

a sermon from PHILEMON 15-16:

Not as servants, but as beloved brethren in The Lord JESUS CHRIST!

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## I. AN OPENING PRAYER

We shall open together in prayer with the first 2 stanzas of the well beloved hymn “Amazing Grace,” written by that former slave ship captain and sinner turned saint and Servant Minister of The Gospel, John Newton:

“Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see!”<sup>1</sup>

“’Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And Grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did That Grace appear  
The hour I first believed!”<sup>2</sup>

In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

## II. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – PHILEMON 15-16

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in The Lord?<sup>3</sup>

## III. A PROPOSITION

As we grow in The Lord, we become His willing bondservants and beloved brethren to one another! O GOD, make us then Thy willing prisoners of JESUS CHRIST!

## IV. INTRODUCTION

On December 21, 1807 AD, there was a certain 82 year old saint of GOD in CHRIST and Minister of The Gospel who died from this earthly life, that he might enter into eternal life Above. He had served faithfully for 28 years as The Reverend and Rector of a Church Parish in England at St. Mary’s in Wollnoth and Saint Mary’s in Woolchurch Haw. As a Christian man and servant of The Lord and His people, it was written in the obituary of this Clergyman, that – as a Christian – “His unblemished life, his amiable character, both as a man and as a Minister, and his able writings, are too well known to need any comment.”<sup>4</sup> But this was not always so with this man.

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Moravian Hymnal, “322. Amazing Grace,” John Newton, 1779 (1725-1807), Stanza 1. “The Life in CHRIST: Regeneration and Acceptance with GOD.”

<sup>2</sup> 1, Ibid., “322. Amazing Grace,” Stanza 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> 3, Piper, The John Newton Project, obituary from The Times, England, dated circa “21 December, 1807.” <http://www.johnnewton.org/>

He was once a hardhearted, cruel and hateful man. His only goal was to obtain the pleasures and riches of the world. He cared nothing for the pleasures and riches of Heaven, much less for the welfare and wellbeing of his fellow man. And in doing so, in the course of his chosen career as a captain of a slaving ship –carting human beings in abominably horrific conditions of bondage from Africa to The New World – he directly was responsible for the unspeakable chains, sufferings and deaths of thousands of men, women and children – some who died most horribly under his authority, others who lived a life of abject misery and pain in the cruel bonds of human chattel slavery. That man’s name was John Newton.<sup>5</sup>

John Newton lived from 1725 to 1807 AD. He is the author of the words of the beloved and well known Christian hymn, “Amazing Grace.”<sup>6</sup> But it was not until the year of our Lord 1764, when he was 39 years of age, that Newton was converted to CHRIST. The conversion came in the midst of a terrible storm that afflicted his slaving ship almost, but by GOD’s Grace not quite, to utter destruction.<sup>7</sup> PSALM 107:23-24 declares, that “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of The LORD, and His wonders in the deep.”<sup>8</sup> And they tremble! Such was John Newton, saved by The Amazing Grace of GOD at The Cross of CHRIST!

King Solomon writes in ECCLESIASTES 12:14, “For GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”<sup>9</sup> Newton’s works of evil in the service of the slave trade in his day have been judged by The Almighty as evil. But the sin-guilt over his soul has been wiped away by The precious Blood of The Lamb of GOD And his good works as a servant of The Gospel of CHRIST stand forever before GOD and man as a testimony to The Amazing Grace offered to all men at The Cross of our Redeemer!

Like John Newton, as with Saint Paul – and with a certain young slave named Onesimus whom Paul disciplined that we shall meet in The Book of PHILEMON – we shall see these things together: First, the Christian life calls us to grow in The Lord. Second, the Christian life calls us to become His willing bondservants. Third, the Christian life calls us to become beloved brethren to one another. And therefore, our constant prayer should be, “O GOD, make us then Thy willing prisoners of JESUS CHRIST!” So we shall see!

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<sup>5</sup> 4, “British History, Abolition of The Slave Trade, 1807 – The Business of Enslavement.” Nigel Pocock and Victoria Cook. British Broadcasting Company. Retrieved 1/24/2008 AD. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/slavery\\_business\\_gallery\\_05.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/slavery_business_gallery_05.shtml).

