

Burning of trees on 'Twelfth Night' is an outgrowth of the special observance by early Christians on the last day of a twelve-day celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

**Brightest holiday greetings to all**

For every one, we wish a Christmas Season glowing with good cheer, enduring friendships and cherished memories.

Ross and Jean Smith  
**Smith Radio**  
MAIN STREET, STOUFFVILLE

**Merry Christmas**

Here's hoping your Christmas gifts include good health, good fellowship and good cheer! Happy holiday to all!

**Aida Cleaners**  
STOUFFVILLE-ONTARIO

**Season's Greetings**

Our warmest wishes to you and yours for a house full of love and happiness all through the holiday season.

**Stouffer Hardware and Staff**

**GREETINGS**

We're heading your way with a sleighful of good wishes for this festive season! May you and all your loved ones enjoy a happy holiday!

**A. E. Weldon and Son**  
STOUFFVILLE-ONTARIO

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON**

(Lesson for December 29)

**BROTHERS THROUGH CHRIST**

Philemon

**GOLDEN TEXT** — Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.—Vol. 3:14, A.S.V.

**THE LESSON AS A WHOLE**

**Approach to the Lesson**

It was late 63 or early 64. The Apostle Paul had spent nearly two years in his own hired house in Rome, which was, nevertheless, his prison, and where he had never been out of sight of his Roman guard. There had been a good deal of coming and going, for there were no restrictions in regard to the visitors whom he might receive. Many strange characters had doubtless visited him in his lodging, and now as a glimmer of hope began to appear that his imprisonment might soon terminate, he received a rather strange visitor, a runaway slave from Colosse. The slave's master, Philemon, had some years earlier been led to Christ by the Apostle Paul (Philem. 19). Now his slave, Onesimus, in making a dash for his freedom, had apparently also robbed his master (v. 18).

What brought Onesimus to the house of Paul, we are not told. Perhaps he had come in contact with some Christians and his troubled soul sought out the apostle as his master's friend. At any rate, Paul led him to the Lord (v. 10).

An ethical question now arose. As a Christian, what was his duty to his master whom he had wronged, and from whom he had fled? In the mind of the Apostle Paul there was no doubt, Onesimus must return to his master, even though he himself would have liked to retain him as a servant. He could not, however, send him back without seeking a means of reconciliation. So the runaway slave returned to his master armed with this gem of a letter of entreaty from the apostle.

It is the only example we have of Paul's private correspondence, and it indicates that if only we had the complete private correspondence of the great apostle it would be a treasure without equal in all the world of epistolary literature. Even Pliny's letter to Sabinianus, written for a similar purpose, is a poor second to Paul's Letter to Philemon. But we can be thankful for this one which has been preserved in the canon of Scripture.

**Verse by Verse**—  
Philemon 1.—"Paul . . . unto Philemon . . ." Note, not "a prisoner of Rome," but "of Christ Jesus." Philemon means "friend." This is a completely personal letter, not like those to Timothy and Titus, which are pastoral.

**Verse 2**—". . . Apphia, and Archippus . . . the church in thy house." Apphia is doubtless the wife of Philemon, and Archippus probably their son, who held a responsible position in the church (Col. 4:17).

**Verse 3**—"Grace . . . and peace . . . From the Father as source and from the Lord Jesus as mediator. This is not a completely trinitarian benediction like 2 Corinthians 13:14.

**Verse 4**—"I thank my God . . . in my prayers." Thanksgiving and prayers go hand in hand with Paul, especially in intercessions for the saints. He was quick to see things in people for which to give thanks.

**Verse 5**—". . . thy love and faith . . . toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." The strange order combines the two inside phrases (faith toward, or in, the Lord Jesus); and the two outside phrases (love toward the saints).

**Verse 6**—". . . communication . . . effectual . . . every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." The phrasing is difficult. The thought is that Philemon's good character and works are so apparent that they are effective in helping along the fellowship of faith in Christ.

