PHILEO is once so used, I Cor. xvi. 22. AGAPAO is the word used of love to one's enemies. The interchange of the words in Jn. xxi. 15-17 is very interesting and instructive. AGAPAO denotes the love of the reason; PHILEO, the love of the feelings, warm instinctive affection."¹⁷ However, the great linguist and theologian, Kenneth S. Wuest, reverses the definitions of AGAPAO and PHILEO. So the question persists, what is the difference?

The author defines *agapao-love* as love based upon reason, intellect and objectivity. Robert Thieme describes it as "impersonal love." This *agapao-love* denotes a lack of arrogance and hatred or any type of antipathy toward others. And it is the result of the power of the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. For it could be accomplished in no other way. *Agapao-love* is directed by mankind toward mankind, and by believers toward God. This is

¹⁷Berry, George Ricker. *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*; pages 24,35.

"virtue-love."¹⁸ Whereas *phileo-love* is a personal love of affection or even romance toward God or another individual.

And PISTIS, or 'faith,' is either what is believed or the object of belief. Thus, in a strictly Christian sense, the term refers either to Christ, the object of mankind's faith, or to God's Word, the dissertation of Christ.

The Concept of Love for God

Scripture provides for three different types of love for believers:

1. The believer's personal love for God and the ability to respond to God's love for the believer. The believer's personal love for God is defined herein as *phileo*.
2. All believers' love toward all members of mankind, whether believer or unbeliever; this is defined herein as *agapao-love*.
3. Personal or affection type love from one individual to another, including both romantic and companionship (friends or associates).

Love for God depends upon a knowledge of God's Word, i.e., the more you know someone the more you love them, and the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit. And this, as noted above, is the definition of spiritual maturity. And the command to love God is found in Deuteronomy 6:5, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

And since God is Spirit and cannot be perceived, the only manner to obey the above command is through knowledge of the Word. And this is the type of love that apostates have lost and are not capable of. The implication is that the more the believer knows of God's Word, the more the believer may love God. And this implication becomes actuality in I Peter 1:8, which says, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." And Ephesians 3:17b-19 sustains this verity: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge --

¹⁸Thieme, Robert.

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

II Timothy 1:13,14 asserts that love for God comes through knowledge of God's Word and the filling of the Holy Spirit, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

Agape-love is the pattern of/for grace, according to Psalm 119:132, "Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name." And Psalm 31:23 relates love for God to faith and grace, "Love the Lord, all his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full."

The more the believer loves God, the more God is able to bless the believer's attendant capacity for blessing, which capacity comes from knowledge and augmented love for God. This concept is related in Psalm 37:4,5 and I Corinthians 2:9, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this." "However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.'"

And Deuteronomy 30:15 and 30:16-20 state that love for God results in not only personal blessing but in blessing for a nation: "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Joshua 23:10-11 declares that love for God results in individual and collective courage toward life and circumstances. And Hebrews 11:27 maintains that love for God, Who is Spirit and invisible to the human eye, provides perseverance in disaster and trouble, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger, he persevered because he saw him who is invisible."

II Corinthians 5:14 declares that true love for God compels and motivates evangelism, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." And I John 4:15-19 describes *agape-love* and *phileo love*, and relates them to the filling of the Spirit and a knowledge of God's Word.

Finally, I Corinthians 16:22 appoints a specific curse on any believer who fails to have a personal/affectionate type of love, *phileo love*, for God, "If anyone does not love the Lord -- a curse be on him. Come, O Lord." Here, then, the one that fails to love God is called *anathema maranatha*, which is "cursed until our Lord comes." This believer, then, will receive nothing but misery and discipline from the Justice of God until he/she dies the 'sin unto death.' Salvation, however, is not lost.¹⁹

I Corinthians 16:22 is an example of *Heterosis* or the exchange of one mood for another mood. Here, the imperative mood is substituted for the indicative, i.e., Paul commands that which is already to take place.²⁰ Discipline will be administered by the Justice of God to those that do not love God.

And Paul states that Philemon has 'virtue-love' toward both Christ and EIS PANTAS TOUS HAGIOUS, which is "toward all the saints." The "saints" refers to the royal family of God, those who are believers in the present Church Age. And the word HAGIOS connotes 'separation' from Satan's system of evil (arrogance and hatred).

¹⁹ Thieme, Robert. *The Doctrine of Category One Love*; from notes on Hebrews, 1975.

²⁰ Bullinger, E.W. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; pages 510, 514.

Philemon 6, "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."

