

## Philemon vv1-7

An Elder, Sharing the Faith With Household, Congregation, and Neighbor

**Thursday, December 7, 2023 • Read Philemon vv1-7**

*Questions from the Scripture text: Who wrote this letter (v1a)? What is his current condition? Whose prisoner is he? Who else is with him? What other title do they have? Whom are they writing? What two titles do they give him? What other two individuals does he address (v2)? What does he call Archippus? What does he call their whole household? With what two things does he greet them in v3? From what two Persons? What does the apostle do for Philemon (v4b)? How does he think of him (v4a)? For what two things about Philemon is he thankful (v5)? Toward whom is this love first directed? And to whom else—how many of them? What does he pray about Philemon sharing of his faith (v6a)? How does he pray that this effectiveness would happen (v6b)? What two things do Paul and Timothy have from Philemon (v7)? How much joy? Comfort in what? What has Philemon done that the Lord has used to give this joy and comfort?*

**What does it look like to labor for the Lord?** Philemon vv1-7 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **believers are prisoners, family, and coworkers of Jesus and one another.**

**Prisoners and Employees of Christ.** Christians know themselves to be made in God's image, and renewed into God's image in Christ. It doesn't trouble them at all to be slaves of Christ (cf. Rom 1:1, Php 1:1; Tit 1:1; Jam 1:1; 2Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1) or, as the apostle says here (v1), prisoners of Christ. Belonging to Christ exalts, rather than denying, their imaging God. And they view men the same way, as created in God's image. Indeed, they view believers all the more as in God's image, having been into the glory of His image in Christ. They are never prisoners first or slaves first, but men first, and especially saints first. This is something that Paul has in common with Philemon. Philemon is a brother, beloved, and coworker (v1).

**Lover of Christ and Christians.** Philemon combines his first-great-commandment love for Jesus with second-great-commandment love for the saints (v5). Not just some saints, who are easier to like, more closely connected, or of the right status/class. ALL the saints!

This is how Christ has transformed the law. Not a jot or tittle has been removed from it, but knowing Him as God directs the whole of Deut 6:4-5 toward Him. This is the foundation of what Jesus calls the New Commandment (cf. Jn 13:31-35). Just as loving our neighbor as ourself is a necessary consequence of our neighbor's being made in the image of God, so also loving our brother as Christ loved the church is a necessary consequence of our brother's being united to Christ.

Where did this good in Philemon come from? Christ Jesus Himself (end of v6). This is wonderful news for us, who would love to be described the way that Paul describes Philemon. We have access to the same resource, Christ Himself. Don't you, dear reader, wish to refresh the hearts of the saints to such an extent that Christ's eminent prisoners and laborers also have great joy and comfort just by hearing about this love (v7)? If that is your desire, then you may praise God that you know exactly where to obtain this: in Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, attendance upon the means of grace is just as much personally motivated as an attendance upon Him Himself as it is motivated by obedience because He commands it.

**Lover of Unbelieving Neighbor.** Philemon shares his faith (v5a). "Sharing" here is a fellowship Word, not meaning exactly the same thing that we often mean when we talk about "sharing the faith"—primarily because the first audience with whom he shares it is actually the other believers in his own home and in the church at Colossae. But Paul here prays that the sharing of his faith would "become effectual." We see in the passage that it is already quite effectual among the saints. So, we actually ought to conclude that Philemon has been laboring to see others brought into the fellowship of faith. In that way, his "sharing the faith" is quite similar to the way we use that language as a reference to evangelism.

Paul has been praying that the good that is in Philemon from Christ would be known in such a way that God would use to make the sharing of his faith even more effective (v5). Though unbelievers cannot have the good in them that Philemon had in him from Christ, Philemon's Christ offers Himself freely to all. Evangelizing is telling good news about Jesus (not ourselves), and what He uses to give faith is His Word preached (not personal testimony, cf. Rom 10:8-17). But the good that He has produced in the evangelist is one of the things that Jesus uses to commend evangelism in those to whom He is making it effective. And even with our sharing the faith in the church, one of the things that God uses to make it effective to others is their observation of the good that is in us from Christ (cf. Heb 13:7).

Now, Paul is writing to Philemon in hope of being employed as part of the answer to his own prayer. He has an opportunity for Philemon to give sacrificially for the work of the gospel. And the Spirit has inspired his letter about it as Holy Scripture, so that we might receive the very words of Christ Jesus right along with Philemon. The Lord make us lovers of Himself, and of brother, and of neighbor. And the Lord produce good in us, which good He will use to make the sharing of our faith effective.

