

Philemon 1 - Laodicea

1. **Let me just say** that this is a bucket list dream come true!
2. **Can I first tell you how I met Bryan Ross?**
 - a. This is literally my favorite story ever. January of last year, I spoke at my first Jordan conference in Kissimmee, Fl. The theme was transitions. I thought, “Great! I’ll open with my ‘why did the chicken cross the road’ jokes.” Because that chicken is making a transition, right? So what would all the so-called “Christian leaders” say why that chicken crossed the road?
 - i. **John MacArthur:** That chicken was predestinated to cross that road, and he found the grace on the other side irresistible.
 - ii. **Rick Warren:** It was a purpose-driven chicken.
 - iii. **Billy Graham:** That chicken was surrendering all.
 - iv. **Joel O’steen:** That chicken crossed the road to maximize his personal fulfillment so he could be all that God created him to be.
 - b. But then I asked, “What would grace pastors have to say about that chicken?”
 - i. **J.C. O’Hair:** That chicken crossed the road to escape the inpouring of evil Modernism. It has Christianity without Christ, a kingdom without a king, Bible study without a Bible, godliness without God, and what do we have left? We have chicken soup without a chicken.
 - ii. **Les Feldick:** That bird was like Peter in Gal. 2. He totally chickened out.
 - iii. **Des Strydom:** Did the chicken cross the road? Yes or yes?
 - iv. Yes, I had about a dozen **Richard Jordan** jokes, which ended with this joke. “That chicken wasn’t KFC-only! That chicken was KJV-only!”
 1. By the way, Richard Jordan is still talking to me.
 - c. But I also told a **Bryan Ross** joke. But before I tell that joke, I gotta say, that I couldn’t help but notice that **David Reid** is in the house. I love David Reid! I love that beautiful man too much! And I can tell you exactly what David Reid would say if you asked him why the chicken crossed the road.
 - i. **David Reid:** “Well, you can decide for yourself but CLEARLY, I mean, if you really think about it, OBVIOUSLY, CLEARLY... that chicken was going to the other side!” That’s what David Reid would say.
 - d. And of course, we have **David O’Steen** with us this weekend – my beautiful southern brother from another mother! I love David O’Steen! He was once a Southern Baptist Preacher, but now... he’s a Southern One-Baptism-by-the-Spirit Preacher. Those are the best kinds of Baptists, aren’t they? In fact, David is so southern (*laugh*), he actually keeps his pants up with a real Bible belt. So, yes, I can tell you what David would say if you asked him why the chicken crossed the road. Now this is kind of an inside joke, but David will sometimes say, “Goodnight, nurse!” I don’t know why. Must be a Georgia thing. But he says that.
 - i. **David O’Steen:** He went to say “goodnight” to a nurse.

- ii. **Bryan Ross:** I don't know what Bryan would say, but I can tell you this. Before Bryan would say *anything*, he'd spend a whole summer reading books about the history of chickens.
- e. Then in March of last year the lockdowns happened. And so Mike Moriarty and I started the Grace Life Podcast just so we could all have daily fellowship while we were locked up in our homes. About a month later, I got a message from Bryan through FB. He's like, "I was wondering what kind of feedback you're getting on your podcasts?" I was like, "No way! It's Bryan Ross! You the man! The Grace History Project! I've been watching you for years! I love you to death, man!"
- f. **It was terrible.** I was gushing like a fanboy... So we had a great conversation. Talked all about podcasts and stuff. But right in the middle of our conversation, Bryan says, "Wait a minute. Wait just a minute. You're the guy that did the chicken joke about me, aren't you?" I was like, "No, no, noooo! We were getting along so well, you know." But I didn't back down. I said, "Hey, that's a good joke. I stand by that joke. I got a big laugh about that joke." And then Bryan was gone for like, 5 minutes. And I knew what he was doing. He was looking up that video to see what that chicken joke was. And then he came back and said, "In fact, I have spent summers reading books about the history of chickens."
 - i. That's my Bryan Ross story. Poor Bryan hasn't been the same.