**Verse 7**—". . . great joy and consolation in thy love . . . the bowels of the saints are refreshed . . ." For "bowels" read "hearts." It is a joy to Paul to

see so much good coming to the saints through the gracious ministries of Philemon. Notice how Paul gives full recognition to these things in Philemon before he broaches the difficult subject at hand.

**Verse 8**—". . . I might be much void in Christ to enjoy thee . . ." Paul's boldness in Christ springs from his apostolic office, as well as from the fact that he was Philemon's spiritual father (v. 19).

**Verse 9**—"Yet for love's sake I rather beseech . . . Paul the aged . . . a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Paul's age and his sufferings for Christ's sake make the appeal to love all the more powerful. A command might secure outward compliance, but the appeal of love reaches the heart.

**Verse 10**—". . . my son Onesimus . . . begotten in my bonds." Onesimus means profitable. Son here signifies "born one" (Scottish barn), a very tender touch, especially connected with Paul's bonds.

**Verse 11**—". . . unprofitable, but now profitable . . ." A play upon the meaning of the name Onesimus, although a different word for profitable is used (euchrestos, "most profitable," as over against achrestos, "not profitable"). See how Paul plays up what Onesimus is to him.

**Verse 12**—"Whom I have sent . . . therefore receive him . . . mine own bowels." Again for "bowels" read "heart," although some believe it ought to be translated here "son," carrying out the figure of parent-hood.

**Verse 13**—". . . I would have retained . . . might have ministered unto me . . ." Once more Paul dwells on what Onesimus means to him, but now links him with Philemon as a sort of ambassador to Paul.

**Verse 14**—"But without thy mind . . . not . . . of necessity, but willingly." But any such relation must be with Philemon's consent, not thrust on him by force of circumstance.

**Verse 15**—". . . departed for a season . . . receive him for ever." Here the appeal is to the overruling providence of God. There can be no thought of rejection in the face of the wonderful works of God.

**Verse 16**—". . . above a servant, a brother beloved . . . in the flesh, and in the Lord?"

Onesimus was probably a child of a slave family connected with the family of Philemon. Hence the phrase "in the flesh."

**The Heart of the Lesson**

Salvation cancels all the debt of our sin toward God, but it does not release us from our obligations to men. What wrongs we have done to our fellow men in our unregenerate days we are bound to undo in so far as it is possible when we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Restitution is a law of the Christian life. We cannot wash our hands of those obligations under pretext that everything is under the blood.

So it came to pass that when Onesimus, the runaway slave, came to the knowledge of Christ through the ministry of the Apostle Paul in Rome, he was under obligation to return to his master, submitting to him and righting as far as possible the wrong that he had done. His salvation did not make him free to remain in Rome at his own pleasure.

On the other hand, salvation lays new responsibility upon Christians toward those who have wronged them, and especially toward those who have wronged them become conscious of their sin and seek forgiveness. The spirit of revenge can have no place in the life of one who has known the mercy of God. Philemon, therefore, while having just cause for anger and good reason to punish his slave, is called upon by the Apostle Paul to exercise a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation beyond anything that can be expected of a man of the world.

Notice how the Apostle Paul urges his plea with Philemon. He refuses to base it on authority which as an apostle he might very well do, but rather he bases the whole plea on love (vs. 8, 9). Then he introduces Onesimus in an entirely new relationship. "My son," he calls him. That is exactly what Philemon himself was—a spiritual son of the apostle. That made a common bond which it would be difficult for Philemon to overlook. Again, Paul calls Onesimus "mine own bowels" (v. 12) or as we would say, "my own heart." If it were like tearing out his own heart to part with Onesimus, certainly Philemon must treat the young man with such affection as the apostle himself had heaped upon him.



By F. L. Rowley

Mr. Owens is extremely popular in Hillcrest. He owns a big barn where the stock shows play each summer. He even serves coffee and sandwiches to his "guests" when they drop in to watch one of the shows. The truth is that Mr. Owens is a lonely old man who likes to surround himself with happy people.

