

The Power of Love and Faith

Philemon 1:1-7

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Philemon is a personal letter from Paul to Philemon and a small church in the city of Colossae that Paul wrote while being on house arrest in Rome. The short letter was a request for Philemon to welcome back a slave named Onesimus, who had done wrong to Philemon and ran away, not only as a slave but a brother. This is a story about love, faith, reconciliation, forgiveness, obedience, and the transformation power of the gospel.

How Philemon's Love and Faith:

1. Evokes Thanksgiving

vv. 4-5 – Paul gives thanks to God for Philemon's love and faith. This is evidence of Philemon's growth in maturity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Not only was Philemon actively serving the Lord, but also his family – Apphia and Archippus, who was a leader of a ministry in Colossae (Col. 4:17). Despite being in prison, the news of how the Spirit of God was moving powerfully through Philemon and his family for the advancement of the gospel was worthy of thanksgiving to Paul.

Biblical love is not just a feeling or emotion. The central theme of Biblical love is expressed through faith and loving actions (Gal. 5:6). It is putting love into action (Jam. 2:15-16). Faith without action is dead. Faith in Christ expresses itself through loving actions.

2. Binds Fellowship

v. 6 – Paul prays that Philemon's deep fellowship with other believers would lead him to a deeper understanding and put into practice all the good that God

has done for him and those around him, all for the sake of Christ. Christian fellowship is utterly important and is held together by love. Love is the super-glue that binds every member in a church tightly in fellowship. There are no autonomous Christians, just like there are no stand-alone body parts. Philemon's church resembled the early church in Acts (Acts 4:32-35) – a community in deep fellowship with love for one another.

3. Gushes Joy and Comfort

v. 7a – Philemon's acts of love were so beautiful that it brought comfort and love to those around him and even those who just heard about it, like Paul. Paul derived joy from the news of his dear friend whose life was showing the love of God. Turn to God and look to Him to remember all that He has done for you and find great joy and comfort in Him.

v. 7b – Not only was Philemon's life bringing comfort and joy but also refreshment and encouragement (Josh. 1:9) to other fellow workers of Christ. Through his loving actions of encouragement and serving those in need, the hearts of the saints in his house were refreshed. People were seeing the kind of Christian love that God desires for all His children to show (1 Cor. 13:6-7).

As a Christian, we are a beloved child of God; a fellow soldier and worker in His kingdom who can love people because God first loved us. His Spirit dwells in to help us love. Jesus came not to take love,

but to give love. We have the same God that empowered Philemon to love the way he did.