<sup>6</sup> 1, Moravian Hymnal, “322. Amazing Grace,” John Newton, 1779 (1725-1807). “The Life in CHRIST: Regeneration and Acceptance with GOD.”

<sup>7</sup> 3, Piper, The John Newton Project, “PSALM 107:23-32 & Newton's Narrative” of his conversion to CHRIST. Retrieved 1/21/2008 AD.

<http://www.johnnewton.org/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=72948>.

<sup>8</sup> 2, KJV, PSALM 107:23-24.

<sup>9</sup> 2, KJV, ECCLESIASTES 12:14.

## V. SOME BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

Matthew Henry observes of This Epistle Letter of Paul, that “Philemon, one of note and probably a Minister in The Church of Colosse, a city of Phrygia, had a servant named Onesimus, who, having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a prisoner for The Gospel, and, Providentially coming under his preaching there, was, by the blessing of GOD, converted by him, after which he ministered awhile to The Apostle in bonds, and might have been further useful to him, but, understanding him to be another man's servant, Paul would not, without his consent, detain him, but sends him back with This Letter-commendatory, wherein he earnestly sues for his pardon and kind reception” by his master in CHRIST. <sup>10</sup>

The Book of PHILEMON opens with this greeting, “Paul, a prisoner of JESUS CHRIST, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved... [other] fellowsoldier[s], and to The Church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from GOD our Father and The Lord JESUS CHRIST.” <sup>11</sup> And PHILEMON closes with These last Words of the scribe writing for Paul, “Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant.” <sup>12</sup>

Between these two places, This Epistle Letter involves much about this man Onesimus, a servant in the flesh and in station as a slave owned by Philemon, but now a servant in The Spirit and in calling of The Gospel and owned by The Lord JESUS CHRIST. Onesimus had apparently come to Paul and Timothy as a runaway slave of Philemon. He had been converted to Christianity and personally discipled by Saint Paul himself. <sup>13</sup> He had proved himself a most faithful minister of The Lord to Paul himself, so much so that Paul desires to have kept Onesimus there in Rome for his own blessing. But being owned by Philemon, Paul feels duty bound to send him back to his master, for he did not have permission to retain Onesimus with him in Rome. <sup>14</sup>

Even so, Paul sends Onesimus in his own place, as a fellow servant of The Gospel, “above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in The Lord!” <sup>15</sup> And any offense that Onesimus may have given to his master, Paul asks whatever is owed in any way, to be placed to the account of himself instead. <sup>16</sup> So much so, that Paul directs Philemon and The Church in his household to receive Onesimus “for ever” in The Love of CHRIST. <sup>17</sup> So much so that he who would receive Paul himself as a “prisoner of JESUS CHRIST,” “dearly beloved” in The Lord and “fellowlabourer” of The Gospel, <sup>18</sup> must also receive Onesimus in the same way! <sup>19</sup> So Paul entreats in PHILEMON 17, “If thou count me therefore a partner [in The Kingdom], receive him as myself” in The Lord! <sup>20</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 5, Matthew Henry Commentary, PHILEMON, Introduction.

<sup>11</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 1-3.

<sup>12</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 25.

<sup>13</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 10.

<sup>14</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 11-14.

<sup>15</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 16.

<sup>16</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 18-19.

<sup>17</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 15.

<sup>18</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 1.

<sup>19</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 9.

<sup>20</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 17.

Now does Paul endorse the institution of slavery itself, neither here or in his other Epistles? GOD forbid! He rather works within the time and place of his day, and by The Spirit of The LORD working in and through him, as he declares in ROMANS 12:21, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good!”<sup>21</sup> There is a higher calling set down here by Paul, that whatever our earthly station might be, we should all aspire to be a “prisoner of JESUS CHRIST” and “fellowlabourers” of The Gospel as the bondservants of The Lord! And as enough men’s lives and hearts are changed into The Likeness of CHRIST, so also society is transformed into The Likeness of The Kingdom of GOD with each soul saved at The Cross!

## VI. AS WE GROW IN THE LORD

First, the Christian life calls us to grow in The Lord. We find Saint Paul putting what truly matters in life in perspective for Philemon – and for us – as he reminds the earthly master of Onesimus in PHILEMON 15, “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.”<sup>22</sup> As Arthur Rupprecht observes, “The contrast between ‘for a time’ and ‘forever’ shows Paul’s conviction that the hand of GOD was at work in the whole situation.”<sup>23</sup> We see Paul can also be tactful, recasting the runaway slave as now having been prepared by CHRIST for an everlasting reuniting with his master, both men learning more deeply The Love and Grace of The Lord.

