

Lesson 8: Slaves and Prisoners  
Sermon Date: November 25  
Text: Philemon and Hebrews 13:3

1. Read these two scripture references. Considering this text, define “slave” and “prisoner”? Address how they are different and how they are alike.
2. Let’s look at Philemon first. Summarize the story of Philemon and Onesimus. What are your views on the conflict that must have existed between Philemon and Onesimus (e.g., is this situation fair? Is Onesimus getting off easy? Is Paul overstepping his bounds?)
3. Based on Paul’s account, how has Onesimus’ status changed? Consider this from each person’s point of view (Paul, Onesimus and Philemon).
4. The penalty for a slave running away from his owner in Roman times could include death. What does this say about Paul’s decision to send Onesimus back to Philemon to deliver this letter?
5. How is Onesimus more “useful” to all involved (see v. 11)?
6. Look again at Hebrews 13:3. We are exhorted to *remember* and *identify* with prisoners and those who are mistreated. Why was this important? Is it still relevant to today?
7. Notice how Paul opens his letters to the Philippians and to Philemon. What does this say to you about Paul’s view of the terms “prisoner” and “slave”? Does this alter your view?