

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES



Refresh My Soul Philemon

T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Refresh My Soul: Philemon

The Pastoral Epistles: Refresh My Soul: Philemon
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Philemon: Introduction

The grace of the Gospel changes everything. The refreshing of our souls is ultimately the work of God, but it pleases Him to use us as agents of grace, to bring the newness of Christ into all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

The book of Philemon shows us just how powerful God's grace can be. Not only can it bring new vitality and encouragement to our souls, but it can change the social order, create new relationships, and restore the world according to the original plan of God. In the story of Onesimus, the runaway slave turned believing brother, Paul points to all the ways grace can make the world new.

We who have received the grace of God must seek to grow in it, so that we may overflow His grace to the world around us, beginning in our homes and churches, and all the places God – and to all the people – God sends us each week.

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1 Postcard from Rome

Pray Psalm 113.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forevermore!

Read Philemon 1.1-3.

Prepare.

1. Who are these people to whom Paul wrote this brief letter?

2. What does Paul desire for them? Why?

Meditate.

Some commentators count Philemon among the pastoral epistles, while others do not. We are including it in this series, along with Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, because it is written, to a pastor, albeit indirectly (Philemon is the primary addressee), concerning a very specific pastoral and ecclesiastical matter.

Who are these people to whom Paul addressed this letter? First, they are a house church among the several that made up the church in Colossae (v. 2), a city in southern Asia Minor. The mention of Archippus here and in Colossians 4.17 makes this connection for us. Again, here is another glimpse at how churches were organized under Paul's leadership. There was one church in a community (to which Paul addressed the book of Colossians), but that church consisted of many house churches, such as the one that met in Archippus' house (cf. 1 Cor. 1.11, 16). Archippus was a "fellow soldier" with Paul, thus signaling his role as a pastor.

Paul considered Philemon a co-laborer in the Gospel – perhaps an elder in the church that met in Archippus' home. He seems to have been a man of means, since he owned at least one slave, and he had a house large enough to include a guest room (v. 22). Paul considered him a "fellow laborer" in the work of the Gospel, perhaps because of his financial support of the work, but also because he refreshed the souls of those who labored in the Gospel (vv. 7, 20). Philemon was the primary addressee of this epistle. Apphia may have been his wife or a prominent woman within the church (the Greek adds "our sister" after her name).

Paul's purpose in writing was to increase grace and peace among all the recipients – that the individuals may know grace and peace, and that the house church may as well. The way grace and peace are to be realized will be completely unlike the way people in the unbelieving world seek these, as we shall see. The issue to be dealt with was of such a nature that the entire church would have to be involved. Yet the principals addressed in the letter would have to take the right steps to make sure that the grace and peace of God flourished as Paul intended.

This brief epistle is little more than a postcard, sent by Paul, who was being held under house arrest for the sake of the Gospel in Rome. Timothy also had a hand in the shaping of this letter (v. 1), if only to affirm with Paul its purpose and contents. As we shall see, the letter to Philemon is rich with practical advice for bringing the new era of the Kingdom to refreshing and transforming expression.

Reflect.

1. What advantages did the first Christians enjoy by organizing their churches around households? Are we

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missing something by not doing this today?

2. Why are grace and peace so important for a believer and the church?
3. Would you describe yourself as a “fellow laborer” with Paul? Explain.

While keeping the social order here, Paul does not call some indiscriminate multitude “the church,” but only those who are bound together in faith. This bond sets the frame for Paul’s appeal in the letter. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428), Commentary on Philemon

Make me an agent of grace and peace today, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 113.1-6.

You will be under the watchful eye of our all praiseworthy God throughout this day. What do you want Him to see? Commit your day to the Lord, for His blessing and direction.

Sing Psalm 113.1-6.

Psalm 113.1-6 (*Amageddon: Who Is On the Lord’s Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!
From this day forever, magnify His fame!
From the time each morning when the sun is raised,
to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!
From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,
who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?
Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,
praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

2 Encouraged by Love

Pray Psalm 113.1, 7.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

He raises the poor out of the dust,
And lifts the needy out of the ash heap...

Read Philemon 1.4-7.

Prepare.

1. What kind of man was Philemon?
2. How did his walk with the Lord affect Paul and Timothy?

Meditate.

