

Title: Amazing Grace!  
Text: Philemon 1-25  
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Onesimus was a servant in the house of a believer, named, Philemon. Philemon had a church in his house--a faithful man-gracious and kind.

Philemon trusted this servant, Onesimus, with his goods—as a steward in his house. But Onesimus betrayed him, robbed Philemon and ran away to Rome.

The apostle Paul was in prison at Rome for preaching the gospel. There Onesimus heard Paul preach. The Spirit of God gave this runaway servant spiritual life, faith, repentance, and he believed Christ.

But Onesimus was still the servant of Philemon. He had wronged Philemon. Onesimus needed his master's grace and forgiveness.

So the apostle Paul is writing this letter to Philemon—on behalf of Onesimus—to make reconciliation between Onesimus and his master, Philemon.

**Proposition:** In this letter we see an illustration of God's grace which saves effectually and brings forth fruit in every believer.

## **I. FIRST, WE SEE GOD'S ELECTING GRACE**

Just as Onesimus belonged to Philemon, though he did not know it, Onesimus belonged to God. We know that because God called Onesimus to faith in Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2: 13: But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Application: My prayer, and the prayer of each saint here, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, is that you who are yet running away from God, may indeed be the chosen vessels of God's grace.

## **II. SECONDLY, WE SEE THE PREDESTINATING GRACE OF GOD**

Onesimus robbed his master—every child God who God saves is a thief and a robber: by Adam's transgression, by conception and by choice. Had God not sovereignly interrupted Onesimus, he would have remained a slave of the flesh and continued on his course of rebellion and went to hell. But God predestinated Onesimus before time began. Knowing full well what we are, every believer praises God for his predestinating grace.

Ephesians 1: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Therefore, God worked all things together to bring Onesimus to hear the gospel of his Redeemer through Paul. God put Paul in prison in Rome through God-hating, self-righteous men. God provided for, and directed this vessel of mercy to where Paul was, even the whole time Onesimus' was in rebellion--all to bring Onesimus to Christ his redeemer.

Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Application: This is the peace of every believer here for you dear sinner—if you are God’s, God determined the precise hour when he will bring you to behold what you are and who he is. Oh, that this might be the day!

### III. THIRDLY, WE SEE THE IRRESISTABLE GRACE OF GOD

**Philemon 1: 10: I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:**

Through Paul, God the Holy Spirit, taught Onesimus the truth of Christ

John 6: 45: It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Through the gospel of Christ—the Spirit of God rebirthed Onesimus--he was begotten again—a new man.

Galatians 4:6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

### IV. FOURTHLY, WE SEE A PICTURE OF GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST

**Philemon 1: 18: If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account**

#### Christ our Surety

Before founding the world, when God the Father gave a people to Christ-- Christ the Son of God, became Surety, saying to the Father, of all the wrong we would do and owe to God--“put that on mine account.”

#### Christ our Substitute

Christ the Mediator came forth as he promised and paid all that his people owed on the cross—substitution.

Isaiah 53: 5: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Illustration: Barrabas—and Christ—substitution

#### Christ our Living Intercessor

We see a picture of Christ who everlives to make intercession for each of his children in whom we have forgiveness for his sake

**Philemon 1: 17: If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.**

Every believer has been forgiven through the intercession of Christ: accepted as sons of God, received of God as Christ himself, accepted because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. FIFTHLY, WE SEE THE FRUIT WHICH GOD'S GRACE PRODUCES IN BELIEVERS.**

Everything that we see in Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus is all the fruit of God's grace given freely through Christ through the Spirit of God.

Paul commends Philemon's faith in Christ and his love toward the saints.

**Philemon 1: 5: Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;..7: For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.**

And Paul reminds Philemon that all is the fruit given him of God through the forgiveness he had in Christ Jesus.

**Philemon 1: 4: I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,..6:...by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.**

So Paul beseeches Philemon "for loves sake"—for God's love to him in Christ and love toward those for whom Christ laid down his life.

**Philemon 1: 8: Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, 9: Yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee*, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.**

A believer does not have to be forced. Our motive and the rule by which we motivate each other is God's faithfulness and love toward us.

**Philemon 1: 14: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.**

Notice, how Paul commends the fruit of God's grace in Onesimus.

**Philemon 1: 10: I beseech thee for my son Onesimus,..11: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: 12: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: [Paul speaks of Onesimus being a new man by God's grace—as trustworthy and useful as Philemon himself] 13: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: 14: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. 15: For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; 16: Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?**

**Application:** I want our new believers to realize something—to your parents who are believer's—you are much more now, than you were. You were sons and daughters in the flesh. Your relationship does not change—your father is still your father and your mother your mother. Oh, but now you are a son who is also a brother, a daughter who is also a sister. You have a father who is also a brother. A mother who is also a sister.

Wouldn't you have loved to have been there when Onesimus came back to Philemon's house! Knowing what great things God had done for Onesimus, how do you suppose Philemon received him? Remember the prodigal son?

Luke 15: 20: And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21: And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22: But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: 23: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry: 24: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

This is the fruit God's grace always produces in his children.

Ephesians 4:32: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

John 13: 34-35: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another

Such is the effectual, never failing grace of our God!

Amazing grace!

Amen!