How do you experience/express joy at being Christ's prisoner and slave? What neighbors do you need to value better as being created in God's image? What is your plan for doing that? What fellow believers do you need to value better as being united to Christ? What is your plan for doing that? With what neighbors are you sharing the faith? With what brethren are you sharing the faith? How has the desire to see that sharing be effective driven you to bear more good fruit in/from Christ?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for taking us as Your very own. Forgive us for when we have been so proud that we did not like to think of ourselves as being Your prisoner, Your laborer, or Your soldier. Forgive us for how little we share the faith with our neighbors. Forgive us for how little we share the faith, even with our brothers. Forgive us for when we have missed opportunities to refresh the hearts of the saints. Forgive us for when we have missed opportunities to thank You and praise You, by not observing every good thing that is in other brethren in Christ Jesus. For His sake, forgive us and sanctify us, we ask in His Name, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Fi leeman, We're just gonna take the first seven verses

Paul the prisoner of christ, jesus. And Timothy our brother. To phylliemann our beloved friend, and fellow laborer. To the beloved of fear. Archipus our fellow soldier. Into the church in your house. Grace to you and peace. From god, our father and the lord jesus christ. I thank my god, making mention of you always.

In my prayers. Hearing of your love and faith. Which you have toward the lord, jesus, and toward all the saints That the sharing of your faith may become effective. By the acknowledgment of every good thing, which is in you. In Christ, jesus. For we have great, joy and consolation in your love.

Because the hearts of the saints. Have been refreshed by you. Brother. Amen, the sins this reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

This. Letter to Philemon. Really ought to be included in the pastoral epistles. It seems quite likely from The way that he addresses him in these first, Seven verses that he is an elder in colossi. And as the apostle says here, Uh, He has been praying. The, the sharing of Philemon's faith.

May become effective. And this sharing is the. Um, it's the coin of neo word. The fellowship. Of your faith. May become effective. So that The first place of this sharing is actually in his home. And in his church,

And then, it does also mean. Evangelism, which is the way we ordinarily think of or use. Uh, the phrase, sharing the faith. But in the context here, It's especially in. Uh, the church in Colossi. And particularly the church. That is in Philemon's house. Now that phrase church in your house, at the end of verse two, There's interpreted by many who do not use the.

Covenantal household, which is such a strong feature throughout all of scripture. As way of understanding. The church in the house. And so they think that it means house church, Like, What was in china? For instance, many house churches. Uh, in the Early 80s. When i was growing up, that we would hear about But he addresses.

Finally men and the beloved affia. Is almost certainly, his wife. And archipus our fellow soldier. Maybe their son. Maybe a household servant or Um, Household attendant. But it's It's a household that he's addressing. And when he says the church in your house, he's reminding Philemon as the head of a household as one.

Who in the qualifications for an elder? Is supposed to be an example to the rest of the congregation. Of how a christian household should be run. And a christian household should be a little church. Including to the scriptures. Believing households should gather to worship god, when they rise up, and when they lie down, And the discipling that takes place between those two appointed times is continual everywhere they go.

When you go out, and when you come in, The great name upon the house. Is the word of god and the lord himself. That is the sign. That is on the gate. Moreover, when someone is being considered for the eldership, His leading in his household, the way he should lead in the church.

Is one of the qualifications. And it's not like, You know, there are some men who desire to be an elder and that's a good thing and they should lead their households that way. But normal christian families should be led some other way. No. All men. Who are the heads of households should seek to lead their household in this way that they would.

Share the faith. That their house would be a fellowship in the faith. And that. Church would be a fellowship in the faith. Now, the language here in verse 6, That the sharing of your faith may become effective. By the acknowledgment of every good thing. Which is in you in christ.

Jesus is very closely related. To hebrews 13 and verse 7. Here. There is this fellowship that is in the faith? Uh, with phylene in his household. And, We're looking at hebrews 13:7 to see that the language in verse 6. Shows that this is also a sharing in the church.

And one of the ways that it becomes effective is when god makes people to know, The good things that are in Philemon. That are. Uh, in Uh, christ jesus. Now, this is one of the ways that the lord blesses The sharing of the faith of a father. Of an elder.

And he believer. But specifically of the elder. Hebrews 13 verse 7, remember? Those who rule over you. And that. Remember word, and The considering word. Uh, later in the verse Are like the acknowledgment. Word in our Verse Philippians one verse 6. Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken, the word of god to you whose faith?

Follow. So. Share with them in the faith that they have have fellowship with them in the faith that they have. And hebrews 13 verse 7.

Talks about the outcome. Of the conduct of the elders who have spoken the word of god to us, And so, we consider. What god has produced in them. By christ. And what has come out of them from christ and from the good that is in them from christ. And as we consider that as we acknowledge that, we remember them and we follow their faith.

We follow christ like they followed christ. We believe the teaching of the bible. That they have taught us like they believe. That teaching of the bible. Which they first learned and then taught others. So that's hebrews 13 verse 7 and Philemon. One verse 6 is describing the same thing.