As a Christian, Philemon loved Jesus and had faith in him. He loved his fellow believers, and he devoted himself to refreshing their souls.. He shared his faith with others, and in so doing, realized more of the promises and blessings of the Lord (v. 6). Hearing about this man, Paul rejoiced and was greatly encouraged.

Philemon must have been a beneficiary of Paul's ministry. Paul thought of him as his "partner" in the faith (v. 17). He called him "brother" (v. 20). Everything about the tone of this letter suggests familiarity and friendship, It is understood that Paul led Philemon to the Lord, since he reminded him that "you owe me even your own self" (v. 19).

How did Paul, a prisoner in Rome, learn about this man's faith? Obviously, from Onesimus, the man he was about to send back to Philemon. Onesimus had been a slave in Philemon's home. He had run away from his master, but not because Philemon was cruel. He simply wanted to be a free man.

By celebrating Philemon's faith and love, Paul sets the table for the rest of his brief epistle. For he will ask Philemon to continue in faith and love, and in refreshing the souls of the saints, by receiving Onesimus back as a brother, and not as a slave. We can imagine that Philemon was not a little irked by this runaway, who may even have taken something as he fled (see Paul's comment about what Onesimus might owe Philemon, v. 18). He would need the love of Jesus to be lively in him to do what Paul was asking.

Paul is calling on Philemon to take up an act of genuine Christian love, and so he begins his letter by saying, in effect, "I know you have it in you because of Jesus." Knowing that this man he had led to Christ was continuing in the Lord and living in love for God and neighbors was a great encouragement to Paul, as it would be to any pastor, to see the members of his flock living for Christ.

Reflect.

1. What does it mean to refresh the soul of a fellow believer? When have you needed such refreshment?
2. Why does sharing our faith with others bring us more "of every good thing" which we have in Jesus? What are some of those "good things"?
3. Why was Philemon's faith and love such a source of joy and encouragement to Paul?

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Faith is said to be in Christ, because to him it especially looks; in like manner as in no other way than through him alone can God the Father be known, and in no other than in Him can we find any of the blessings which faith seeks. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Philemon 1.5

Increase my faith in and love for You, Lord Jesus, so that today I can...

Pray Psalm 113.1-7.

Thank the Lord for how He raised and lifted you, and pray for someone to encourage in the faith today.

Sing Psalm 113.1-7.

Psalm 113.1-7 (*Amageddon: Who Is On the Lord's Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised,

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,

praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!

Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,

raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

3 An Appeal for Love's Sake

Pray Psalm 113.2, 7, 8.

Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!

He raises the poor out of the dust,
And lifts the needy out of the ash heap,
That He may seat *him* with princes—
With the princes of His people.

Read Philemon 1.8-11.

Prepare.

1. Onesimus' name means "helpful" or even "profitable". How is Paul punning on that? Why?
2. How would you describe Paul's appeal to Philemon?

Meditate.

Having established that Philemon was a man of love, Paul now appeals to that love on behalf of Onesimus, the runaway slave. He could have commanded Philemon to do what he wanted, but he wanted him to do it out of love, not compulsion, for thus grace, not duty, would be the operative power (vv. 8, 9).

The name Onesimus means "helpful" or "profitable". But Onesimus was not profitable to Philemon, since he ran away from him, and may have stolen from him as he fled (v. 18). Onesimus sought out Paul in Rome – quite a long journey for a runaway slave. He was seeking freedom, and he must have reckoned that Paul could lead him to it, even though he himself was "a prisoner" because of his faith.

It appears Paul led Onesimus to the Lord (v. 10), and now, as we shall see (v. 12), he was sending him back to Philemon. This action is more complicated and fraught than it appears on the surface, and it is another brick in the foundation leading to the Christian opposition to slavery.

Reflect.

1. What was Paul suggesting to Philemon by referring to himself as a prisoner of Christ?
2. Why was it important that love, not compulsion, should prevail in this situation?
3. How was Onesimus "profitable" to Paul and Philemon (cf. Col. 4.9)?

I must stand in awe of the apostle's greatness of soul here, as a man whose mind burns for Christ. He is held in prison, he is constrained by chains, in physical misery, separated from dear ones, plunged into prison darkness, yet he does not feel the injury, he is not crucified with sadness. Rather, he knows nothing else than to ponder the gospel of Christ. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Philemon

Make me useful for Your Kingdom, Lord, and profitable to the people I will see today, as I...