The word for "pray" is omitted by *ellipsis*; however, the verb must be supplied to continue the thought of the sentence. And by omitting the verb, Paul stresses not his prayer, but Philemon's spiritual maturity. In other words, Paul is saying that the current situation, that of Onesimus' return as a fellow spiritually mature believer, demands that Philemon apply his faith and spiritual maturity toward Christ, not toward Onesimus. It is vital that Philemon hold onto his knowledge of Christ or he will fail when he confronts Onesimus. If he deliberates on Onesimus, he will see disrespect, disloyalty, hatred, fear, theft, etc.; however, if he deliberates on Christ, he will see intellectual *agape-love*, a fellow-believer, understanding, and grace.

Verse 6 might also be translated "[I pray] that our (Paul and Onesimus) association with your faith (Philemon's spiritual maturity) might become operational (or effectual) toward Christ by means of [your] complete knowledge of the all good which is in you (in Philemon's soul)."²¹ And what is 'the all good?' It is the Word of God living in Philemon's soul. For remember, "the Word of God is alive and powerful," and in II Timothy 1:14 Paul calls 'the all good' the 'good deposit.' "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

Philemon 7, "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints."

Paul begins verse 7 with the post-positive conjunctive particle GAR used in the illative sense, and thus translated "for." Then Paul states that he has "come to have much happiness." This phrase demands some of our attention, for Paul is in prison, he is chained, his physical movements are confined, his recreation is very limited, his pleasures are denied; in these circumstances, how can Paul make the statement that he is not just happy, but that 'he has **much** happiness?'

Happiness

Happiness is the situation of well-being or general prosperity of mankind. It encompasses the

circumstances of life and relationships. And happiness can run the gamut from tranquility to intense ecstasies, and the term often used in Scripture to describe happiness is "blessedness." Blessedness relates happiness to God and His Plan of grace.

Happiness has many different relative facets:

1. Happiness related to prosperity is described in Psalm 128: 1-4, "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord."
2. I Peter 3:14 declares that believers may be happy even in suffering, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."
3. Proverbs 3:13 says that true happiness is found through knowing God's Word, "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding."
4. Proverbs 14:21 states that happiness may be gained from treating others with kindness and grace, "He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy."
5. Romans 14:22 says that a clear conscience produces a type of happiness, "So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves."
6. Proverbs 29:18 states that happiness comes from obeying the laws of the land and that lawlessness and spiritual apostasy accompany each other, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law."
7. Psalm 144:13-15 states that happiness comes from living in a free and prosperous nation.

To fully understand the concept of happiness, we must understand the happiness of God. For God's happiness is unique in the sense that God's happiness is absolute, perfect and unlimited. In other words, because God is perfect He has perfect happiness. And as God is eternal, so is His happiness; God's happiness never ends and has

²¹Thieme, Robert. *Philemon*; from notes, 1974.

never been diminished in the least and cannot be changed.

And since God is perfect this means that He is perfect Righteousness; thus God's perfect happiness is directly connected to one simple fact: *God is never wrong, has never been wrong, and never will be wrong.* This makes God happy. Additionally, since God is perfect He is also perfect Justice; this means *God is never inequitable, unfair or unjust.* This makes God happy. Inasmuch as God is perfect, His love is perfect; this means that God loves the other members of the Godhead with a perfect love and that He loves Himself with a perfect love and that He loves His creatures with a perfect love; this ability to love perfectly, without bounds or mitigation, makes God happy. And because God is Omnipotent, this gives Him an unlimited capacity to be happy. In His Omniscience God's very genius adds comprehension and sharpness to His happiness; in other words, God *knows* that He is happy.

Finally, in His Sovereignty, in His Reign, in His Supremacy, God has determined that He will share His perfect happiness with mankind, for Psalm 43:4 says, "Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God." And Psalm 97:12 tells how God shares his happiness with mankind, "Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous [perfect Righteousness given to mankind at the point of salvation], and praise his holy name." And Habakkuk 3:18 states that once the believer has God's perfect Righteousness given to him/her, then the believer may be given anything and everything by God, for God gives to His perfect Righteousness (in the believer) from His perfect Righteousness (in Himself).

The fact that God has determined to give His happiness to mankind and found a way to do it is called *grace*. And God's instrument of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ; thus true happiness begins at the point of belief in Christ. This is where happiness begins. From there, the more the believer knows about God and Christ, the greater the believer's capacity for happiness becomes. Thus through spiritual growth the believer's happiness may become as the happiness of God: without limit, without dependence on circumstances, or events, or people, or any exterior influence. And John 13:17 declares that once spiritual maturity is attained, the believer shares God's perfect happiness, "Now that you

know these things (God's Word), you will be blessed (intense happiness) if you do them."

