

Sermon text: Philemon 1 - 7

Historical background

1. Philemon was a wealthy Christian and a patron in Colossae.
2. Onesimus had run away from Philemon.
3. This was a loss of honour and a financial loss to Philemon

4. Under Roman law, the punishments for a runaway slave were very severe.

5. It is possible that Onesimus sought out Paul because Onesimus knew that Paul had converted Philemon to Christianity.

6. Now, Paul also converted Onesimus to Christianity and Onesimus was useful in Paul's mission work

7. However, under Roman law, Onesimus had to be returned to Philemon and Paul knew this.

8. Paul now writes this Letter.

RELATIONSHIPS

PAUL

Partners
(v1, 17)

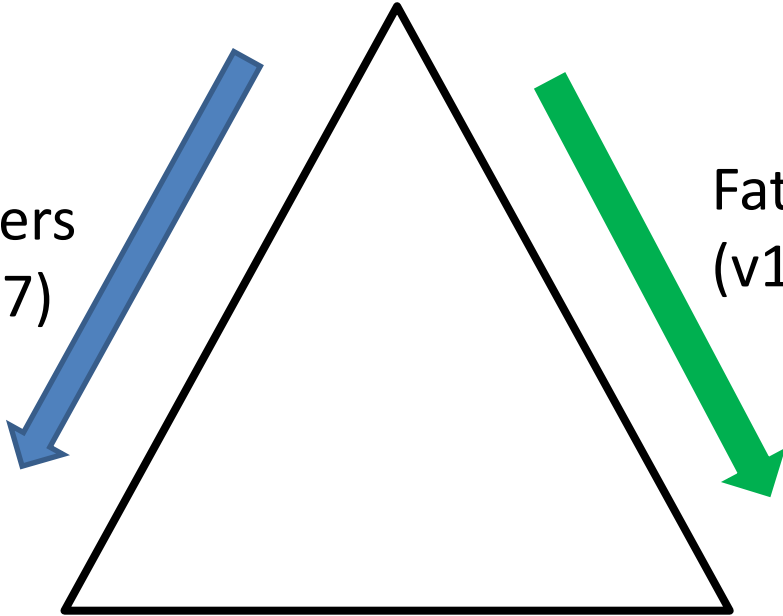
Father – Son
(v10)

PHILEMON

ONESIMUS

Master - Slave

HONOUR & SHAME



BEFORE THE LETTER

PAUL

Respect

Trust

Love
(1, 9)

Love
(v12)