Pray Psalm 113.1-8.

Bless and praise the Lord for the many opportunities He gives you to be useful and profitable in the work of

the Gospel. Commit yourself anew to serving Him today.

Sing Psalm 113.1-9.

Psalm 113.1-9(*Amageddon: Who Is On the Lord's Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!
From this day forever, magnify His fame!
From the time each morning when the sun is raised,
to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vs. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!
From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,
who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?
Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,
praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,
praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!
Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,
raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

Seated now with princes round Your glorious throne,
we by grace are lifted to become Your own.
Barren women, joyous, glad their children bear;
joining in the chorus, they Your praise declare.

Refrain

4 No Longer a Slave

Pray Psalm 113.4-6.

The LORD *is* high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens.
Who *is* like the LORD our God,
Who dwells on high,
Who humbles Himself to behold
The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?

Read Philemon 1.12-16.

Prepare.

1. What was unusual about Paul's sending Onesimus back to Philemon?
2. What was he expecting of Philemon?

Meditate.

Paul led Onesimus to the Lord, and the runaway slave immediately became a help to him in his ministry (v. 13). He loved Onesimus, and he would like to have had him remain in Rome. But before he could continue with Paul, Onesimus had to return to Colossae and set matters straight with Philemon (v. 14). First things first.

In sending back a runaway slave, Paul might be seen to have been in violation of the Law of God, which granted runaways their freedom (cf. Deut. 23.15, 16). The Old Testament permitted slavery (cf. Ex. 21.2-6; Lev. 25.44-46), but the form of it was far different from what was practiced in the surrounding nations of the time, or in the American experience. Slaves had rights, could wed and raise a family, own property, and be manumitted or purchase their freedom. It was unlawful to divide their families or treat them with violence.

And it was unlawful to return a runaway to his master. Paul made it very clear that he was not violating the Law. He was sending Onesimus back as a free man, a brother and not a slave. He assumed that, because of what he owed Paul in terms of his own life in the Lord, Philemon would acknowledge his authority and submit to his decision. Paul expected Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother, and not to reduce him to bonds again. Paul seems to have wanted his friend to send Onesimus back to Rome, to help him, in Philemon's stead, in his ministry. We note the emphasis on love that bookends these verses (cf. vv. 12, 16). Unless love – for the Lord, Onesimus, and Paul – were Philemon's motive, he would be acting by compulsion in granting Paul's request, and this would not fulfill the law of love.

In Christ there are neither slaves nor free, Paul had written (Gal. 3.26-29). This alone was a first blow against the wall of slavery, which was everywhere practiced in Paul's day. The manumitting of Onesimus was another plank in the foundation that would see Christians and others working to end slavery in the early 19th century, and continuing to work against it worldwide today.

Reflect.

1. What was Paul hoping to accomplish by sending Onesimus back to Colossae?
2. Though Christians continued to own slaves in the period of the New Testament and beyond, the Gospel laid the foundation for the elimination of slavery. Explain.

3. Why did Paul want Philemon's blessing on the action he took with Onesimus?

God does not tyrannize but rules, and when he rules, he does not coerce but encourages and he wishes that those under him yield themselves willingly to his direction so that the good of someone may not be according to compulsion but according to his free will. This is what Paul with understanding was saying to Philemon in the letter to Philemon concerning Onesimus: "So that your good be not according to compulsion but according to free will." Origen (185-254), Homilies on Jeremiah 20.2

Thank You, Lord, for the freedom I have in Jesus. Help me to use that freedom today to serve You by...

Pray Psalm 113.4-7.

Give praise to God Who, though He is high and holy, looks upon the needs of lowly wretches such as we, to touch us with renewing grace and power.

Sing Psalm 113.1, 2, 4-7.

Psalm 113.1, 2, 4-7 (*Armageddon: Who Is On the Lord's Side?*)

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

Praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain v. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,

praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!

Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,

raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

5 Refresh My Heart

Pray Psalm 113.1, 7.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

He raises the poor out of the dust,
And lifts the needy out of the ash heap...

Read Philemon 1.17-20.

Prepare.