In other words, God's Word is the source of the believer's happiness, according to John 17:13, "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."

And sharing God's perfect happiness *should be* the estate of every believer, according to Philippians 4:4 and I Peter 1:8, which say, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." And once the believer shares the perfect happiness of God, the believer's happiness cannot be diminished by: circumstances, things, or people, according to Philippians 4:11,12; Hebrews 13:5,6, and Hebrews 12:2,3, which say, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Thus, even though mankind inhabits an imperfect world, mankind can have the perfect happiness of God. And according to I Corinthians 11:24,25, Philippians 1:3, and Song of Songs 3:1, 4:6, and 8:6, the sharing of God's happiness increases the believer's ability to love others and God. Jude 24 asserts that the happiness experienced by the believer in heaven is more intense than that on earth; this degree of intensity is related to the locale, heaven, and not to any limitations on the sharing of God's perfect happiness.

Isaiah 35:1,2 declares that in the future Millennial Reign of Christ happiness will be ubiquitous.

And according to the following verses, II Samuel 1:19,20, Ecclesiastes 9:9, 11:8,9, and Proverbs 23:24,25, the happiness derived from the 'world,' sin, evil, and 'pleasure' is temporary and inadequate. For "the aesthetic age seeks satisfaction through the senses, physical beauty, erotic excitement, through success in any of its

guises.”²² And true inner happiness cannot be found through the senses or celebrity.

Ultimately, the truly happy person, the believer who shares the perfect happiness of God, provides happiness for, and is a ‘ministry of refreshment to’²³ other believers and unbelievers. This concept is found in Philippians 2:28,29, Romans 16:32, II Corinthians 7:13, and our verse, Philemon 7, which says, “For I have come to have much happiness and encouragement by your love (for Christ) because the tender affections of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.”²⁴

Paul’s use of the term “brother,” ADELPHOS, indicates that Philemon is not only a fellow-believer, a member of the royal priest/family of God along with Paul, but that Paul is about to discuss a ‘family’ matter.

The Greek term for “refreshed” is ANAPAUO; and this concept was briefly discussed in the above dissertation on Happiness. However, the idea commands more attention and more detail, as ‘refreshment’ is an attribute of those believers that have attained spiritual maturity. Thus we might say that the ‘ministry of refreshment’ is the realization and function of the spiritually mature.

Paul calls Philemon a ‘refreshment.’ This means that Philemon is a vivifying and soothing personality to all that interrelate with him. Spiritually and soulishly, Philemon provides refreshment to others. He is a pleasure to be with and around; others seek out his company so that they might be restored by his calm faith in God, by his virtue-love toward others, by his real compassion, and by his doctrinal-perspective toward life.

The Ministry of Refreshment

In the papyri, the term ANAPAUO is found as “an agricultural term, e.g., of giving land rest by sowing light crops upon it. In inscriptions it is

²²Muggeridge, Malcolm. Title unknown.

²³Thieme, Robert. *Colossians*; notes taken from lectures, 1975

²⁴*Ibid.* *Doctrine of Happiness*; originally compiled by Thieme; altered and appended by R. E. Radic. Translation of Philemon 7 is by Robert Thieme from the Koine Greek.

found on gravestones of Christians, followed by the date of death (Moulton and Milligan).”²⁵

Romans 15:32 says, “So that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.” And here, Paul implies that true refreshment comes from one saint to another as they enjoy each other’s company.

In I Corinthians 16: 17,18, Paul cites by name three spiritually mature believers whose company, virtue-love and faith recently ‘refreshed’ his soul. And the ramification is that believers occasionally require ‘refreshment.’ “I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.”

Our Lord used the term in Matthew 11:28, where the connotation is to give rest from effort: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” And this is a remarkable statement -- that there is refreshment and rest in this Person only; only here may true ease be discovered.

Paul will again use the term in Philemon 20, which says, “I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.” And the inference here is that Philemon’s grace attitude, faith in God, trust in God’s promises, virtue-love, and *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* (method of operation and manner of life) are all images and expressions of love for Christ, and the character of Christ being expressed in Philemon, so that by associating with Philemon, Paul experiences the same refreshment that he would have found with Christ Himself. This verse details the importance, then, of growing to spiritual maturity and of associating with such mature believers.

In II Corinthians 7:13, Paul confirms that the *spirits* of believers are ‘refreshed’ by other believers. “By all this we are encouraged. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.”

