

Book of Philemon

- 1 **Paul**, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and **Timothy the brother**, to **Philemon** our beloved and **fellow worker**
- 2 And to **Apphia the sister** and to **Archippus our fellow soldier** and to the church, which is in your house:

10 I entreat you concerning my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, **Onesimus**,

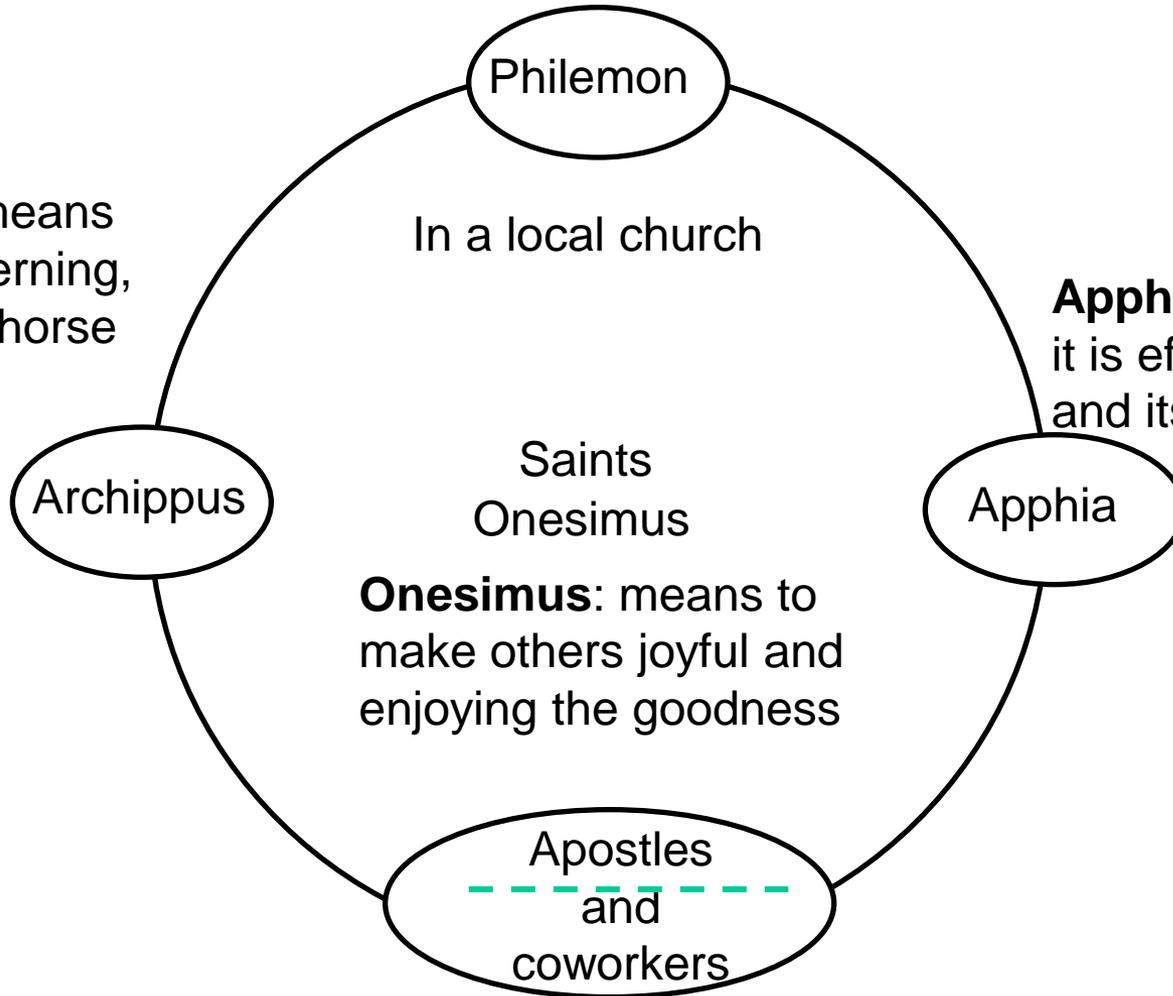
11 Who formerly was useless to you but now **is useful** both to you and to me.