1. What does it mean to be refreshed in your heart?
2. Why would Philemon's receiving Onesimus refresh Paul's heart?

Meditate.

Can you imagine being told by the apostle Paul that you could refresh his heart? Given the opportunity, would we not fall all over ourselves to do so?

This must surely be one of the primary objectives of reaching out to others with the grace of God. We want to bring the refreshment of grace to their battered, weary soul. We want them to experience the love of God, for their souls to beat with His Presence, for them to know His power affecting and transforming them, and for His beyond-understanding peace and joy to flood their being.

And this is what Paul said Philemon could do for him, by receiving Onesimus as a brother rather than as a slave. Paul could envision that transaction – Philemon's welcoming eyes, Onesimus bowing humbly, the two embracing, and Onesimus being welcomed to the congregation as a brother in Christ. The mere thought of that excited Paul, and he knew the actual performing of it would refresh his soul.

There might be some little mess to clear up between Onesimus and Philemon, but Paul says not to let that stand in the way of full reconciliation. Grace forgives and receives first, then addresses the remaining mess. Paul promised to take care of any outstanding debts when he comes. And to make that promise firm, he wrote this part of his letter in his own hand – as Philemon could see because of the large letters (Gal. 6.11), whereas the rest was probably dictated to Epaphras (v. 23).

Paul suggests an excellent way to begin each day: Ask the Lord to lead you to people whose souls you can refresh with the grace of the Gospel.

Reflect.

1. How does the Gospel refresh the soul? How do you experience that refreshment?
2. What we do or say has the potential to bring the refreshment of God's grace to the souls of the people around us. What does that suggest about how we should pray for the day ahead?
3. The Lord gives joy to refresh the soul, but He uses us to set the stage for His work of grace. Explain.

Paul writes at once movingly and with subtle spiritual grace. The idea is that since Paul did not refuse to extend his credit, [how ironic it would be] if Philemon should refuse to receive Onesimus! The mention of this deserved favor would both shame Philemon

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into compliance and bring Onesimus out of trouble. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Philemon 3

Use me today, O Lord, to refresh the souls of others, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 113.1-7.

Nothing refreshes the heart like the Gospel. How has it refreshed you? With whom can you share this refreshing Good News today? Pray for those opportunities now.

Sing Psalm 113.1-7.

Psalm 113.1-7 (*Amageddon: Who Is On the Lord's Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised,

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,

praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!

Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,

raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

6 Faith Praying

Pray Psalm 113.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forevermore!

Read Philemon 1.21-25.

Prepare.

1. How did Paul affirm and encourage Philemon in these verses?
2. What can we learn about prayer from Paul's instructions to Philemon?

Meditate.

Philemon was to understand that, while Paul wanted him to act out of love rather than compulsion in receiving Onesimus, the apostle was in fact giving him a commandment. Philemon was to obey (v. 21), but he was to do so out of love. The two are not contrary ideas. These days, obedience is thought to be wrapped in the fist of compulsion. No one wants to have to obey anyone. Obedience to anything external to one's self is considered to be the very negation of freedom and love.

But the Scriptures teach otherwise. Obedience motivated by love is what God seeks. It's what Jesus did when He came to earth to redeem His people from their sins. It's not enough to love God with deep feeling and gratitude. And it's not enough to obey God because we think we should. Love issuing in obedience, and obedience motivated by love: these are what God wants from His people.

To encourage Philemon, Paul told him he was confident that he would not only obey, but would do even more than he commanded.

Paul also encouraged Philemon to pray for his release and return to Colossae (v. 22). We note that the instruction to pray was coupled with instructions to act as if God were already moving to answer the prayer: Philemon should get a room ready for him. We pray in faith when, having prayed, we begin acting in ways that indicate we believe God will answer our prayer.

Though he was in prison, Paul had friends and co-laborers with him who wanted to be remembered to Philemon. And mentioning them as privy to the contents of this postcard from Rome would perhaps have strengthened Philemon's resolve to carry out what Paul commanded.

It will take grace for Philemon to obey; and Paul invoked the grace of Jesus to be with Philemon in the inner man, in his spirit. For true love and complete obedience arise from the soul, when the grace of God sets our thoughts, desires, and priorities to do His good and perfect will.

Reflect.