Physical refreshment is found through sleep and physical rest, according to Matthew 26:45, which states, “Then he returned to the disciples and said

²⁵Vine, W.E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*; page 288.

to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'" And this need for physical rest is also stated in Mark 6:31 and Mark 14:41. And Luke 12:19 asserts that food, drink, sleep and recreation are all forms of physical refreshment, and that they are legitimate *as long as* they do not take priority over God and knowledge of His Word. "And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

I Peter 4:14 uses the term ANAPAUO for the rest/refreshment that belongs to the saint/believer that suffers for the name of Christ. This is indeed an extraordinary statement, that spiritual 'refreshment' may be found in suffering and persecution. Only the very, very spiritually mature believer could produce this type of attitude and happiness -- more and more happiness and rest found in more and more suffering for Christ. "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

And in Revelation 6:11 dwells an unique insinuation: that the 'righteous indignation,' or 'righteous demand for vengeance from the Perfect Justice of God' by the martyred saints of the Tribulation, can only find rest/refreshment in the Perfect Righteousness and Faithfulness of God. "Then each of them (the martyred saints) was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer (rest), until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed."

And Hebrews 4:3,4 and Revelation 14:11 states that those who reject Christ will never know any type of rest/refreshment in the Lake of Fire for all eternity. "And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

In contrast, Revelation 14:13 states that those who accept Christ will 'rest' forever and ever. "Then I heard a voice from heaven, say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'"²⁶

Philemon's Test

Philemon's spiritual maturity and his 'spiritual refreshment' to others is about to receive a test. Will the spiritual maturity of Philemon be able to endure the natural influences of the Old Sin Nature? Is Philemon's virtue-love stronger than his innate hatred of Onesimus?

And the reason that the test is so difficult is because Philemon must choose between right and rightful. Rightfully, Philemon may torture, brand or even execute Onesimus; but he would not be 'right' before God; to be 'right' he must be spiritually right. So being right legally (rightful) makes him wrong spiritually. Thus, the voluntary return of Onesimus produces a great spiritual turning point.

Paul's Test

Paul is writing to Philemon, of course, under the Ministry of the Filling of the Holy Spirit; however, Paul's interest in Philemon's test is also personal, as Paul underwent, and failed, the same test earlier in his own spiritual growth.

Paul's test revolved around John Mark, to whom is traditionally assigned the authorship of the Second Gospel. John Mark was a Jew and a native of Jerusalem. And his Jewish name was the Old Testament name *yohanan*, which means 'Yahweh has shown grace,' II Kings 25:23. The shortened English form is 'John.' His adopted Latin name of Marcus means 'a large hammer.'

John Mark's mother was Mary. She lived in comfortable circumstances in Jerusalem; in fact, the church in Jerusalem met in her house, according to Acts 12:12-17. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas, according to Colossians 4:10 (sister's son). And John Mark accompanied Barnabas and Paul from Jerusalem to Cyprus on the first missionary journey, according to Acts 12:25; 13:5. However, at Perga, according to Acts 13:13, John Mark left them and returned home to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas went on without him.

Paul viewed John Mark's action at best as spiritual failure and, at worst, as desertion of our Lord. Later, when in Acts 15:38 Barnabas proposed once more taking John Mark along on the second missionary journey, Paul categorically refused. And here, then, is Paul's experience with Philemon's test. Paul failed to forgive John Mark. So much so that Paul and Barnabas separated over

²⁶Compiled by R. E. Radic.

the principle of 'right' and 'rightful.' Barnabas went on to Cyprus with John Mark, and Paul traveled with Silas.

Acts 15:36-41 narrate the occurrence as follows: "Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."

Paul, though, learned from his mistake. For we find John Mark in Rome with Paul ten years later, Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24. "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)" "And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."

Indeed, so great was Paul's change of mind and attitude that he wrote concerning John Mark in II Timothy 4:11, "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry."

Thus, Paul faced the same type of test that Philemon is about to face -- a test of grace and spiritual maturity.

Philemon 8, "Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do,".

Verse 8 as translated here in the NIV is very accurate and conveys the gist of the Greek.

Paul, because of his spiritual gift of Apostleship from Christ, could order Philemon to do what is right, namely, accept Onesimus back without retaliation or hatred. But Paul sets aside his spiritual authority.

Apostleship

In the Greek, the term is APOSTOLOS, and was initially used to designate an admiral sent to command a fleet, and this admiral had complete and total authority over those whom he

commanded. In Scripture, though, the term refers "specially to the twelve disciples whom Christ selected, out of the multitude of his adherents, to be his constant companions and the heralds to proclaim to men the kingdom of God."²⁷ The term occurs 79 times in the New Testament, and 68 of these 79 are found in Luke or the Pauline Epistles.

