

***The Home Church and Its Leaders***

**050103-3**

*Hello! This is Dorothy -*

What a joy it is that together we look at the **Book of Philemon**. This little book only has twenty-five verses, so perhaps you will find it in your Bible in the New Testament and you will learn something of this amazing little story. In fact, the first time I ever heard this portion of Scripture, it was a cold, bleak Wednesday night in the East End of London, where I was nursing. I had never heard of such a person as Philemon. I was a young Christian and I remember being so excited! I couldn't go home and sleep that night without having to read this for myself, just to see the story of how God broke through into the life of a slave in a situation where there were so many slaves. It was all so bleak and so hopeless there in that Roman empire with everybody under the control of this evil force. And here, God spoke to my heart that, yes, I had been a slave to sin, but now I was set free in Christ Jesus! In His love, I could love people. I need not see them from their background or appearance, but I could see them in what God was doing in their life. It is a marvel to witness the resurrection life of Jesus Christ in one another!

We read in this very first verse -

**1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon. . .** - *Philemon was in a different city from Rome, in Colosse - he was a man of God and, in fact he was considered to be a minister of God. - . . . our dearly beloved, and a fellow laborer.* It is interesting that Paul, who is writing this letter of appeal for the slave who had done Philemon harm by running away and at the same time having stolen from him, is wanting to send him back with this letter. Therefore, he is also careful to mention Timothy. He is like mentioning the two big men of the Church at the time. He is mentioning them to this other brother as if to say, "You know, God is doing this in our hearts for this man. Let Him do it in your heart, also." He speaks to Philemon as a **dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer.** I hope you see other Christians, whatever they are doing in the work of the Lord, as **dearly beloved, and fellow laborer.** It does not mean we all have to be doing the same thing, but the love of God needs to be exercised through our hearts toward them. Then we go on to read in **verse 2** -

**2 And to our beloved Apphia. . .** - *Apphia was the wife of Philemon.* This is interesting. In those days it was the women's responsibility to run the household, which meant all the servants, all the slaves, and whatever else went on in that household. So, in a sense, Paul was pretty wise here. He knew that she was going to be upset. This had really thrown her. Something had been taken from

the house illegally and this person had run away, which, in those days, was a crime which could be met by capital punishment. That was the law of Rome. Instead, Paul addresses this lady, also. He knew what she was going through and how it had upset her situation. Then he not only addresses Philemon and Apphia , but also —

**2 . . . and Archippus our fellow soldier. . .** - *I love that little phrase!* You see, anybody in the ministry realizes that it is not just the fun and games and you go around and everybody calls you Pastor. No, anybody in the ministry understands that it is a warfare. I want us to start, as never before, to pray for the pastors in our lives and to understand they are on a battlefield. This one was being addressed as **our fellow soldier**. This means he is out there in the conflict and he has to understand the hardness of the battle. Even in **2 Timothy 2:4**, we read: **No man that warreth. . .** -*that is as a good soldier of Jesus Christ - . . .* **entangleth himself with the affairs of this life . . .** *So when you pray for the pastor, pray that he will not be entangled with the affairs of this life - . . .* **that he. . .** *-the pastor - . . .* **may please him. . .** *- the Lord God - . . .* **who hath chosen him to be a soldier.** - *which means much warfare, but much victory in Jesus Christ.*

And the other situation to which Paul addresses the letter to Philemon is **(verse 2) . . . and to the church in thy house.** This is

interesting. We think of a big building as our church. No, the building is you and me in Christ Jesus. You know, we are a church when we meet in His Name as two or three gathered in His Name. It is not the building we are talking about; it is the presence, the glory, the power of the Lord, that fellowship that unites our hearts and builds us up, one another, in Him. You know that feeling. It might be a lonely situation where you work, and then you meet that Christian. Oh, the joy of just speaking of the Lord, sharing the things of Christ, speaking of the Scriptures. That is what the Church is about. And the Church met in homes. We even read back in another section in **Acts 18:7** when Paul entered into the house of Justus. That is where they worshiped the Lord and the . . . **house joined hard to the synagogue.** There was a big building and lots of religious activity, but no life and no victory — the denial of the resurrection of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. But they met in the house in the Name of Jesus. As they met in the house, may you and I today meet in the Name of the Lord Jesus and say, *We are His and as His, let us give Him all the praise as glory as we know Him.*

If you do not know Him, be sure and write today so we can give you spiritual help to know Him.

*In Jesus ' Name.Amen.*

