

PHILEMON

The reach and depth of Christian Community

“When Paul writes to Philemon about Onesimus he offers the most thoroughgoing, absurd set of paradoxes in all of his letters” Sarah Ruden

Paul has three things in mind as he writes:

Partnership...

Leading to Restoration...

Leading to Reconciliation...

Leading to Inclusion

SLAVERY

What to do
between Philemon
and Onesimus?



RECONCILIATION INCLUDES
INCLUSION

Dealing with the issues...

Could Paul hide him?

Could Paul free him?

Had Philemon freed Onesimus when he got him back,
it would not have turned Onesimus into a full human being.

Could Paul Include him?

Paul, the gospel messenger

10 I am appealing to you for **my child**, Onesimus, whose **father** I have become during my imprisonment.

16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave,
a beloved **brother**—especially to me but how much more to you,
both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Now we enter into the great paradox Paul has put forward.

Greco-Roman Culture

“If you want one word to define social organization, religion and values in general for the Greeks and Romans of this time, you can’t do better than ‘fatherhood’” Sarah Ruden

The great paradox

Inclusion!

Neither bond or free, male or female, Jew or non-Jew...

Galatians 3:28

God's mercy lies in not giving us what we deserve.

God's grace is giving us what we don't deserve.