Thus, in our context the word is used of the spiritual gift of absolute power and authority as concerns the Church. And the function of the gift of Apostleship was to support the Church during its formative years, i.e., during the first century AD, until the Canon of Scripture was completed. Thus either the apostles themselves or someone associated with them wrote the Canon of Scripture. Additionally, the apostles appointed Pastor/Teachers, interpreted the Word of God, and were responsible for formulating policy.

According to Ephesians 4:8 and 4:11, the apostles were not appointed until the resurrection of our Lord. "This is why it says: When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."

The apostolic gift provided each apostle with as much spiritual authority as God has ever given to any man. The apostles had complete authority over all the local churches. And Matthew 10:2 informs that Christ Himself appointed the apostles to Israel. And as has been noted above, Christ Himself appointed the apostles to the Church, Ephesians 4:11; and the appointment of spiritual gifts is the perquisite of God the Holy Spirit, according to I Corinthians 12:11.

All of the apostles to the Church had to be eye witnesses to the resurrected Christ. And Paul fulfilled this qualification while on the Damascus Road, according to I Corinthians 9:1, and 15:8,9. "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?" "Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

²⁷Thayer, Joseph Henry. *Ibid*; page 68.

So that their apostolic authority might be manifest to the Church, the gift of Apostleship initially included three gifts: miracles, healing, and tongues. Citation of these gifts is found in Acts 5:15,16, 28:8,9. "As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed." "His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island (Malta) came and were cured."

Nonetheless, after apostolic authority had been achieved, the three gifts were abrogated, according to Acts 19:11,12, Philippians 2:27, and II Timothy 4:20. "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. Handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them." "Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him (Epaphroditus), and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow." "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus."

Thus, it is evident that Paul, through whom even garments that had touched him caused healing, later on could not even heal his close friends Epaphroditus and Trophimus, except through the power of prevailing prayer. So once apostolic authority had been determined, the miraculous gifts were removed.²⁸

Philemon 9 "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 --."

Without presumption the translation should perhaps be altered to read as follows: "because of your virtue-love (personal love for Christ leading to toleration-type love toward all) I encourage you even more, being such a person as Paul, an ambassador and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus." In Greek the three prominent words are 'love,' 'more,' and 'ambassador.' Philemon's personal love for God stimulates a tolerant-type of

love for all individuals that he comes in contact with, both believer and unbeliever. This *virtue-love* which Philemon has demonstrated gives Paul the confidence to 'encourage him more' to accept Onesimus based upon this very virtue-love. And the term PRESBUTEIS is the technical term for *ambassadorship*, which has previously been discussed.

Paul here registers his perspective on his personal life and his incarceration in Rome: he is the prisoner, not of Nero or of Rome, but of Christ. And here is the principle that Paul believes, knows, and understands: that Jesus Christ controls history; that Paul's incarceration was for a purpose, two of which were the evangelizing of Onesimus and writing the pastoral letter of Philemon as a part of the canon of Scripture.

Onesimus was the slave of Philemon, Paul was the slave of Christ, and both had certain portions of their freedom eliminated; but in spite of this, both achieved spiritual maturity, which maturity was the Will and Purpose of God. Thus, as per Romans 8:28, "all things do work together for good to them that love God."

If Paul had not been the slave of Christ and in chains in a Roman prison, and if Onesimus had not been a slave and a fugitive, would either have become believers, attained spiritual maturity, or led others to Christ? For that matter, would all of Christendom have the book of Philemon to study? Probably not.

Philemon 10 "I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains."

In verse 10, Paul again uses the verb for 'encourage,' PARAKALEO, and its object is the accusative personal pronoun 'you,' referring to Philemon. In the Greek the object is se,; and the construction isolates Philemon. In other words, Paul is saying, 'I appeal to you or I encourage you,' but you are all alone in this decision, Philemon. You must use the spiritual resources that you have in your soul, for I (Paul) will not remove the burden from your soul by using my authority as an apostle to order you to do the right thing. So Philemon stands alone with only his soul.

And the spiritual decision revolves around the last word in verse 10, Onesimus, whose name means "profitable." And Paul describes Onesimus as

²⁸Thieme, Robert. *Doctrine of Apostleship*; from notes on II Timothy, taken in 1976. This doctrine was originally compiled by Robert Thieme; appended and altered by R. E. Radic.

“my son,” whom Paul “has fathered. And the phrase does not imply any type of physical relation, but simply a spiritual relation: Paul evangelized and then taught Onesimus the Word of God; thus Paul views Onesimus as his spiritual student.

Philemon 11 “Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.”