And to both men, Paul might well have said The Words of David in PSALM 37:27-29, “Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For The LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit The Land, and dwell therein for ever!”<sup>24</sup> Learn to grow ye in The Amazing Love and Grace of The Lord, and be ye fellow servants of one another in the work of our Divine Master’s Kingdom!

We might well hear Paul adding, “Yes, Philemon, this young man was once unprofitable for you in the flesh when he did not yet know GOD. But The Almighty’s hand was upon him, and you, all along! Now Onesimus is sent back to you in the everlasting bonds of liberty in CHRIST! He is forever in The Lord, as are you, and thus he shall be profitable to you in the things that truly matter for eternity. To grow in The Lord takes time. See what GOD hath wrought in this young man, that he has been such a blessing in CHRIST to me, so he shall be to you! Receive him then as you would receive an Apostle, even me. For in CHRIST you shall both dwell as equal heirs, both now and for all eternity, in The Promised Land of His Amazing Grace on earth and in Heaven!”

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<sup>21</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 12:21.

<sup>22</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 15.

<sup>23</sup> 6, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, PHILEMON 15, p 461.

<sup>24</sup> 2, KJV, PSALM 37:27-29.

As Saint Chrysostom observes, Paul bore every burden for The Gospel for the sake of others in The Love of CHRIST, which he bore gladly for The Kingdom of GOD! The most important possession of all for Paul "... was that he knew himself to be loved by CHRIST. Enjoying This Love, he considered himself happier than anyone else; were he without it, it would be no satisfaction to be the friend [all] of principalities and powers! He preferred to be thus loved and be the least of all..., than to be without That [Amazing] Love [and Grace] and be among the great and honored!"<sup>25</sup> To both master and slave Paul entreats that they be fellow laborers within the bonds of CHRIST, to love one another as The Lord loves us, giving themselves sacrificially for one another!

So to possess The Love of CHRIST was Paul's all encompassing purpose and desire, which he called both Philemon and Onesimus to! Paul discipled and instructs both men, that they both become willing prisoners of The Lord to one another! So does good overcome evil with good, in the possession of CHRIST above all else, as Paul declares in PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for CHRIST. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of The Knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST!"<sup>26</sup> O Lord, help us to grow in The Glory of Thy Amazing Grace!

## VII. WE BECOME HIS WILLING BONDSERVANTS

Second, the Christian life calls us to become His willing bondservants. Paul continues in PHILEMON 16, declaring that Onesimus is, "Not now as a servant, but above a servant...", he has become GOD's willing bondservant in CHRIST.<sup>27</sup> Arthur Rupprecht notes how Paul next ministers to both men, for "he contrasts 'slave' – a temporal and demeaning condition – with 'brother' – and eternal relationship in The Lord."<sup>28</sup> So The Lord calls all men into His Kingdom as brethren, as Paul says in GALATIANS 3:27-29, " For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all One in CHRIST JESUS. And if ye be CHRIST's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to The Promise!"<sup>29</sup>

Free indeed, and all One in The Lord! But what is the difference between a "servant" versus a "slave?" As Noah Webster says, in the world's eyes, a "servant" is one "...that attends another for the purpose of performing menial offices for him, or who is employed by another for such offices or for other labor and is subject to his [every] command." But there is a difference between this word and "slave" in the English, in

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<sup>25</sup> 7, Liturgy of The Hours, Book III – Ordinary Time – Weeks 1-17, homily, "For Love of CHRIST, Paul Bore Every Burden," Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop, p 1322, paragraph 3 - p1323, paragraph 1.

<sup>26</sup> 2, KJV, PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8.

<sup>27</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 16.

<sup>28</sup> 6, Expositor's Bible Commentary, PHILEMON 16, p 461.

