INTRO **A.-Christian Correspondence:**

1-Earliest **personal letter**
- --Only private correspondence of Paul's that is preserved
- --Priceless delicacy, **tact** & courtesy
- --IDEAL christian gentleman

2-**Good pattern** for handling of problems

3-Nowhere is the **SOCIAL influence** of the gospel in the affairs of believers more strikingly exhibited

4-Probably the **reason for this epistle** being preserved & included in the Canon of Scripture is the reference to "**the church** in **thy house**", which is where most of the early congregations met for the first 3 centuries

B.-History Behind Letter To Philemon:

1-**DEDUCED** from the letter itself

2-**PHILEMON**
- --Common name in region of Phrygia
- --**Wealthy** christian **slave-owner** in Colosse
- --**Saved** thru Paul's ministry, though we know nothing of the circumstances of his conversion:::possibly during Paul's ministry at **Ephesus**, the major city of Asia Minor
- --**Church** met in **his house** in Colosse
- --Called "**fellowlaborer**" & "**dearly beloved**"
- --Eerdman--"The love of Philemon, therefore, was no mere sentiment, no weak emotion, no empty profession. It was expressed **in deeds**."
- --**Apphia** was his wife
- --**Archippus** was their son & he is believed to have been PASTOR of the church at Laodicea (Col. 4:17)

3-**ONESIMUS**
- --Common name for a slave
- --Name means "**PROFITABLE**"
- --**Thief** and a **runaway** slave
- --Squandered his "fortune" of ill-gotten gain
- --Tried to hide in ROME, which was a metropolitan cesspool for runaways. SECRECY sought in the crowd
- --**KNEW** THE **GOSPEL** from having heard it as a slave in Philemon's house, but not a saved man
- --One has said: "He seems to have done just what the representative slave in the Roman comedy threatens to do when he gets in trouble. He packs up some goods & took to his heels."
- --**Unnamed** by Paul until 2/5ths of the way through the letter----after Paul has "smoothed the way"

4-**PAUL**
- --**Unknown** by face in Colosse (Col. 2:1)
- --Yet fully **known to Philemon** thru his ministry in Ephesus for several years (Acts 19:10)

--Now in prison in Rome, so he uses as his official title in this letter "A PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST", perhaps to gather a little sympathy for the contents of his letter.
--Indicates he has had contact with Onesimus

5-The Meeting of Paul & Onesimus
--We can really only conjecture on the "HOW" of it
*--Perhaps Onesimus committed a misdemeanor & he was put in jail
*--Perhaps he was on the street & met the Pastor from Colosse (Epaphras-Col. 1:7; 4:12; Phm. 23) who may have confronted him with the gospel or brought him to jail to see Paul
*--Or perhaps just desperate enough of heart that he heard Paul was in jail in Rome & he sought him out
--In any case, GOD BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER!!
--That's like our God to work on both ends at the same time.
--Let me illustrate that point:

Some years ago when SAM HADLEY was in California, Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman--a princely man of God--arranged a midnight meeting in Oakland, using the largest theatre in the city in order to have the largest possible crowd. On the night of the meeting a great procession, maybe 1000 people, from many different churches, led by a gospel band wended their way through the main streets of Oakland. Beginning at 10 PM they marched for an hour and then came to the Metropolitan Theatre, and in just a moment it was packed from floor to gallery.

Harry Ironside happened to be sitting in the first balcony looking down on the stage. He said that he noticed that every seat on the stage was filled with Christian workers, but when Sam Hadley stepped forward to deliver the stirring message of the evening, his seat was left vacant. Just as Hadley began to speak, Ironside saw a man who had come in at the rear of the stage, slip around behind the back curtain & stand at one of the wings with his hand up to his ear, listening to the message. Evidently he was not hearing well. In a moment or two he moved to another wing, and then on to another. Finally he came forward to one side of the front part of the stage and stood there listening---but still he could not hear very well.

Upon noticing him there, Dr. Chapman immediately got up, greeted the poor man, brought him to the front, and put him in the very chair which Sam Hadley had occupied. There he listened entranced to the story of Hadley's conversion to Christ.

When the speaker had finished, Dr. Chapman arose to close the meeting, and Hadley took Chapman's chair next to this man. Turning to the man he shok hands with him & they chatted together quietly. When Chapman was about to ask the people to rise & receive the benediction, Hadley suddenly sprang to his feet & said: "JUST A MOMENT, MY FRIENDS. Before we close, Dr. Chapman, may I say something more? When I was on my way from New York to Oakland a couple of weeks ago, I stopped at Detroit. I was

traveling in a private railroad car put at my disposal by a generous Christian manufacturer. While my car was in the yards, I went downtown and addressed a group at the Rescue Mission. As I finished, an old couple came up & said: 'Mr. Hadley, won't you go home with us and have supper?'