In verse 11 Paul utilizes a figure of speech called *meiosis*, or *litotes* by the Greeks, and *diminutio* and *extenuatio* by the Romans. “By this figure one thing is diminished in order to increase another thing. In *meiosis* there is an omission therefore, not of words, but of sense. One thing is lowered in order to magnify and intensify something else by way of contrast.”²⁹ And the thing diminished in Philemon 11 is Onesimus’ theft and flight as Philemon’s slave. And the thing magnified is tripartite:

1. The salvation and spiritual growth of Onesimus.
2. Onesimus’ benefit and service to Paul while Paul was in prison.
3. Onesimus’ potential benefit to Philemon as a spiritual test for Philemon.

The acts of theft and flight are diminished because compared to Onesimus’ personal salvation, his refreshment to Paul, and Philemon’s spiritual growth through testing, the loss of money is inconsequential. And to emphasize this *meiosis* Paul simultaneously employs a double *paronomasia*, which is the placement of two words similar in sound or orthography. Paul, in his spirit-filled genius, places two side by side: (1) “formerly useless, now useful,” and (2) “both to you and to me.” In other words, that which was formerly useless, Onesimus (whose name means ‘useful’), is now, by the grace of God and salvation, “useful”, just like his name. And he is useful to both Paul and Philemon.

The subtlety of this sentence is striking for the meaning of the message is found in the structure of the message itself; Philemon cannot miss it.

²⁹Bullinger, E.W. *Figures of Speech Used In the Bible*; page 155.

Philemon 12 “I am sending him -- who is my very heart -- back to you.”

Here, in verse 12, Paul states the matter briefly and passionately; he is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, and Paul tenderly states that ‘he dearly loves Onesimus,’ when he says “who is my very heart.”

Philemon 13 “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.”

Here, Paul states that he would have liked to keep Onesimus with him in Rome, and that he has viewed Onesimus as having taken Philemon’s place at his side, for both are spiritually mature, is the implication. And that Philemon should consider Onesimus as having been ‘on loan’ to Paul as a surrogate for himself.

Here, then, is the suggestion that Onesimus, too, has been a ‘ministry of refreshment’ to Paul, just as Philemon has been to those in Colossae. Paul is saying, then, that though one is the slave of the other, both have great spiritual status -- spiritual maturity.

And again, Paul perceives himself not as chained by Nero, but by the gospel. Jesus Christ controls history, according to Paul. Finally, in verse 13 is found the frugally employed partitive genitive “of the gospel.” In this construction, “a noun may be defined by indicating in the genitive the whole of which it is part.”^{30 31}

In other words, the ‘whole’ to Paul is the ‘gospel;’ and the parts of the ‘whole gospel’ are Paul’s chains, his imprisonment in Rome, and/or freedom. Both these conditions, imprisonment and freedom, are a ‘part’ of Paul’s ministry, the ‘whole’ of which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus simply arranged:

Gospel.....whole

Chains.....part

Freedom.....part

³⁰Dana, H.E., and Mantey, Julius R. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*; page 79.

³¹Thieme, Robert. The author’s attention to this syntactical detail must be charged to Robert Thieme.

And the 'whole' is Paul's life serving the Lord in whatever state he finds himself. Thus the partitive genitive imparts a charming spiritual lesson. Inherent in the lesson is the fact that the return of Onesimus is but a 'part' of Philemon's 'whole' as he, too, serves the Lord and is a minister of refreshment.

Philemon 14 "But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced."

In verse 14, Paul states that since Onesimus is, according to the law, Philemon's property, he will not detain him in Rome any longer, especially not without Philemon's permission. Paul then asserts that he is doing this so "any favor you do" will not be an act induced by coercion. And the word for "favor" is engaging; it is TO AGATHON.

When used as a substantive in the neuter case, the word is translated "a good thing" or "advantage." And the author submits that in this particular sentence the term should be translated "any gracious act," or "grace application," and thus refers to Philemon applying his knowledge of God's Word and God's Grace to the present situation, i.e., the Onesimus matter. In is noteworthy that Paul calls, if translated literally, the doctrine in Philemon's soul 'the good,' or 'the advantage.' It is, then, to Philemon's advantage, or for that matter to any believer's advantage, to have God's Word, doctrine, in his soul. For only then may 'the good' produce 'gracious acts,' or 'good.'

An alternative translation for verse 14 is now offered: "But without your permission I did not want to do anything, in order that your application of grace (the good) should not be from compulsion but from your own free will."