1. Why must obedience always be motivated by love to be true obedience? Why must true love always be expressed as obedience in some form?
2. "We pray in faith when, having prayed, we begin acting in ways that indicate we believe God will answer

our prayer.” What are the implications of this, for example, in praying for the salvation of lost people in your Personal Mission Field?

3. Paul regarded his friends as “fellow laborers”. Why is that a good way to think about our Christian friends? Is this how you think about your Christian friends?

He has finished his epistle with a prayer. And indeed prayer is a great good, beneficial, and preserves our souls. But prayer is great when we act in line with our prayers and do not undermine by our behavior the very thing for which we pray. And you, too, therefore, when you go to the priest, and he says to you, “The Lord will have mercy on you, my son,” do not trust in the word only but add works to your trust. Mercy is an excellent thing! Why, then, haven’t you shown it to another? John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Philemon 3

Give me grace for this day, Lord; help me in working my Personal Mission Field to...

Pray Psalm 113.1-6.

As you pray, settle it in your mind to praise God throughout the day for His many blessings and the evidence of His glory all about. And as you pray about meetings, tasks, or work to accomplish, seek His grace and strength, that He might be glorified in all you do.

Sing Psalm 113.1-6.

Psalm 113.1-6 (*Amageddon: Who Is On the Lord’s Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised,

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

7 Refreshment All Around

Pray Psalm 113:4-6.

The LORD *is* high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens.
Who *is* like the LORD our God,
Who dwells on high,
Who humbles Himself to behold
The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?

Review Philemon.

Prepare.

1. How would you describe the relationship between Paul and Philemon?
2. How would you explain the relationship between love and obedience to a new believer?

Meditate.

Power comes in small packages sometimes, as we have seen in this postcard from Rome. Paul's instructions to Philemon are designed to refresh the souls of everyone involved in this matter. That seems to have been Philemon's specialty (vv. 7, 20), and Paul played to it on behalf of the runaway-slave-turned-brother-in-Christ, Onesimus.

Paul was confident Philemon would do what was right, and he looked forward to being reunited with him and Onesimus in the near future. Paul's action was a blow to the practice of slavery, though it would take centuries for Christians to implement what this brief letter pointed to in the erasure of slavery among believers, and as far as their influence could extend.

It takes grace to make things right. Like Paul's other epistles, this one to Philemon is book-ended with grace (vv. 3, 25). This is not just filler or pro forma epistolary etiquette. This is Paul acknowledging the greatness of grace, the need of grace, and the certainty that grace is available for all times of needing to do what is right before the Lord.

Even for the challenges you and I face today.

Reflect.

1. What does this little book reveal about Paul's attitude toward slavery?
2. Why must love – for God and others – come before obedience for obedience to be full? How can we make sure we have the love (grace) we will need when opportunities arise?
3. What is your most important takeaway from the book of Philemon?

If the question is asked—“How can we have the same faith in Christ Jesus and toward all the saints?”—the answer is that you have love in Christ Jesus and toward the saints, and you have the same faith in Christ Jesus and toward the saints by a shared property.... It is because the same holiness is shared by the Lord and by his servants, as Old Testament usage shows. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Philemon

Thank You, Lord, that I am no longer a slave to sin, but a bondservant of Christ! Help me to fulfill my service today as I...

Pray Psalm 113.

Thank God for bridging the great gap that divides us, and for doing so much to lift, bless, and empower us to serve Him. Commit your day to the Lord.

Sing Psalm 113.1-9.

Psalm 113.1-9 (*Armageddon: Who Is On the Lord's Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised,

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,

praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!

Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,

raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

Seated now with princes round Your glorious throne,

we by grace are lifted to become Your own.

Barren women, joyous, glad their children bear;

joining in the chorus, they Your praise declare.

Refrain

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What are some things that make the book of Philemon important enough for the Holy Spirit to have included it in God's Word?
2. What do we learn from Philemon about obedience and love, and love and obedience?
3. How does the book of Philemon strike a blow against the practice of slavery? Is it thus contradicting the Old Testament practice of slavery, or bringing it into the grace of the Gospel?
4. Why does Paul bookend this and others of his epistles by invoking the grace of God? How is such grace available to us?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Philemon? How are you putting that lesson to work in your daily life?

For prayer:

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.