

Theme: The Gospel of God's grace releases us from our chains of sin, and sets us free to live in the peace of God - no matter our circumstances.

I. Intro - A Series on Philemon

- A. How many have ever heard a series on Philemon?
- B. How many have heard even a single teaching?
- C. This is certainly a neglected book - for many reasons
- D. It is a very small book - 335 words on Greek
- E. It is a personal letter - does it really apply to us?
- F. But it is an incredible story - and full of the Gospel
- G. And it is full of Gospel applications for us
- H. So today we begin "Unchained"

II. Unchained - The Letter to Philemon

- A. A quick overview of the letter & its circumstances
 - 1. Paul is in chains - a prisoner (v1, 9, 10, 23)
Paul, a **prisoner** of Christ Jesus... ⁹ I then, as Paul — an old man and now also a **prisoner** of Christ Jesus — ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in **chains**....
²³Epaphras, my fellow **prisoner** in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. Philemon 1:1, 9–10, 23
 - a. Most likely either on way to Rome or in Rome
 - b. Some say Ephesus - but no record of imprisonment there
 - c. Most likely in Rome - reasons to be seen
 - 2. He is writing to Philemon, a church leader

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, **To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker**, ² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier **and to the church that meets in your home**: Philemon 1:1–2

- 3. Philemon probably lives in Colossae - see below
- 4. Probably written at the same time as Colossians
 - a. Paul is in prison when writing both letters
 - b. Timothy is mentioned in both openings as "the brother"
 - c. Six people send greetings to Colossians; 5 of them also do to Philemon
 - d. Archippus only in Philemon 1:2 and Colossians 4:17
 - e. Onesimus only in Philemon and Colossians 4:9
- 5. This means Paul was probably in Rome chained to a guard when he wrote the letter to Philemon

B. Why Paul wrote the letter to Philemon

- 1. Philemon owned a slave name Onesimus who ran away
- 2. Onesimus ended up meeting Paul and converting
- 3. Paul is now sending Onesimus back with letter to Colossians - and to Philemon
He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. Colossians 4:9

I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was

useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. ¹² I am sending him — who is my very heart — back to you. Philemon 1:10–12

C. This is high drama!

1. A runaway slave returns - how will the owner respond?
2. What will Paul say? How will he word it?
3. What will happen to Onesimus?
4. How does the Gospel apply to this????

III. Paul - Unchained By Grace

A. Paul is in physical chains

1. He mentions chains 4 times in this short letter
Paul, a **prisoner** of Christ Jesus... ⁹ I then, as Paul — an old man and now also a **prisoner** of Christ Jesus — ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in **chains**....
²³Epaphras, my fellow **prisoner** in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. Philemon 1:1, 9–10, 23
2. He does not use title of Apostle in intro - chains
Paul, **a prisoner of Christ Jesus**, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, Philemon 1:1
 - a. Almost always 'Paul an apostle' or 'Paul a servant'
 - b. Only letter he opens this way - stressing his chains
 - c. This 20% of Paul's references to being imprisoned in NT - stressing it here

B. Paul is in chains for Christ and the Gospel

Paul, a **prisoner of Christ Jesus**... ⁹ I then, as Paul — an old man and now also a **prisoner of Christ Jesus**
²³Epaphras, my **fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus**, sends you greetings. Philemon 1:1, 9, 23

1. Prisoner of Christ Jesus - in chains for Gospel
2. The Gospel had put Paul in chains!

C. Paul was unchained by the Gospel of God's grace & peace

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philemon 1:3

1. This is a typical blessing in Paul's letters!
2. Not throwaway words - the heart of everything
3. The Gospel tells us of the grace of God that saves
4. The Gospel gives us peace - shalom - with God
5. This Gospel had set Paul free from his sin
6. This Gospel had set Paul free from prejudice
7. This Gospel had given him peace with God and others
8. The peace of God reigned - even when chained and facing death!
9. This Gospel had transformed the persecutor into the Apostle!

D. Chained by man - but Unchained by God!

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I

endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 2 Timothy 2:8–10

1. Paul is in chains for the Gospel
2. But the Gospel - God's Word - is unchained!
3. Paul is willing to be physically chained - so that other might be spiritually unchained
4. This is the power of the Gospel - it breaks chains!

IV. Unchained - To Apply the Word

A. Have you been unchained by the Gospel of grace?

1. This is the way to freedom!
2. Real freedom does not come from us
3. Real freedom is not just choice - but being restored to God
4. Have you been unchained by grace?
5. Look to Christ - and be unchained!

B. Have you been unchained by the peace of God?

1. True peace does not shift with circumstances
2. Paul had peace - while in chains!
3. Onesimus had fled his chains - and still had no peace!
4. Without the peace of God, we are still chained!
5. Peace - with God, others, circumstances - flows from receiving and meditating upon the Gospel

C. Communion - our meal of grace and peace

Unchained By Grace

Philemon 1:1-7
January 27, 2014
Communion
Philemon 1:3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philemon 1:3

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, 2 to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philemon 1:1–7