Crucial persons mentioned in the Book of Philemon: Paul, Timothy, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and Onesimus.

Philemon: means the beloved who is full of love,
but also can have intimate relations with the saints

Archippus: means
capable, discerning,
and skilled in horse
training

Apphia: means that
it is effective, fruitful,
and its fruit that lasts



A Virtuous Church Life

Companionship among the saints

- a. Paul wrote to Philemon with Timothy (co-worker and co-writer, the brother (v.1)
- b. Paul considered Philemon to be his fellow laborer and his partner (v.1,17), and would not make a decision without Philemon's approval (v.14).
- c. Paul called Apphia (Philemon's wife) the sister indicating sweet mutual fellowship (v.2)
- d. Paul considered Archippus (Philemon's son) to be his fellow soldier (v.2)
- e. Paul considered Onesimus (who was a slave in Philemon's household) to be his beloved brother (v.16)
- f. F. Paul pleaded Philemon to receive Onesimus to be his partner (v.17)
- g. Paul considered Epahras to be his fellow prisoner (v.23)
- h. Paul ends his letter with greetings from a list of coworkers (v.24,25)

Book of Philemon

- Paul raised up a household (Philemon's family).
- It is sweet to be able to "owe" apostle Paul.
- Apphia's service is hidden. Church meetings were held in Philemon and Apphia's house.
- Marvellous and harmony relations need to be among the five pillars in order that the church can be profited. If any part does not function well, the church life will not that sweet and rich.

A Virtuous Church Life

A close relationship of love

- a. Philemon loved the saints and refreshed the inward parts of the saints (v.5,7)
 - b. Paul had much joy and comfort in Philemon's labor in the church (v.7).
 - c. Paul sent back Onesimus with a deep love (v.12)
 - d. Paul asked Philemon to **refresh his inward parts** (v.20)
 - e. Paul requested Philemon to provide hospitality (v.22)
 - f. Paul expected Philemon to pray for him (v.22)
- Love generates life and life sustains love.
 - Mother kisses the new born baby brought to her right after the birth.
 - Son runs to his father and mother.

A Virtuous Church Life

Basic virtues in a healthy church life (v 5 - 7)

a. Love

1. This love began with the leading brother, **Philemon (Love)**, and out from this love a corporate love was brought in by him, **Apphia (Life)**, and **Archippus (perfecting)**.
2. This love caused the apostles to have great joy and encouragement.
3. This love caused the inward parts of the saints (spirit and heart) to be refreshed.

A Virtuous Church Life

Basic virtues in a healthy church life (v5 - 7)

b. Faith

1. This faith issues from the best love.
2. When we have the faith toward the Lord as the source, which will be extended to be the faith toward the saints (church). This is the inward content a heavenly church life must have.
3. This faith becomes effective (operative, effective, energizing, and working) through healthy fellowship with the saints.
4. As this faith becomes effective, we are brought into a full knowledge of every kind of goodness.

Beseeching of the apostle Paul (Phil. 8-9)

- a. Paul has the boldness (the right) to charge Philemon
- b. Because of love, he would rather beseech
 - 1. As an aged, seasoned brother**
 - 2. As a prisoner of Jesus Christ**

Phil. 8-9 Accordingly, though I (**apostle Paul**) am bold enough in Christ to command you (**Philemon**) to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—
I, Paul, **an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—**

Philemon

Beseeking of the apostle Paul (Phil. 19,21,22)

- 19** I, Paul, have written with my own hand: I will repay; not to say to you (**Philemon**) that you owe me even your own self besides.
- 21** **Having confidence in your obedience, I have written to you, knowing that you will do even beyond the things that I say.**
- 22** And at the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that **through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.**

Virtue to receive the apostle Paul

- a. Not obligatory, but with a willing heart (v.14)
- b. Receiving without regard to social status or past history, but receiving as if one is Paul the apostle (v.17)
- c. Willing to forgive one's debts (v.18)

Phil. 14: but I ([apostle Paul](#)) preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but **of your own accord**. 17: So if you ([Philemon](#)) **consider me (apostle Paul) your partner**, receive him as you would receive me. 18: If he ([Onesimus](#)) has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, **charge that to my account**.