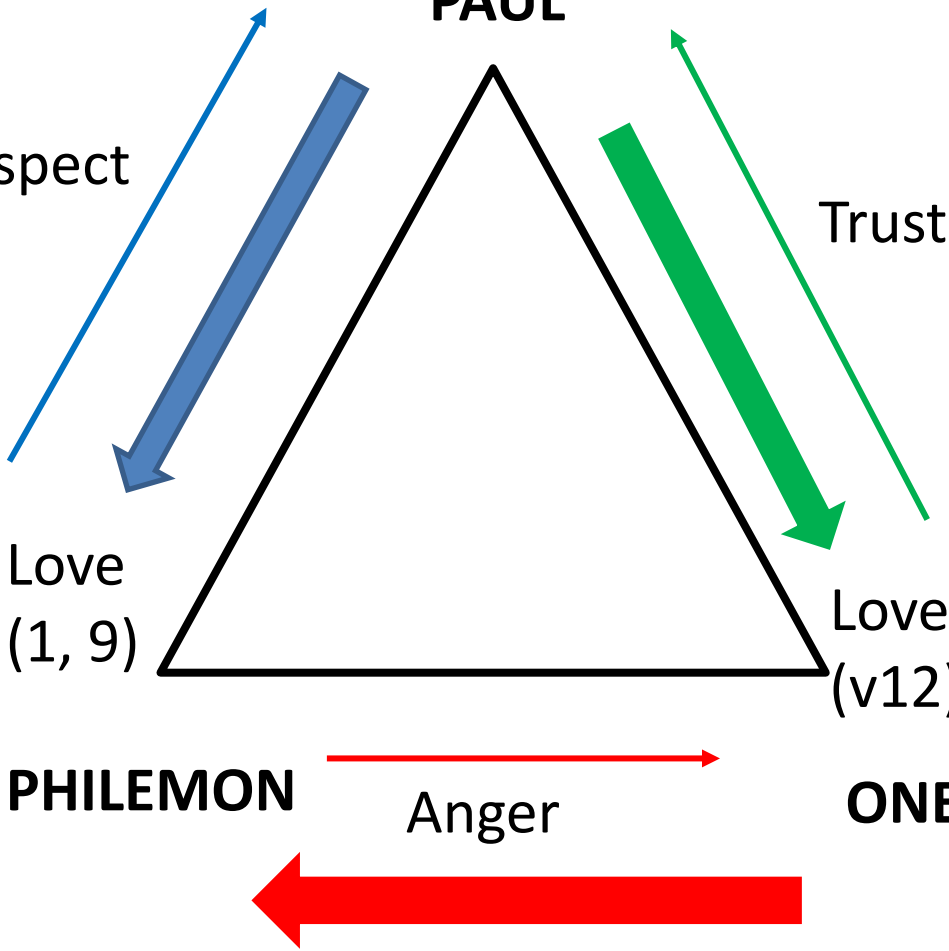
PHILEMON

Anger

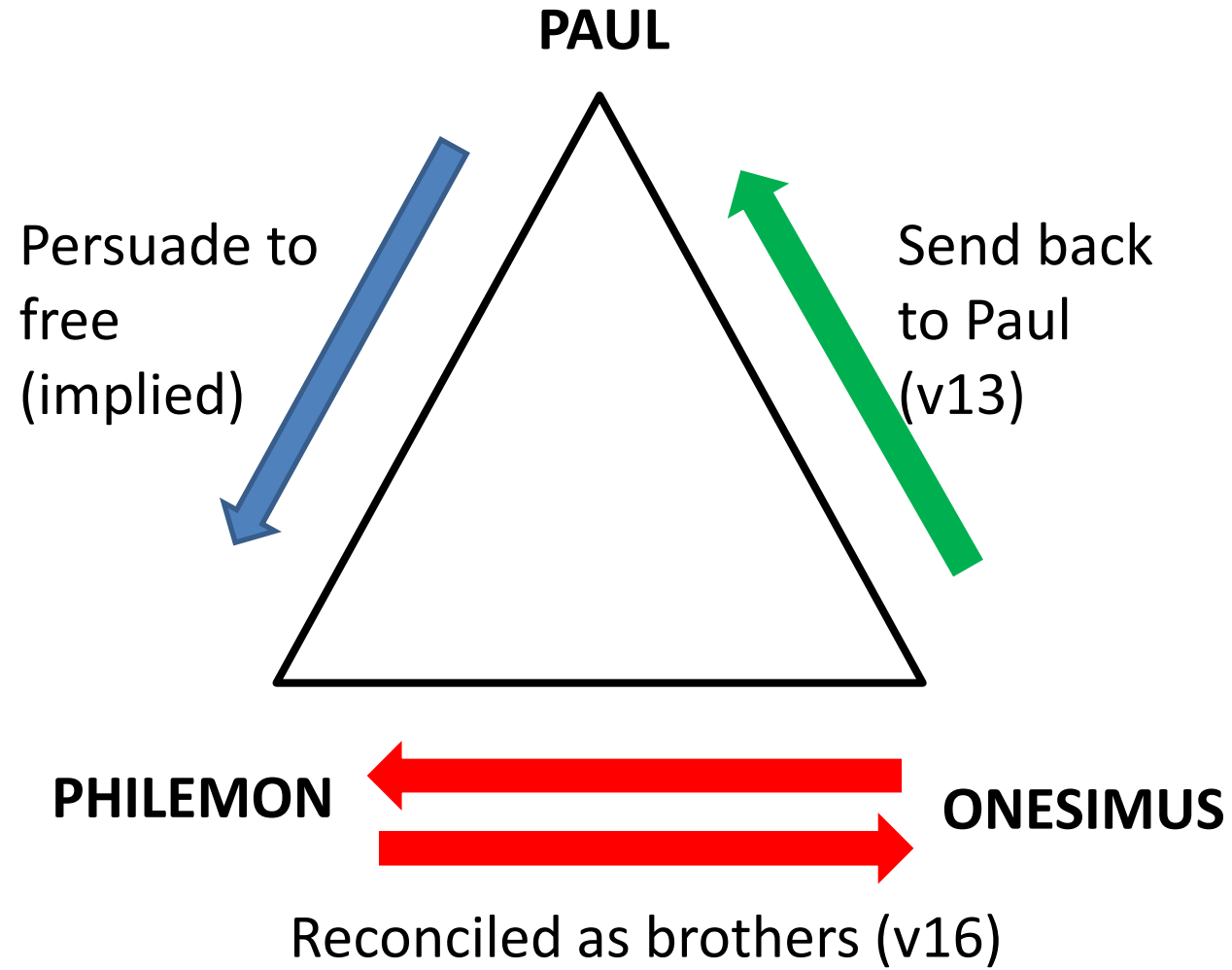
ONESIMUS

Fear

HONOUR & SHAME



GOAL OF THE LETTER



HONOUR & SHAME

Key points

V1 “prisoner” = “prisoner of war”

V1 “dear friend”: a term of endearment

V5

“your love” – i.e. your sacrificial, selfless love

“holy people” – insiders who are pure in God’s sight

“faith” – pledge of allegiance

“Lord Jesus” – Emperor Jesus

Verse 6

“partnership”: joint partnership in the gospel

“be effective”: ready to be productive/effective in the gospel

“understanding”: includes putting into practice the gospel work

“every good thing”: good works arising from God’s transformative work

Verse 7

“love” (agape) – Philemon’s sacrificial love in Paul’s partnership resulted in “great joy and encouragement” for Paul.

“ brother”

- Allow some faults between them & still remain loyal (v16)
- Display strong motivation to forgive (v16)
- Remember the good days together (v17)

Verse 7

“refreshed”: “give peace of mind”

“hearts”: not usual “*kardia*” but
“inward guts”. Represents the whole
person at the deepest level.

Summary

Paul writes to Philemon to persuade him to be reconciled to Onesimus.

Paul appeals to Philemon's love for the saints (v5).

Paul reminds Philemon that they have a common, shared goal because they are in a mutual partnership (v 6a).

For this partnership to be effective, it must be energized/powerful by the Holy Spirit (v 6b).

Paul calls Philemon “brother”.

Paul is “refreshed” by
Philemon’s love for the God’s
people.

Vv 1 – 7 is to prepare Philemon
for Paul’s plea for Onesimus in
the next section.