That the sharing of your faith or the fellowship of your faith. May become effective. By the acknowledgment of every good thing, which is in you. In christ jesus. Now verse 7. Helps us. In verse 5. Uh, help us. To know that this isn't just in his household and in the church.

Uh, but it's especially in evangelism. Because the fellowship of his faith is already effective in the church. Hearing of your love and faith, which you have toward the lord jesus and toward all the saints So, Not only is Philemon. Keeping the the first and second grade, commandment love, the lord your god with all your hearts.

Oh man, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. But his knowledge of god and love for god and obedience to god. Have been revolutionized. By the knowledge that jesus is god. And so, loving god, with all his heart, soul, men and strength has translated now, especially into loving jesus, with all his heart soul, mine and strength.

Because jesus is the person of the godhead in whom god has declared himself to us. He is the one who to whom this. The spirit unites us he is the one in whom we see the father As he as he told philip. And so we love the triune god especially by loving jesus christ.

As god. With all our heart. Soul maintenance strength. And Paul has heard. Sorry. Paul has heard. About this love that he has for the lord jesus christ. And And how has he loved the lord jesus christ. Well, especially by his love. Uh, for all the saints. Not just some of them, not just the ones that that are in his house of fear and Archipus, for instance, and, and asms who We'll hear about, and i'll Uh, next week.

Lord willing. Um, but all the saints, just the fact. That god has. Called them saint. And as made them, a member of his church. And Given him by the judgment of charity. To treat them as the elect of god. The in those who are united to christ and entwined by the spirit and adopted by the father.

If? Someone is a church member and has the name saint upon them. If i leave in, Loves them with the love that he has for jesus. The love for the saint is actually somewhere. It's kind of a hybrid. Of the first two, great commands. Not just loving your neighbor as yourself.

Because that saint is united to christ. Who is god the son? And so that's why you don't just love your your brother as yourself. You love your brother as christ has loved you. Because christ has loved you. Out of a recognition that you belong to god. As a believer as a saint.

In a way that the rest of the world doesn't belong to god. There's a first great, commandment love. That is involved. In the way we Think of and feel about and act towards other Christians. Or at least they're ought to be. And there was for Philemon. And, And, Not only was he doing it, verse 5, but it was effective verse 7.

Paul has great joy and comfort and Philemon's love because it is in him from christ jesus. Just as the hearts of the same sorts or And here is that, that visceral word the guts of the saints.

Have been refreshed by Philemon. And so, the lord has used Philemon to take that good. Which is in him. And multiply it so that Uh, the the good of christ. Is being increased in all of the saints. Through Philemon's ministry. And so, he doesn't just have this ministry that is in his household, he has this ministry that is to all the saints.

And christ who had produced good and Philemon as producing good in the saints. And paul is rejoicing over that. Well then why does verse 6 say that the fellowship of your faith may become effective? When verse 5 and 7, make it obvious that the fellowship of his faith has already been effective.

Well, for two reasons, one. Not everyone in the church. Has. Grown, in the faith. This is true in every church circumstance. But second, Philemon as an elder in the church, which we Uh, c is a Goodness necessary consequence from the way four through seven, talk about him and the way hebrews, 13 7 talks about elders in general.

Phylene, as an elder in the church is also to do the work of an evangelist. Not just to be an ordinary. Christian evangelist, which every ordinary christian. Gives an answer for the hope that is within them every ordinary christian. As careful how they speak to outsiders. Wanting to speak in a way that is according to light.

And according to grace, But elders in the church are commanded especially to do the work of an evangelist. And so, if ileman has, This faith in christ. That christ has used. To produce good that is in him. That he's sharing with. Affair and archivists in. And the rest of his household.

The church that is in his house in verse two, And that he shares not just with them. But, Um, evidently as part of his calling and his office in the church, he shares. With all the saints, verse 5. And verse 7, And so he is. A. Fellow laborer. Uh, verse one, he is an officer.

In the church. Well along with paul along with timothy. And, The labor that the lord has given him. Is. To serve christ in his home. And in the congregation. That believing in christ. The good that the spirit produces in him from christ will also be produced in them. From christ.

And so, Re2. Uh, should learn from hopefully our daddy. And our elders. To love the lord jesus, with all our hearts, all mind and strength. To love all the saints. That's christ, has loved us. And to labor. To see the good. Um to see good from christ jesus. Produced in ourselves.

Produced in our family. Produced in our congregation. And even. Produced in our neighbors. Pay the lord help us to do that. Spread. Our gracious gardener heavenly father, we pray that you would Give us the work of your spirit. To make us to love. Uh, christ and to love. Has saved.

Even as phylman did. We pray that you would bless to us the worship times. The fellowship and the faith that we have in our family. Pray that you would bless to us. The fellowship in the faith that we have in our congregation. We ask these things. In jesus name.

Amen.