Several years ago today, when Christmas cheer abounded and glowing parlor windows warmed the hearts of passersby, Mr. Owens was lonelier than usual. He had not even set up a tree that year; what good was a tree without someone to admire it?

Christmas Eve, and Mr. Owens strolled down Main Street alone, peering into the few shop windows that were still lighted. In front of the ten-cent store he saw young Jim Harder. Jim was watching the lights go out with an expression of dismay on his freckled face.

"It can't be that bad, my boy," the old man said kindly. Jim tried to smile when he saw Mr. Owens. "It's bad enough. I'll sure catch it from mom when I get home. She sent me out to buy some Christmas tree ornaments."

"Tree ornaments? At this hour?"

"Yes, sir. Last summer we had a fire in the woodshed," explained Jim, "nothing serious, but our Christmas stuff was destroyed. We forgot all about it until we set the tree up this morning."

"And you waited until now to buy ornaments?"

"That's just it," groaned Jim. "I left home over an hour ago. It's just that—well, I've been looking in store windows and—"

**Problem Solved**

"I understand," said Mr. Owens with a twinkle in his eye. "Used to do the same thing when I was a lad. Never could figure out why clocks were invented. Say, I've got an idea! I have some old ornaments—"

"You have?" cried Jim eagerly.

"On second thought," Mr. Owens went on, "I don't think they would do. Too old, most of them, with cracked sides and hairpins stuck in their tops. Had one box of good ones, but I stepped on it."

Jim didn't smile. He looked miserable.

"Wait!" cried Mr. Owens, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder. "I've got it! You'll have your Christmas-tree ornaments yet."

With Jim Harder striding hopefully beside him, Mr. Owens set off at a brisk trot that belied his years. A happy smile played upon the wrinkled face. He was doing someone a favor at Christmas; he was part of the scene! He joined Jim in a chorus of 'White Christmas.'

**Hiding Place**

When they reached his place he surprised Jim by taking the path that led to the barn. The boy followed. Once inside, he groped around until he located an old lantern.

After squeezing between dusty props they reached a huge chest. Mr. Owens pulled out a drawer to reveal several dozen brightly colored balls.

"Wow! They're perfect!" cried Jim. "What are they?"

Mr. Owens laughed. "Let's see now; those plastic ones are plums, and those pressed-paper ones are oranges. This other drawer is full of stars; it's all part of the scenery. I do hope you'll bring them back after the holidays."

house of yours?" Mr. Owens couldn't think of a single reason for not going. "I—I reckon I would like to see the tree," he admitted.

The little metal trumpets decorating Christmas trees date from early Danish custom of blowing in the Yule with zorns hymns representing the four corners of the world.

Playfully, joyfully, we greet Christmas. May the Christ Child's message of love and hope gladden your heart and enrich your life.

**Merry Christmas**

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF  
**Stouffville Bakery Ltd.**

**Greetings**

We'd like to help brighten your holidays with our sincere thanks for the privilege of serving you and our warmest wishes for every happiness.

**STOREY'S I.D.A. Drug Store**  
STOUFFVILLE - ONTARIO

**Thank You and Warm Wishes**

We hope you have a very delightful Christmas surrounded by devoted family and friends, and also a Happy New Year.

**Harold's Grill**  
OPEN CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR  
STOUFFVILLE - ONTARIO

**Season's BEST WISHES**

To all our loyal friends and patrons we send this Holiday greeting with the wish that you enjoy all the delights of this festive season.

**Hendricks Hardware**  
CEC. HENDRICKS  
STEWART STOUFFER, HOWARD DONER, RAY FLEURY, NORM HENDRICKS.  
STOUFFVILLE - ONTARIO

**Season's best wishes and may you count this Christmas among your very happiest... may its spirit long dwell in your home and your heart.**

**L. E. O'Neill Furniture**  
STOUFFVILLE - ONTARIO



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