(3)

I replied: 'You must excuse me; I am not at all well, and it is a great strain for me to go out and visit between meetings. I had better go back to the railroad car and rest.'

They were so disappointed. The woman faltered: 'Oh, Mr. Hadley, we did so greatly want to see you about something.!

"Very well, give me a few moments to lie down and I will go with you." He then told how they sat together in the old-fashioned parlor on the horse-hair furniture and talked. THEY TOLD HIM THEIR STORY: "Mr. Hadley, you know we have a son named Jim. Our son was brought up to go to Sunday School and Church, and oh, we had such hopes of him. But he had to work out rather early in life and he got into association with worldly men and went down, and down & DOWN. Eventually he came under the power of drink. We shall never forget the first time he came home DRUNK. Sometimes he would never get home at all until the early hours of the morning. Our hearts were breaking over him. One time he did not come in all night, but early in the morning after we had waited thru a sleepless night for him, he came in hurriedly with a pale face & said: 'Folks I cannot stay; I must get out. I did something when I was drunk last night and if it is found out, it will go hard with me. I am not going to stay here and blot your name. HE KISSED BOTH OF US AND LEFT, and until recently we have not seen nor heard from him."

Mr. Hadley, here is a letter that just came from a friend who lives in California, and he tells us, 'I am quite certain that I saw your son, Jim, in San Francisco. I was coming down on a street car and I saw him waiting for a car. I was carried on a block. I hurried back, but he had boarded another car and was gone. I KNOW IT WAS JIM.'

"He is still living, Mr. Hadley, and we are praying that God will save him yet. You are going to California to have meetings out there. DAILY WE WILL BE KNEELING HERE PRAYING that God will send our son, Jim, to hear you, and perhaps when he learns how God saved one poor drunkard, he will know THERE IS HOPE ALSO FOR HIM. Will you join us in daily prayer?"

"I said I would join them, and we prayed together there in Detroit. They made me promise that every day at a given hour, Detroit time, I would lift my heart to God in fellowship with them, knowing that they were kneeling in that room, praying God that He would reach Jim, and give me the opportunity of bringing him to Christ. I HAVE KEPT MY PROMISE every day in these two weeks. My friends, this is my first meeting in California.... .....AND HERE IS JIM." *!

"Tonight he was drinking in a saloon on Broadway as the great

procession passed. He heard the singing, followed us to the theatre, and said: 'I believe I will go in.' He hurried up here, but it was too late. Every place was filled, and the police officer said, 'We cannot allow another person to go inside.'

Jim thought, 'This is just my luck. Even if I want to go and hear the gospel, I cannot. I'll just go back and get drunk. He started back to the saloon; then he returned determined to see if there was not SOME WAY to get in. He came to the back door, and he finally sat in my chair. Friends, JIM WANTS CHRIST, and I ask you all to pray for him."

There that night we saw that poor man, Jim, drop on his knees and confess his sin and guilt; accepting Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior. The last sight we had of Jim was when J. Wilbur Chapman and he were on their way to the Western Union office to send the joyful message:

"GOD HEARD YOUR PRAYERS. MY SOUL IS SAVED."

Oh, what a God, the lover of sinners that He is. He delights to reach the lost and the needy!!"

God works at both ends, — and we can count on that, and he did it also in the...

I.-SALVATION OF ONESIMUS:

A.-God Was Watching:

1-Delights in mercy
2-Watching over Onesimus, as he did over Jim, though both were seeking SECRECY & ANONYMITY in a large city
3-Brought Onesimus "TO HIMSELF" after his money was gone
4-Brought pangs of conscience & remorse

B.-God Was Working:

1-Meeting with Paul
2-How they met is unimportant
3-THAT THEY MET is the real issue!
4-Onesimus was brought by God to Paul for counsel on "how to make right" his foul deeds.
5-Doubtless Onesimus was aware of the PENALTY!
6-Sub-human status of a slave: "The slave has no rights". Theft was to be punished by lash, chain, mutilation, Starvation, crucifixion or being branded"C.F." (cave ferum= Beware the thief). A runaway was to be branded, given extra labor, and then subjected to a cruel death. To be spared under Roman Law it was necessary to have special intercession by a friend of the wronged master.

C.-God Was Winning:

1-Paul deals with the REAL PROBLEM
  --Not with his stealing hands
  --Not with his running feet
  --But with his sinful heart !!
2-Leads Onesimus to receive salvation from sin's penalty and guilt by accepting Christ as SAVIOR.
3-Onesimus--Becomes Paul's "SON" as Titus & Timothy (1 Cor.4:15)
  --The SLAVE of Philemon became the FREEDMAN of Christ

4-**Restitution**--Sure **sign** of a **changed heart**
--Luke 19:8--"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; & if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold."
--Want a good conscience before **BOTH** God and man
--**Unable to pay**, in Onesimus' case, but still wanting to **set it right**
--His **only way** of restitution is to SUBMIT AGAIN to the servitude from which he had fled.

