

# Sunday School Lesson

For Sunday, June 11

By Dr. Paul Caudill

Lesson For June 11  
**Topic: THE OUTBREAK OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD**  
**Lesson Text: Philemon 4-21**

The letter to Philemon is "the only distinctly personal one" that has come to us from Paul. It is the only one of "a mainly private character". While we have Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, it will be remembered that each of them has to do with church problems and doctrinal issues (Robertson, whereas Philemon, like John's epistle to Gaius, is concerned more especially with purely personal matters. Philemon lived in Colossae, along with Archippus (Col. 4:17), and Paul is writing him in connection with a runaway slave by the name of Onesimus, who belonged to Philemon and who likewise lived at Colossae. Paul evidently found Onesimus in Rome, and, after leading him to Christ, sends him back to his earthly master, seeking, at the same time to reconcile him to his master and to make restitution for whatever he might owe his master. It is a beautiful story, tender and affectionate, and has within it the germ seeds of freedom and brotherhood for all men in slavery—the world around.

### THE JOYS OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

Philemon 4-7

Following the salutation, our epistle opens with a glorious picture of the joys of Christian brotherhood. Says Paul: "I thank my God always, making mention of Thee in my prayers, hearing of Thy love, and of Thy faith, which Thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints; that the fellowship of Thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ. For I had much joy and comfort in Thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through Thee, brother." It will be noted that Paul is a prisoner, as he writes these words. Whether or not he writes with a "menaced" hand, we do not know, but the word "prisoner" which he uses (v. 1) signifies one "bound", a "captive",

one "in chains". At any rate, Paul is bold to say that in his days of imprisonment, he finds joy and comfort in the love of Philemon. The joys of Christian brotherhood help to sustain him during his hours of confinement. When one considers the character of Philemon, it is not difficult to understand why Paul found joy in his love. To begin with, Philemon was an active worker in the church as Colossae. We know this from the expression "fellow-worker" in the salutation (the term literally means "co-worker"). Here was a church member who was wide-awake and at work, and that with others—he was a co-worker. The trouble with a lot of church members lies in the fact that there is not enough "co" in their labors. They want to be the whole show, or not at all. Moreover, Philemon had a good case of the love way of life (see I Cor. 13), and the right kind of faith "towards the Lord Jesus". From verse 2, we see that Christians were accustomed to gathering in Philemon's house for worship. "In large cities there would be several meeting-places. Before the third century there is no certain evidence of special church buildings for worship (Robertson). (See Acts 12:12 for a similar use of Mary's house in Jerusalem, and Romans 16:5 for the house of Aquila and Priscilla in Rome). Such a brotherhood as that which existed between Paul and Philemon was bound to have its compensations—its joys. It always has—it always will!

### THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

Philemon 8:16

What is the basis for this spirit of brotherhood that existed between Paul and Philemon? From what did it stem? Is it the product of sheer chance? It is not. It is derived from a mutual fellowship in Jesus. That is to say, both Paul and Philemon knew Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. They both had more than a passing acquaintance with Him. The boldness that Paul has in approaching Philemon about the restoration of his unprofitable, runaway slave is

in Christ" (or, one might translate the phrase "with Christ" in the sense of Greek "together should perish"). Paul says that it is "for love's sake that he is beseeching Philemon in behalf of Onesimus. It is all happening 'on account of the love way of life that he is trying to live (see again I Cor. 13). Love is viewed by Paul as the ground or reason for his position. It is love that comes in between him and his act. And this kind of love to which he refers is that lofty, exalted love—the kind of love that flows from God to man, and from man to God, and from man to man in Jesus Christ. Only this exalted form of love could make it possible for him to take the step he was taking in returning Onesimus to his earthly master. The present status of Onesimus was that of a runaway slave. Paul wanted him to return to his rightful master "no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to Thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord". Paul sends Onesimus, the converted runaway slave, back to his legal master, but shows that he expects Philemon the Christian to trust Onesimus as a brother in Christ, not as a slave. If he could only accomplish this, he would deliver a master stroke. He would plant the seeds of brotherhood that would boldly point for Christian brotherhood. If men are to become brothers in this war-weary world, then they must learn the practical meaning of Christian love. Their brotherhood, if it exists at all, will be for love's sake, as was Paul's. And Christian love is possible only when men know Jesus Christ as Saviour, Redeemer, and Cleanser from sin.

### THE TEST OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

Philemon 17-20

Paul closes his appeal to Philemon by demonstrating in his own life the true quality of Christian love. He offers to settle with his own means any bad debts or obligations that Onesimus may have incurred before running away; "But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ". It took real courage on the part of Paul to write such words as these, but he was not afraid. If he could be used to restore Onesimus in the confidence of Philemon, and to open up the way for a nobler concept of human

### Champion Club In Meeting For June

The Champion Home Demonstration club held its monthly meeting June 3, at Mt. Pleasant school lunchroom at 2:00 o'clock p. m.  
 Mrs. Annie H. Greene was assisted by Miss Helen Price, assistant home agent. They demonstrated proper methods in canning, using pressure-cooker and hot water bath. Mrs. Greene explained the different types of cans and can lids and how to use them, and gave each member booklets on canning and drying meats, fruits, and vegetables. The club's secretary has moved away and we elected Mrs. Bruce Miles as secretary for the rest of the year.  
 The club has taken over the Mt. Pleasant cemetery and will work on the cemetery each Wednesday afternoon.  
 The July meeting will be held at the lunch room at 2:00 o'clock.—Reported.

### Hatchery Will Open On Ronda and Elkin Highway; Sell Feed

Walls Hatchery, to be owned and operated by O. P. Walls, is being constructed on highway 265 3 1-2 miles west of Elkin.  
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 relations, he would be willing to pay any price that might be demanded of him. In other words, he was willing for his own brotherhood to be put to the acid test of practical experience. The dividends in human relations would be worth the cost, whatever it might be. "These words", says A. T. Robertson, "sound in Christian countries and there are still millions of slaves in pagan and Mohammedan lands. Paul wrote the words with wisdom and courage and sincerity.  
 If Paul was put to the test of Christian brotherhood in his day, how much more are we today! Surely, we who know Christ must seek, as never before, in the wake of this tragic war, to manifest a spirit of true brotherhood—we who are Christ's. And we must strive to have an outreach that will touch life at its neediest points—here at the earth where we live . . . here and now!

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