<sup>29</sup> 2, KJV, GALATIANS 3:27-29.

that “the servant’s subjection to a master is voluntary, [but] the slave’s is not.”<sup>30</sup> But a “slave” is one “who is wholly subject to the will of another; one who has no will of his own, but whose person and services are wholly under the control of another,” in some cases made so by the conquest of war, in other cases “purchased [debasely], like [mere] horses and oxen.”<sup>31</sup>

The early Church Father Lactantius says, “GOD, Who produces and gives breath to [all] men, willed that all should be equal, that is, equally matched [in salvation]. He has imposed the same conditions of living on all, [life and death]. He has opened wisdom to all [in creation and at The Cross]. He has promised immortality to all [in CHRIST JESUS]. No one is cut off from His heavenly benefits... [if they will but receive them]. In His sight, no one is a slave; no one is a master. For if all have The same Father [Above], by an equal right we are all [His] children!”<sup>32</sup> And if so for the brotherhood of all men, how much more for the brethren redeemed by The Blood of The Lamb of GOD at The Cross?

A servant then places himself ‘in voluntary subjection’ to a superior for some form of agreed upon compensation between the two, while a slave is placed by others in involuntary subjection to an owner for no agreed upon compensation between the two. Therefore, “Every slave is a servant, but every servant is not a slave.”<sup>33</sup> But in CHRIST JESUS, men and women become – not slaves to GOD and one another – but willing fellow prisoners, dearly beloved brethren, fellow labourers for the bringing of and service in The Kingdom of GOD and The Divine King Himself.<sup>34</sup> And not only in Heaven Above, but here and now on earth in this life, through The Church and her Head, our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Such is GOD’s Amazing Grace!

#### VIII. WE BECOME BELOVED BROTHERS TO ONE ANOTHER

Third, the Christian life calls us to become beloved brethren to one another. Paul continues in PHILEMON 16, that therefore Onesimus has become “...a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in The Lord?”<sup>35</sup> For you were both doomed to drink the full measure of the just wages of sin, which is death.<sup>36</sup> But by The Amazing Grace of GOD in CHRIST, as Paul says in I CORINTHIANS 6:20, “...ye are [both] bought with a Price...,”<sup>37</sup> That same Price of The suffering and death of The Messiah JESUS, that you might both live in Him forever in His Resurrection and exaltation! Therefore, embrace one another in The Lord!

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<sup>30</sup> 8, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, entry “servant,” noun, p SER-SER, # 1.

<sup>31</sup> 8, Ibid., entry “slave,” noun, p SLA-SLA – SLA-SLE, # 1.

<sup>32</sup> 9, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry “Equality of Humankind,” p 236, 4<sup>th</sup> entry, paragraph 1. “Lactantius (c. 304-313, W), 7.150, 151.”

<sup>33</sup> 8, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, entry “servant,” noun, p SER-SER, # 1.

<sup>34</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 1.

<sup>35</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 16.

<sup>36</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of GOD is eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.”

<sup>37</sup> 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 6:20.



Consider that the word here in PHILEMON for “servant” is the Greek - δούλος - doulos, means “a slave, bondman [or] man of servile condition.” Such is how the world uses the word. But δούλος – doulos also is a Biblical metaphor for “one who gives himself up to another's will, [especially] those whose service is used by CHRIST in extending and advancing His Cause among men.” It may mean, in the highest sense, of being “devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests,” no more so that The Son of GOD for us His saints on The Cross, and thus we for Him!<sup>38</sup>

But now Philemon is called to receive Onesimus as adelphos - ἀδελφός – a brother, more than just of the same earthly parents, more than just a fellow earthly countrymen, but as joint heirs possessing The same Promise of dwelling together before The Almighty on earth and in Heaven, as “a fellow believer, united to one another by The Bond of [Christian] affection,” as “brethren in CHRIST” by The common saving Blood of The Lamb of GOD, as fellow members of The Body of CHRIST in The Church on earth now, and “as those who are exalted to The same Heavenly Place” into His eternal Body The Church Above!<sup>39</sup> And This, forever!

As Matthew Henry says, Onesimus is commended as a faithful servant in the flesh, because servant and master are now equal in the “spiritual brotherhood between all true Believers...” They are both now “children of The same Heavenly Father,” not only in His physical gifts of life, but also in His spiritual gifts of Amazing Grace! This “does not annul nor confound the respective civil duties, but strengthens the obligation to them, and directs to a right discharge of them.”<sup>40</sup> In Onesimus, True Faith produces the flow of Good Works in The Lord! Here is a true son of Abraham by Faith in JESUS CHRIST, now living proof of the axiom of Saint James in JAMES 2:24, that “...by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 10, Strong's Data, 1401 - δούλος – doulos, meaning: 1) a slave, bondman, man of servile condition 1a) a slave 1b) metaphor., one who gives himself up to another's will those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men 1c) devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests 2) a servant, attendant. Usage: servant 118, bond 6, bondman 1; 125.