II.-INTERCESSION FOR ONESIMUS:

A.-Paul's Solution:

1-He'd write a letter to Philemon
2-He'd give testimony of **Onesimus' salvation**
3-He'd become **SURETY** for Onesimus' debt
4-He'd **plead** the case--Paul does this by reminding Philemon that he might make a claim upon him, as the instrument of his salvation
5-ALL Onesimus was to do was **to carry** the letter to Philemon.....and **SAY NOTHING**!!
6-**Tychicus** & Onesimus traveled together from Rome to Colosse, each with a letter in his possession:
--Tychicus bearing "Colossians" for the Church
--Onesimus bearing "Philemon" for his master

B.-Paul's Communication:

1-**Philemon sees** Onesimus coming
2-Onesimus **refuses** to **talk**;;;;Just hands over Paul's **letter** to Philemon
3-"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother"
--Where did you meet him?
--**What kind** of a "snow-job"did you give him?
--Why are you delivering a letter from him to me?
--Is he **still** a **PRISONER**?
4-"Unto Philemon our **dearly beloved**, and fellowlaborer"
--My such kind words
--Paul always was overly **gracious**
--Really, **I don't deserve** that high a commendation from one like Paul, that I should be classed as his "fellowlaborer", even though I do know that he has deep love for me in Christ
5-"And to our **beloved Apphia**"
--That's "Mrs. Philemon"
--He calls her
--Says there's a letter from Paul the Apostle
--She **comes** & **sees** Onesimus.
--Don't know whether she said anything to him, but I expect her look at Onesimus would have withered dandelions

6-Phile. 1:3-7--**Commendatory words** soften their hearts
--Paul uses a LONG PRELUDE before getting to the "meat" of his purpose in writing
--Not really "**buttering them up**", but expressing freely his **warm appreciation** for this family who are dear to him.
--**Doesn't leap** into a difficult matter
--Something of letter writing can be learned from this example

7-1:7-8--Paul could **give "orders"**
--But doesn't consider that to be "fitting"
--"**Beseech**" is the language of grace & the heart
--"Yet for love's sake"--Onesimus, you must have really **put one over** on Paul to get him to write like this

8-"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds"--**Even convinced him** you got saved, eh?
--I wonder if you told him you were a thief & a run-away?
--However, I do **feel sorry** for Paul as a prisoner and still in chains...
--And at his advanced age, this must be taking a severe toll on his health

9-"Which in time past was **unprofitable** to thee..."
--That's an **understatement**!!
--A **thief** & a **fugitive**.

10-"But **now profitable** to **thee** and to **me**:"
--I'm not so sure of that!!
--Such a scoundrel become **profitable**??
--That'll be the day
--It would take QUITE A **TRANSFORMATION** of life to make you profitable to me, even if you have fooled Paul!

11-1:12--Paul certainly seems to have **come to love you**, Onesimus.
--He even calls you "mine own heart (bowels).
--Seems you were **some good** to him, even if you were a thief to me.
--Well, I'll not believe you're **REALLY SAVED** until I find out you've **confessed** the wrong you did to me.
--**Lost** for a season.....**gained** for eternity... How is that??
--Not a servant, but a brother beloved....I'm not so sure.
--**PROFITABLE** ** in the flesh---well, not in the past
** in the Lord--What proof is there???

12-1:17-18--"**Partner**"; what a term for Paul to use to one who is just a layman like me.
--"**Receive him** as myself"--Oh, Paul certainly is putting me on the spot now, Apphia.
--Wants me to **receive** Onesimus on the grounds of Paul's own relationship to me in the gospel.
--"If he hath **wronged** thee, or **oweth** the ought"
** Philemon is CONQUERED!

** Knows Onesimus must have made confession
For Paul to write in such manner.
** Repentance must have been part of such a confession or Paul wouldn't intercede for Onesimus saying; "PUT THAT TO MY ACCOUNT"
--Paul has full confidence that Philemon will respond affirmatively !
** Yet he uses no outward compulsion
** Just signs his own name as surety in 1:19-21

C.-Paul's Gospel Presentation:

1-Sin is against HEAVEN AND EARTH
--God has been wronged
--Man has been wronged also
--Worst offense is against God

2-Christ on Calvary is saying:
"CHARGE THAT TO MY ACCOUNT"

3-Each must receive that Divine provision of the saving grace of God FOR HIMSELF

4-Results:
--"Receive him as myself" 1:17
--As if it were me, Paul
--Eph. 1:6--"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."
--Not as a slave
--But as "MY SON", and as "YOUR BROTHER"
--No more a servant, but an honored member of the family of God
--"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed me white as snow
-Onesimus departed a reprobate; he returns a saved man. He departed for a few months; he returns to be with you for all time and eternity.
-FULL RESTITUTION because of the gospel
--God does bring GOOD out of the EVIL we make of our lives.

