

Lesson 2

Philemon 1:3-5

Noel R. Vincent (04-Oct-2025)

Study Notes



*** Start the Recorder ***

Group Discussion

Reflection Questions from the Last Study: Introduction to Philemon 1:1-2

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:”

- o What did you get out of it?
- o What did it mean to you?
- o Did it change your worldview?
- o What was your favorite point or lesson? Why?

Introduction: Good morning. [introductory remarks]

Opening Prayer: _____.

Read Allowed: Philemon 1:1-8

Philemon 1:3 (NOTES)

- “*Grace to you and peace*” – A common greeting used by Paul in all thirteen of his NT letters, but it is not a trite platitude. He is offering a blessing that Philemon, his family, and his house church should enjoy all the benefits of God’s grace in salvation and in their daily living. As Paul says in the next verse (vs. 4), he is “*always making mention of [them] in [his] prayers.*” His desire for them to be blessed with “grace and peace” are among his highest prayer concerns for them. His blessing is the expression of his prayer for them.
- “*Grace to you*” – It’s Paul’s desire that the saving grace of God would pervade Philemon’s house church. Grace is extended without regard to the worthiness of a recipient. It is the unmerited favor and lovingkindness of God. Another definition of grace is getting what we do not deserve. But grace of which Paul speaks is more than that. Paul is blessing the believers in Philemon’s house church with the hope of God’s grace being lavished upon them as born-again Christians who have already enjoyed God’s grace in their salvation. There is more grace to be enjoyed.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: If a believer is already saved by grace (Eph 2:8) (initial grace), then how is grace to be manifest through prayer and blessing in the life of that believer after his conversion, and how is grace manifest in the life of a church that is made up of people who have already been saved by God’s grace? What is it that Paul hopes and prays will come from God in the form of grace to Philemon’s grace-saved family and house church?

- God’s grace extends to the whole of a believer’s sin, his sin nature, his pre-conversion sins, and his post-conversion sins.

- God's grace bestows upon the sinner forgiveness through repentance, and salvation through faith in Christ.
- In the post-conversion life of the believer, God's initial saving grace continues to secure the believer's salvation, even as he commits new sins each day.
 - **Rom 6:14** *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace."*
- By His grace, God does not hold our post-conversion sins against us. As Paul explained in Colossians (2:14), He has nailed all our transgressions (Pre and Post-salvation) to the cross.
 - **Col 2:13-14** *"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."*
- Paul's blessing and prayer are an appeal to God that each member of this house church would come to more fully understand and appreciate the grace of God that not only saved them, but also sustains them in their salvation, even as they sin as born-again believers. This can lift the tremendous burden of guilt and set us free from mourning and regret over our sins.

- From another perspective, God's grace is manifest in all the ways His lovingkindness is expressed toward us. He answers our prayers, He provides for our needs, He saves people when we share our faith, He grows and matures us in our faith and walk, He produces spiritual fruit in our lives, He blesses us with the desires of our hearts.
 - **Ps 37:4** *"Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart."*
- Concerning the church as a local body of believers, as in the case of Philemon and his house church, God adds to their numbers, He meets the needs of the church, He is present as they gather for worship or corporate prayer or in smaller groups, He guides the ministry of the church, He unifies the church, He builds up and equips the Body.
- Ultimately, Paul is expressing the desire that the house church "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ".
 - **2Pe 3:17-18** *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*
- *"peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* – Paul's desire for such peace in Philemon's house church would have been the result of their lives being steeped in grace.

- Among the Jews, “*peace from God*” was regarded as more than calmness of mind or the absence of discord, but wholeness, spiritual prosperity, contentedness and good relations with others within the church.
- He means peace that results from holy and righteous living in obedience to God’s commands, as expression of our love for Christ, and through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul prays for the house church to be at peace through the knowledge of grace - that even our current and future sins will not separate us from God and that those sins have already been “*taken...out of the way*” and forgiven.
- Paul means peace among humanity - first, within the body, for the members of the church to be at peace with one another. Second, Paul means for the believers to be at peace with all men (**Rom 12:18**), and to do whatever is necessary and within our power to be “*peacemakers*” (**Matt 5:9**).
 - **Rom 12:18** “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*”
- And he means peace in difficult circumstances, in great need, in great loss, in fear, in regrets, in pain, and in injustices, knowing that one day everything will be set right by God. All our tears will be wiped away, all our hopes and dreams will be fulfilled in Christ, and God’s justice will ultimately and finally prevail. There will be a judgement of the wicked, but by His grace we, the righteous, will be granted eternal life and will enter into our rewards. God’s grace in our eternal perspective gives us “*strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow*” (from the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness.)

Philemon 1:4 (NOTES)

- *"I thank my God [for] you"* – Paul is grateful for Philemon, a brother and co-laborer in Christ.
- *"always making mention of you in my prayers"* – Paul remembers Philemon by name in his daily prayer life, which demonstrates Paul's love for Philemon and the closeness of their relationship.

Philemon 1:5 (NOTES)

- *"because I hear of your love"* – Paul is praying for Philemon, as he says, *"because I hear of your love...toward all the saints"*. Among other matters, Paul is no doubt praying for Philemon's heart to be tendered in love toward a particular saint, his runaway slave, Onesimus.
- Paul commends Philemon for his devotion to Christ and to the Church (= all the saints), which would, and by implication should, include Philemon's love for Onesimus. Paul is laying the groundwork for his appeal by reminding Philemon of his obligation to love Onesimus as a fellow saint.
- The word Paul uses for *"love"* here is *agape*. This is not romantic love (Gr. - eros), or even brotherly love (Gr. - phileo), but a heart of charity toward other believers. The word *"agape"* appears 116 times in the NT. Of those, the AV (KJV) translates the word *"agape"* 27 times (one-fourth) as *"charity"*, which often conveys the best sense of the intended use of the word in the text.
- A *"saint"* is a person set apart for God's purposes, and the word (Gr. - hagios) shares the same root word as sanctify and holy. Born-again

Christians are saints by title (set apart by God), holy by position (separate and distinct from the world out of which we are called), and sanctified by process (continually being conformed to the image of Christ).

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Could it be said about me or you, that we are known for our love and of the faith which [we] have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints ? What is the real application here?

- Love is the basis for every moral human act.
- 1Co 13:4-8 Love is patient...kind...not jealous...doesn't brag...isn't arrogant... doesn't act unbecomingly [or] seek its own...isn't provoked, doesn't [keep track wrongs] suffered [or] rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. [It] bears...believes...hopes...endures all things...[and] never fails.
- God is love (1Jo 4:8) in the ontological sense (in the nature of His existence). Love is the foundational divine essence, and not a mere attribute or quality that God possesses. Rather, love constitutes the very essence of God's being - His ontology. God's fundamental nature is love, and love is the truest expression of His existence.
- God's moral attributes are manifestations of His love: mercy, grace, faithfulness, forgiveness, longsuffering, and justice.
- The Application: Love should motivate us to forgive.

Closing Challenge: *Note: The passage may challenge us to start or stop doing something, increase or decrease something we're doing, or change something. The following are merely examples. Draw your own from the text.*

- This passage is about our expression of agape love through forgiveness. As men of God, it challenges us to:
- Start doing something. (e.g. – praying with your wife)
- Stop doing something. (e.g. – skipping church for activities)
- Do more of something. (e.g. – opening up to a trusted friend)
- Do less of something. (e.g. – making decisions without input)
- Do something differently. (e.g. – disagreeing with gentleness)

Questions or Comments?

Small Groups