Who is Onesimus?

- I. Onesimus means to make others joyful and cause others to gain benefits (v.10-13)
- II. Formerly
 - a. A runaway slave of Philemon who ends up in Rome
 - b. A sinner
 - c. Useless (v.11)
- III. Under God's sovereignty he comes to Paul
- IV. Learned to be profitable (v.11)
 - a. Regenerated, begotten by Paul (v.10)
 - b. Ministered to Paul in the bonds of gospel (v.13)

Onesimus represents all the saints in the life of the church:

1. We are all sinners, having received the grace of God
2. We all owe our "Lord Jesus" but can still return to home (God's church).
3. We all can receive the help provided by the Lord and His servants, not only their care in "love", but also the fulfillment in "righteousness", and the reality of "sanctification".

How did Onesimus grow?

- V. Onesimus represents all the saints in the church life
 - a. under the covering of the pillars
 - b. Saw who he was
 - c. Learned to be with brothers
 - 1. Ministered to Paul
 - 2. Became a child to Paul
 - 3. Became as Paul's heart
 - 4. Sent by Paul to go back to Philemon to be received forever as a brother
 - 5. Received the covering of Paul in the matter concerning owing Philemon (vv.18-19)

Can we learn from Onesimus?

- We often declare ourselves as Onesimus, however, we may not realize that it is difficult to be Onesimus.
- **Onesimus must be willing to be perfected by Paul. Are we willing to be perfected by servants of the Lord?**

Colossians 4:

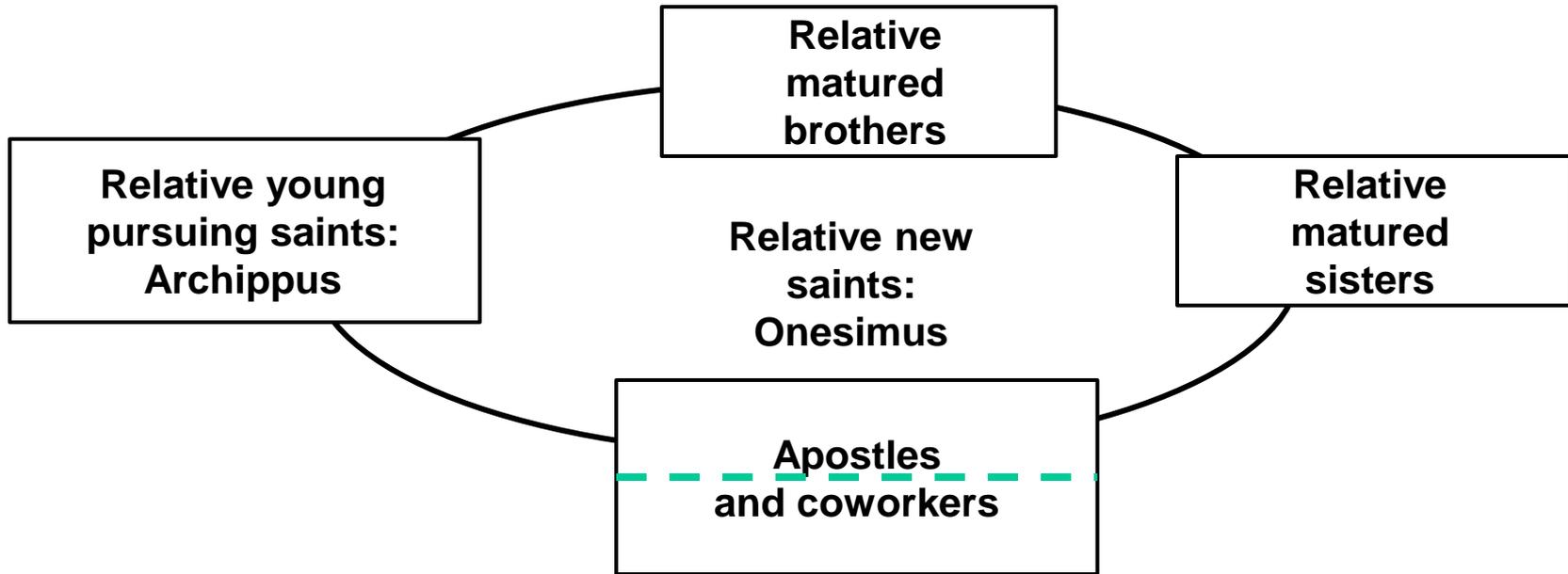
- 9 With Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all the things here.