5-Christ became OUR SURETY:
--Prov. 11:15--"He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.
--Signing for someone else is DANGEROUS !
--Bad enough for a friend
--May cost you your friendship
--RIDICULOUS to do for a stranger or an enemy
--That is to "court disaster"
--Rom. 5:6-8
--Christ became our surety when we were strangers to grace & enemies of God
--2 Cor. 8:9--"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye

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through His poverty might be rich."
--Bishop Lowth's translation of Isa. 53:7--"It was exacted and He became answerable"
--Christ "SMARTED FOR SIN" for me-----and for you
--"He bore on the tree
The sentence for me,
And now both the Surety
And the sinner are free."

6-None other could have met the claims of God's holiness against the sinner and have come out triumphant at last. He alone could atone for sin. Because He has settled every claim. God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in glory.

7-LUTHER--"This epistle showeth a right noble lovely example of Christian love. Here we see how St. Paul layeth himself out for poor Onesimus, and with all his means pleadeth his cause with his master: and so setteth himself as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Philemon. Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus also doth St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon...We are all his Onesimi, to my thinking." (Pp. 317-318 of Lightfoot on Philemon)

III.-NEW LIFE OF ONESIMUS:

A.-Paul's Estimate:

1-"Son in the faith"--Phile. 1:10
2-"Faithful"--Col. 4:9
3-"Beloved brother"--Col. 4:9
4-"One of you"--Col. 4:9
*5-GLORIOUS EMANCIPATION of a former slave to a child of God and a brother in Christ

B.-Onesimus' Experience:

(Relationships transformed as a result of the gospel)

1-Before MAN----------Still a slave by law, though perhaps set free (??)
2-Before PAUL----------Faithful & profitable as a "son"
3-Before PHILEMON--------Profitable now (doing his work as unto the Lord, Col. 3:22; and also a "brother beloved" 1:16
4-Before CHURCH----------No distinction because a slave Col. 3:11, Faithful & beloved brother
5-Before SELF----------PROFITABLE; now living up to his name.
6-Before CHRIST----------A saint
7-Before FATHER----------A child
8-Before THE WORLD-------A WITNESS OF THE GRACE OF GOD

CONCLUSION:

A.-The Man Onesimus:

1-Sinful and running away
2-Met a faithful messenger who told of FORGIVENESS
3-Introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ
4-TRANSFORMED by his believing in the Savior.

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B.-The Messenger Paul:

1-Ministering Christ where he was

2-**Faithful** to His Lord wherever he found himself---even in a Roman **PRISON**

3-Showed Christian love, concern & suretiship

4-Believed there was **no other** really workable **way** to help people in their need

--Not a matter of **social action** or **world betterment**

--Rather, of a **CHANGED MAN** through the gospel

--**Only way** to really help the needy

--F.B.Meyer--"Not so much a matter of getting men out of the slums as it is a matter of getting the **slums out of the man.**"

C.-The Meaning To Us:

1-LUTHER--"We are **all** God's Onesimi"

2-Eerdman--"It must have been a sincere conversion, for Onesimus was **facing voluntarily** the fate of a runaway slave. He might expect any indignity, even the agony of the cross. Yet he was **willing to return** to the master whom he had wronged and to submit to any penalty which might be imposed. Surely Onesimus was a **transformed man**; his name has become a symbol of the redeeming power of Christ." (P. 122, Colossians & Phile

3-All must come to THIS SAVIOR, The Lord Jesus Christ to be saved

4-Every Christian is to be **a messenger** of this GOOD NEWS

5-**WHAT OF YOU???**

--A person **without life** in God??

--A man **with life** in the Savior and a **MESSAGE** of hope and help to those around you??

--Have **you** trusted "THE STRANGER'S SURETY"??

--If not....

...How about doing it **right now**??

--God's gracious invitation is open to you NOW.!

Westbrae--8/11/74 ③ #12--"Wonderful, Wonderful Jesus" 451

Valley Chapel Com Ch ① #97--"Blessed Be The Fountain" 196

4/29/79 ④ #198--"Just As I AM" 249

Lookout Bapt. Ch., WV - 3/27/83 ③ "At The Cross" 129

Oak Hill Bible Church - 10/30/88

Faith Bapt. Ch., Charleston, WV 1/11/98

Wile, Montevideo, UR - 7/17/98

Calloway Heights Com. Ch, Beckley, WV - 8/[illegible]/98

Bible Center Ch, Charleston, WV - 9/6/98

Hilltop Bapt. Ch - 10/4/98

10/18/98 - Faith Baptist Church, Prosperity, WV