<sup>39</sup> 10, Ibid., 80 - ἀδελφός – adelphos, meaning: 1) a brother, whether born of the same two parents or only of the same father or mother 2) having the same national ancestor, belonging to the same people, or countryman 3) any fellow or man 4) a fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection 5) an associate in employment or office 6) brethren in Christ 6a) his brothers by blood 6b) all men 6c) apostles 6d) Christians, as those who are exalted to the same heavenly place.

<sup>40</sup> 5, Matthew Henry, PHILEMON, verse 8-25, “The Apostle's Plea for Onesimus; Salutations,” I., v. 16, (1.), “Tenth Argument.”

<sup>41</sup> 2, KJV, JAMES 2:24.

Onesimus is even more commended as a faithful religious servant, a fellow brother in The Lord. For such are “more than mere ordinary servants; they have Grace in their hearts, and have found Grace in GOD's sight, and so will in the sight of religious masters...” So Paul entreats Philemon to receive Onesimus readily and lovingly, “as one of thy family and one of The True Faith, one of thy house and one of The Church in thy house!”<sup>42</sup> Here is a beloved brethren fit for service in the Christian home and Church under Philemon’s authority, as James says in JAMES 2:18, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works!”<sup>43</sup> “Prove him,” says Paul to Philemon, “And you will find GOD’s Amazing Grace has refined and purified him in The Gospel of our Lord!”

#### IX. O GOD, MAKE US THEN THY WILLING PRISONERS OF JESUS CHRIST!

Having seen all this, our constant prayer should be, “O GOD, make us then Thy willing prisoners of JESUS CHRIST!” Now we may better understand the message here as Paul dictates This Epistle Letter, which ends, “...Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant.”<sup>44</sup> Paul declares the common bonds of being willing prisoners of JESUS CHRIST between himself, Timothy, Philemon and Onesimus. He opens in PHILEMON 1-3, “Paul, a prisoner of JESUS CHRIST, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved... [other] fellowsoldier[s], and to The Church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from GOD our Father and The Lord JESUS CHRIST!”<sup>45</sup> And thus Paul closes in PHILEMON 25, “The Grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST be with your spirit. Amen...!”<sup>46</sup>

Now here is an example of “The Hound of Heaven,” That Divine Providence which calls, redeems and rebirths into righteousness those who GOD would have as His adopted heirs! John Calvin observes, “that the elect of GOD are sometimes brought to salvation by a method that could not have been believed, contrary to general expectation, by circuitous windings, and even by labyrinths. Onesimus lived in a religious and holy family, and, being banished from it by his own evil actions, he deliberately, as it were, withdraws far from GOD and from eternal life. Yet GOD, by hidden Providence, wonderfully directs his pernicious flight, so that he meets with Paul,” hears The Gospel of CHRIST preached and sees it lived, is convicted by The Grace of GOD, repents and receives new life in The Lord, becoming a willing prisoner for JESUS CHRIST!<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> 5, Matthew Henry, PHILEMON, verse 8-25, “The Apostle’s Plea for Onesimus; Salutations,” I., v. 16, (2.), “Tenth Argument.”

<sup>43</sup> 2, KJV, JAMES 2:18.

<sup>44</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 25.

<sup>45</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 1-3.

<sup>46</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 25.

<sup>47</sup> 11, Calvin’s Commentaries on TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON, Verses 15-19, “15. For perhaps he was separated,” page 209, paragraph 8.