How did apostle Paul perfect Onesimus?

- VI. What makes a church so blessed is not only pillars, but profitable brothers who are committed to the Lord
- a. Sent by Paul as a brother to be in the church life with Philemon (v.15-16)
 - b. Paul already viewed Onesimus as a faithful and beloved brother (Col. 4:9)
 - c. Paul believed that Onesimus would be brought into a loving, caring church life where he also could grow up to be a pillar
 - d. Paul could do this because he had such an intimate relationship with the leading brother Philemon

VII. Onesimus grows and becomes useful in the church life supported by five pillars

A local church needs to build up an organic service team



Apostles: Decide the breadth, length, height and depth of a healthy church life.

Co-workers: unite with the apostles and the churches.

Relatively mature brothers: Cooperate with the visions and revelations of the apostles and co-workers to lead the church and fellowship with the nearby churches.

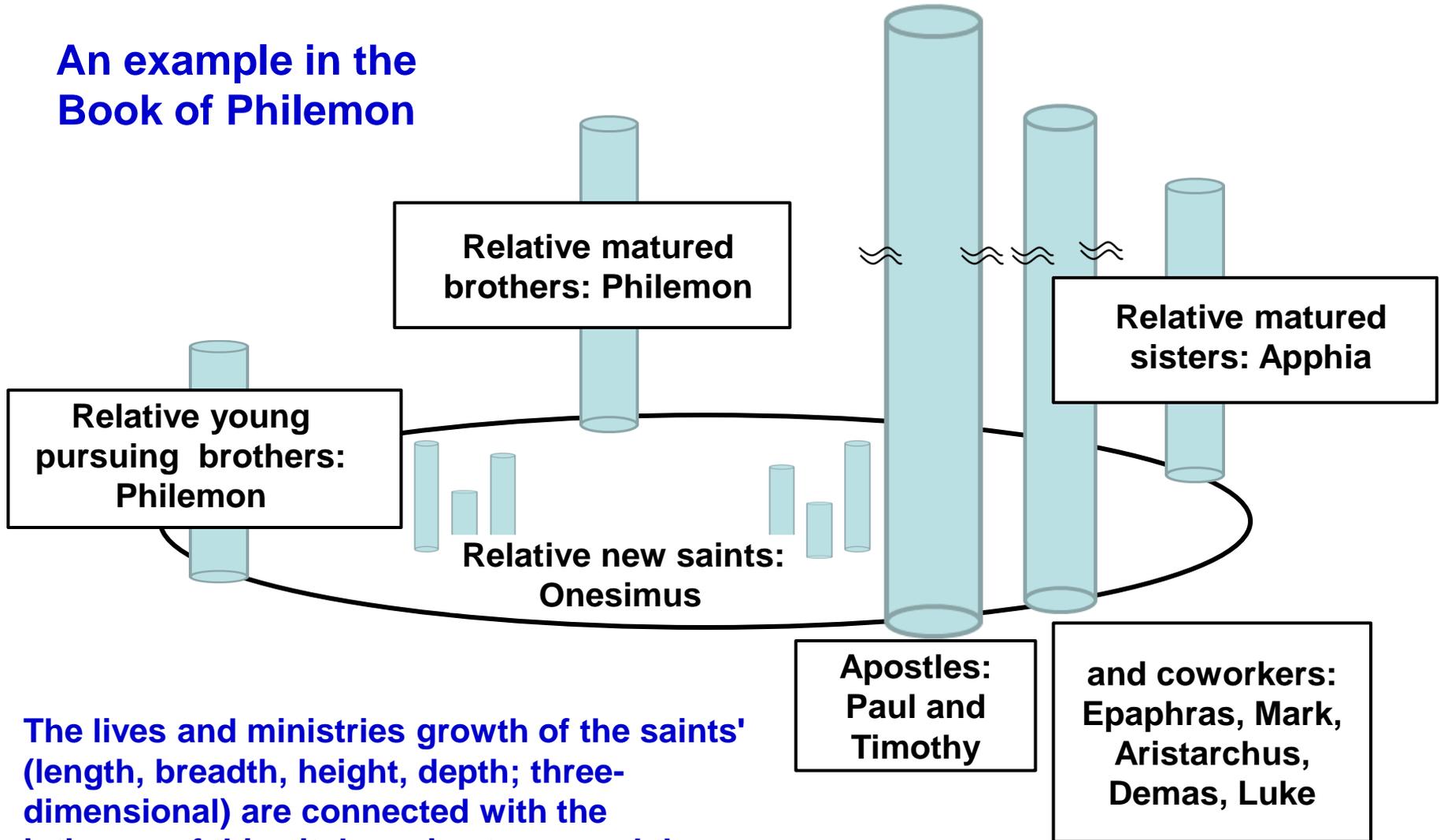
Relatively mature sisters: Support relatively mature brothers to serve the church.