Philemon 15 "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good --"

Paul suggests that Onesimus was "separated," which is a tactful way of stating the reality: Onesimus stole, betrayed a trust, and fled as a fugitive. And the "reason?" The antecedent of "reason" is 'the good' in the previous verse; so the reason was because of grace and was to the 'advantage' of all that were involved, namely, Onesimus, Paul, and Philemon. Onesimus was led to the Lord and grew to spiritual maturity, Paul was served by a ministry of refreshment while in

prison, and Philemon now has the opportunity to advance his own spiritual maturity through spiritual testing.

The temporal phrase "for a little while" is an example of *synecdoche of the part*; here, part is put for the whole. And the whole in this instance was approximately two years, and the part is, literally in the Greek "for an hour." So an hour is put for two years. Why? For two reasons: 1) Paul continues his extraordinary syntactical syllogism which he started with the partitive genitive (part/whole), because again he puts a part (two years) for the whole (God's eternal plan of salvation); 2) "Time is short when the results are positive."³² In other words, no matter what the time span, if just one person was saved by the Grace of God and the work of Christ, then the passage of time is irrelevant and inconsequential. And the term "forever," sustains this interpretation; for the Plan of God and salvation affects each believer 'for eternity.' And one hour is just a drop in the ocean of forever.

The word "reason" in verse 15 has one other connotation, and that is the concept of "crisis evangelism," i.e., Onesimus was of such a personality that he would never accept the gracious work of Christ until he was faced with utter desperation. "True wisdom is to know what is 'a broken heart' and 'a contrite spirit.' Until man knows this he cannot know either God or himself. To teach Job this important lesson is the 'end' of all that we read in this book. All that is done and all that is said is intended to do for Job

What the mighty famine did for the lost son, Luke xv.

What another famine did for Joseph's brethren, Gen. xlv. 16.

What Nathan's parable did for David, 2 Sam. xii. 1-13.

What a wondrous miracle did for Peter, Luke v. 1-8.

As Isaiah confessed, 'I am undone.....unclean;' so must Job be brought to say, 'I am vile,'

chapter xl. 4. 'I abhor myself,' 'I repent in dust and ashes,' chapter xlii. 6."³³

³²Thieme, Robert. *Colossians (Philemon)*; from notes taken in 1979.

³³Bullinger, E.W. *The Book of Job*; page 4-5.

And just as with Job (although Job's testing was designed to promote spiritual growth through testing) , Onesimus, to come to the point of salvation, had to know hopelessness.

The spiritual principle is this: Some unbelievers will not respond to the gospel or grace until challenged by an harrowing situation.³⁴

Philemon 16 "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."

The author offers an altered and expanded translation based upon the remarks of A.T. Robertson: "No longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a respected fellow believer; especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord."³⁵

In verse 16, Paul acknowledges the spiritual maturity of Philemon, but also recognizes that Onesimus, although now a great believer, is still a slave and is still subject to Philemon's authority and the laws of Rome. This explains Paul's use of "in the flesh," and "in the Lord." In the flesh, Onesimus is a slave; in the Lord, Onesimus is a member of the Royal Family of God, and is an ambassador for Christ.

Here is the puzzle as Paul presents it: both Philemon and Onesimus, master and slave, are spiritually mature. And whether a slave or a freeman, Onesimus is spiritually mature. Additionally, Paul respects and loves both Philemon and Onesimus; both have been a 'ministry of refreshment' to Paul. And because Paul respects Onesimus, he wants Philemon to respect Onesimus also. Further complicating the pieces of the puzzle is this fact: spiritual salvation *does not* alter the legal, endowed institutional relationship of the two men; one remains the master, the other remains the slave.

The concept of authority abides, as it must. For if authority is abrogated, then the Sovereignty of God is rescinded and His Plan is not effectual. Change, though, has taken place; it has occurred

³⁴Thieme, Robert. Paraphrase of a principle propounded by Robert Thieme, *Study in Colossians (Philemon)*.

³⁵Bible Works CD: *Hermeneutika*; A.T. Robertson's GNT Word Pictures. CD donated to the author by *Hermeneutika*.

inside the souls of men. And this underscores the notion that authority and free-will travel together; one cannot exist without the other. For if God has no authority, then mankind has no free-will with which to accept salvation.

Philemon 17 "So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me."

Here, by his use of the word "associate, fellow-believer," Paul refers Philemon back to verse 6, where he wrote, "our association with your faith/doctrine;" thus, Paul is saying, if you consider me to be a fellow-participant in the saving work of the blood of Christ (and he is, is the statement of the conditional clause), then welcome Onesimus, who also resides under the blood of Christ, as you would welcome me. So, salvation, the Royal Family of God, and ambassadorship are all hinted at by this one word, KOINONON.