Both Newton and Paul, like Onesimus and his earthly master Philemon, are no longer either slaves of and servants to sin, darkness and death. Rather, by The Grace of GOD at The Cross, they are both transformed into willing fellow bondservants to GOD's righteousness, light and life! And in doing so, also to one another! They become, by The Spirit of GOD working in them, each a "prisoner of JESUS CHRIST," brothers, dearly beloved to one another and fellowlabourers in for The Gospel in The Kingdom of The Lord!"<sup>48</sup> They become "servants" of one another and of The Lord Himself, in flesh and in spirit, by The Grace of GOD!<sup>49</sup> Fellow willing bondservants in The same Lord as new creations, reborn into His Likeness as they both were made in His Image!<sup>50</sup>

And an Amazing Grace it is that saves sinners such as these, and such as us, that goes before us, brings us into His Loving Presence and keeps us there! Such Amazing Grace, as The Catechism of The Catholic Church declares, is That Divine Gift which justifies us by the hand of GOD by His favor towards us, "the free and undeserved help that GOD gives us to respond to His Call to become children of GOD, adoptive sons [and daughters], partakers of The divine Nature and of eternal life!"<sup>51</sup> Such is This Amazing Grace in CHRIST, "The gratuitous Gift that GOD makes to us of His Own Life, infused by The HOLY SPIRIT into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it, washed in body by the waters of Baptism and in The Spirit by The Blood of The Lamb of GOD!"<sup>52</sup>

## X. IN CONCLUSION

What then do we see here in The Book of PHILEMON? We see The living and acting Divine Word of GOD Who inspired The Holy Scriptures buying back lost sinners from the slavery of darkness and death into the liberty of Divine Light and new Life in The Lord! It is The same Divine Word of GOD Who saved the slaver John Newton to make him The Reverend John Newton! It is the same Divine Word of GOD Who saved Saul the Pharisee enforcer to make him Paul The Apostle! It is the same Divine Word of GOD Who teaches both Philemon and Onesimus to love The LORD with all their hearts, minds and souls and one another as and above themselves<sup>53</sup> - and we as well!

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<sup>48</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 1.

<sup>49</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 16.

<sup>50</sup> 2, KJV, II CORINTHIANS 5:17-18, "Therefore if any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of GOD, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by JESUS CHRIST, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

<sup>51</sup> 12, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1996, p 538. "Grace."

<sup>52</sup> 12, Ibid., # 1999, p 538.

<sup>53</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40, "Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law? JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is The First and Great Commandment. And The Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On These Two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets."

Let us be clear that Paul does not endorse the institution of slavery itself, either here or in his other Epistles. Human slavery was part of the cruel fabric of society in which The LORD was using Paul and others to redeem fallen men. This was part of the sad and sinful background of society in the time of Newton as well. The antidote that both men find to overcome evil, both in their own lives and in the societies in which they lived, is The Divine Grace and Love of GOD. The prescription is to bring men to live out The Two Great Commandments – to love GOD and one another<sup>54</sup> – by bringing them to be born again in JESUS CHRIST.<sup>55</sup> We do not bring down strongholds of wickedness with greater wickedness. GOD forbid! It is at The Cross that all evil is overcome by good!

In our Scripture Text we see The Principles of Divine Love and Grace at work, changing lives and saving souls in CHRIST, destroying barriers of godless cruelty and infusing the world of men with the righteousness of GOD! It is a proof of Paul's axiom of ROMANS 12:21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good!"<sup>56</sup> Such are the fruits of The Spirit that flow from These Words of Paul in PHILEMON 15-16, "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in The Lord!"<sup>57</sup> And as we grow in The Lord, we become His willing bondservants and beloved brethren to one another! O GOD, make us then Thy willing prisoners of JESUS CHRIST! May it be ever so!

Having opened this sermon with the first 2 stanzas of the well beloved hymn "Amazing Grace," written such a former evildoer turned to righteousness by The Gospel as John Newton, it is most fitting that we end with the last 2 stanzas of that same hymn:

"Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis Grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And Grace will lead me home!"<sup>58</sup>

"The Lord has promised good to me;  
His Word my Hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures!"<sup>59</sup>

In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

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<sup>54</sup> 2, KJV, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40.

<sup>55</sup> 2, KJV, JOHN 3:5, "JESUS answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of The Spirit, he cannot enter into The Kingdom of GOD."

<sup>56</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 12:1.

<sup>57</sup> 2, KJV, PHILEMON 15-16.

<sup>58</sup> 1, Moravian Hymnal, "322. Amazing Grace," John Newton, 1779 (1725-1807), Stanza 3. "The Life in CHRIST: Regeneration and Acceptance with GOD."

<sup>59</sup> 1, Ibid., "322. Amazing Grace," Stanza 4.

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