Relatively young saints who pursued the Lord diligently: willing to grow up and fulfill their ministries.

Whom they serve: every saint in the church life.

A local church needs to build up an organic service team

An example in the Book of Philemon



The lives and ministries growth of the saints' (length, breadth, height, depth; three-dimensional) are connected with the intimacy of this vital service team, and the degree of how the saints abide in the teachings and fellowship of the apostles.

Why Paul sent Onesimus back to Colossae?

- The main reason could be that **he wanted Onesimus to enjoy and grow in the healthy church life at Colossae that consists of the care of five pillars** even Paul is a such capable apostle who also loves and cares for Onesimus.
- The ending of this book must be good, because this book remains in the Bible.
- God's sovereignty that Onesimus can meet Paul because the distance between Colossae and Rome is ~2000 km.

Saints should be in one accord to build up a local church

Phil. 23-24 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

- a. Epaphras - lovely and dedicated
- b. Mark - defensive, glowing
- c. Aristarchus - good leader
- d. **Demas - a popular ruler (means to gain men's glory)**
- e. Luke - the Illuminator

These brothers indicate that every local church needs help on four aspects (Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus and Luke) and **should be careful on one aspect (Demas).**

The help from four aspects:

1. Saints need the help of some brothers who love and consecrate their lives to the Lord and church, so that they can become like these brothers - represented by Epaphras.
2. Saints need the help of some brothers to defend the devil in truths and operations so that they can live out of human virtues in the divine attributes and become the testimonies of light -represented by Mark.
3. Saints need some brothers like the head sheep caring for the flock, while leading them like princes and also being good leaders who are willing to lay down their lives for the flock - represented by Aristarchu.
4. Saints need some brothers to help them to become the illuminators at their locality and exhibit the word of life - Represented by Luke.

Be aware of one aspect - represented by Demas:

1. Beware of those who use various opportunities, especially preaching opportunities to please the saints,
2. Beware of those who try to gain the popularity among the saints and divide the saints into sects.
3. Beware of those who turn the divine revelations into spiritual philosophy, and even into the deceptions of vanities, took the saints away from Christ.

Ephesians 4

- 11** And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- 12** For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

Ephesians 2

- 20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

These verses show us how important is to abide in the teachings and fellowship of apostles.

2nd Timothy 3

- 10 But you have **closely followed** my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance,
- 11 **my persecutions and sufferings** that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

closely followed: Parakoloutheo

Para: parallel, walk together

Koloutheo: way

These two verses show us how to abide in the teachings and fellowship of an apostle.

Timothy: Honoring God and being Honored by God

- Timothy was not a yes man.
- Timothy did not say any word in the Bible.
- He abode in the teachings and fellowship of Apostle Paul all his life.
- He grew in life and became an Apostle (1st Thess. 2:6)
- Bible scholars said that he later served churches together with Apostle John.

Timothy was an excellent example that he grew up in the church life and became an apostle. He was the co-writer with apostle Paul to write the Book of Philemon.