Note bene: status, whether we like it or not, is a key factor in human interrelations. And royalty acknowledges royalty.

Philemon 18, 19, "If he has done you any wrong (and he has) or owes you anything (and he does), charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back -- not to mention that you owe me your very self."

First, Paul admits by his use of the first class conditional clauses, that Onesimus has wronged Philemon, and could never pay back the large sum of money he stole. Then Paul makes a remarkable statement, he gives Philemon his personal IOU. Paul states that he will pay back the sum; Paul says charge it to my account, send me the bill. Well, what is Paul's account, his credit with Philemon? 1) Paul led Philemon to the Lord; 2) Paul taught Philemon God's Word to the point of spiritual maturity; 3) God has blessed Philemon because of this spiritual maturity with: health, family, love, a ministry of refreshment, and great personal wealth to the point of being a millionaire.

Paul will repay the stolen money. In other words, Paul says this: "if you have been blessed by grace, then you should bless others in grace. And hopeless situations (the fact that Onesimus could

never pay back the money) are only solved by grace."³⁶

And note Paul's noisy finesse; he uses *apophasis* or *insinuation*, which is when professing not to mention certain matters, the speaker then proceeds to do so.³⁷ In other words, Paul says, I won't even mention the fact that you owe me your own salvation and present happiness, but in not mentioning it he has mentioned it. But note that Paul does not press it any further. The mere hint should be more than enough for a man of Philemon's astuteness. And also note that Paul will personally repay the stolen monies rather than crudely remind Philemon of what he has just delicately insinuated. Paul is indeed a scholar and a gentleman.

And a genius without peer, as we now see in...

Philemon 20, "I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ."

In verse 20 Paul uses both the voluntative optative and the imperative of entreaty; and both of these grammatical constructions allow Philemon his free-will -- there is no demand, no coercion. But Paul uses two Greek words that suggest a deep wisdom beyond imagination. The first is the verbal form (voluntative optative) of Onesimus' own name. Thus, Paul is saying, now that profit (Onesimus) has come back to you (the slave is back and Paul will repay the monies and the slave is also a great believer), let me receive some profit from you for having led you, too, to the Lord.

And second, what profit does Paul want? The answer is found in the words "refresh my affections [for you] in Christ." Again, Paul uses the term for the 'ministry of refreshment;' so the profit he asks in return from Philemon is that which Philemon has received by the Grace of God, the 'ministry of refreshment.' Paul requests, then, that Philemon continue to do and to be that which he already does and is, reflect the image of Christ to everyone.

To some commentators this is an example of *paronomasia*, to others it is an actual *pun*; but it is more, it is an example of literary beauty that

³⁶Thieme, Robert. Quote from Robert Thieme's *Study in Colossians (Philemon)*.

³⁷Bullinger, E.W. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; page 486.

conceals another quality, a prize too precious to sell, the concept of grace ... just as a woman's beauty camouflages her more abstract virtues.³⁸

Philemon 21-25 "Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

As he closes the letter, Paul states that he has confidence in Philemon's obedience, not to Paul's demand, but to his own faith, knowledge of God's Word, virtue-love, and grace attitude toward other believers. And Paul anticipates that Philemon will not only forgive and welcome Onesimus, but free him from his status of slave. And remember, that this solution is found only in Philemon's spiritual free-will. If Paul commanded that it be done, Onesimus would be physically free, but Philemon would be a spiritual slave; and that is much worse than being a physical slave.

Paul also anticipates his release from prison in Rome. He requests that Philemon prepare him a guest room, so that the might visit Colossae as soon as he is released. And finally, in verse 25, Paul formally declares the solution to all problems, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Appendix: Why examine the Greek words, the syntactical and grammatical structures, the figures of speech, and change the translation? The best and most eloquent answer is found in the words of Christopher Lasch, "With the collapse of religion, biblical references, which formerly penetrated deep into everyday awareness, have become incomprehensible, and the same thing is now happening to the literature and mythology of antiquity -- indeed to the entire literary tradition of the West, which has always drawn so heavily on biblical and classical sources. In the space of two or three generations, enormous stretches of the 'Judaean-Christian tradition,' so often invoked by educators but so seldom taught in any form, have passed into oblivion. The effective loss of cultural traditions on such a scale makes talk of a new Dark Age far from frivolous. Yet this loss

³⁸Vance, Jack. The author has paraphrased Jack Vance; source unknown; taken from notes.

coincides with an information glut, with the recovery of the past by specialists, and with an unprecedented explosion of knowledge -- none of which, however, impinges on everyday experience or shapes popular culture."³⁹

³⁹Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism*; page 260-261.