3. Introduction

- a. **Now, look.** I promised Bryan that I would literally blow your minds about Philemon. And this is that sermon. Are you ready to have your minds blown?
- b. **Turn to Philemon.** Here we have the story of the servant who betrayed his master. He stole some valuables and ran as far away as Rome. Then, somehow, he got in contact with the Apostle Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. Paul took him down the "Roman's Road" *in Rome* no less, and as a result, Onesimus got saved. He accepted God's gift of salvation by grace through faith trusting in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as a payment for all of our sins. Paul loved Onesimus like a son. He grounded him in the faith. He put him to work in the ministry and found Onesimus so useful for the Lord he wanted to keep him. Before he would do that and out of consideration to his old friend Philemon, whom he also led to the Lord years earlier and who was still the rightful master of Onesimus (and there was the matter of resolving all that wrong that had been done to him), Paul made the decision to send Onesimus back to Philemon along with this amazing letter. Let's read Philemon.

4. Read Philemon

- a. **1:1** *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, 1:2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: 1:3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1:4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, 1:5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 1:6 That the*

communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. **1:7** For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. **1:8** Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, **1:9** Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. **1:10** I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: **1:11** Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: **1:12** Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: **1:13** Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: **1:14** But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. **1:15** For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; **1:16** 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? **1:17** If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. **1:18** If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; **1:19** I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. **1:20** Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. **1:21** Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say. **1:22** But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. **1:23** There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; **1:24** Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. **1:25** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

5. Total Philemon Junkie

- a. I once spent a year obsessing about Philemon. I'm a total Philemon junkie. I read every book every dispensationalist ever wrote about Philemon. My favorite commentary was by William Kelly. My second favorite was William Graham Scroggie's book called "A Note to a Friend." That was a sweet book. I also read a ton of non-grace books, including scholarly works, which were literally the dumbest books I ever read in my life. A couple of my favorite quotes about Philemon. I loved what John Calvin had to say. I don't agree with John Calvin about anything, but I love what he said about Philemon. John Calvin was so moved by this letter, he wrote that even if Philemon "were made of stone, he would have to melt." I also loved what Darby had to say. Darby wrote that Paul's letter to Philemon inspires "the individual Christian to act as the light of grace."
 - i. Now all the books, I think just about everyone, tells you that we don't know what Philemon did with Onesimus after he got this letter. That is total bunk. We CAN know from Scripture what Philemon did, and I'm going to prove it to you tomorrow. You don't want to miss it.

6. Structure

- a. I want to start here. **SS** Look at this structural breakdown of Philemon. This was put together by Bullinger. He has a book called “Figures of Speech Used in the Bible.” It’s almost 1,000 pages long. I found this on page 403. We’re not going to go into the details but notice the overall shape. Notice how perfectly symmetrical it is. The sentences in the top half are of the same length as the sentences in the bottom half. I was like, “What on Earth is going on?” So I spent a day studying his breakdown. Do you know what Bullinger is saying here? He’s saying that if you take Philemon and fold it in half, the first half of this letter is a perfect mirror to the second half. And he’s absolutely right! Consider.
- b. Just as the opening sentence has a proclamation of grace and peace from “*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*” so too, he says in the closing sentence “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*” Just as Paul lists in the beginning of his letter 5 names (Paul, Timothy, Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus), so too, Paul lists 5 names at the end of his letter (Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas). The names in the beginning are centered around Philemon. The names at the end are centered around Paul. Just as, roughly 1/3 of the way into the letter, Paul shares the request he lifts up in prayer about Philemon, so too, roughly 2/3 into the letter, Paul shares with Philemon a prayer request about himself. Just as Paul explains that he led Onesimus to the Lord, so too, he later reminds Philemon that he also led *him* to the Lord. Closer to the center, Paul explains that he had authority as an apostle but chose to not exercise that authority to instead beseech him to receive him (which meant that he was trusting that the grace of God was working in him). So, too, on the other side of that center, he expresses confidence in Philemon that he’d do more than he asked (not because these things were asked of him by Paul but because the grace of God *was* indeed working in him). Just as he mentions the wrong that was done, so too, he offers a Godly solution. And in the center of this letter, we find Onesimus, who is also the center of this story, his past colliding with his present, his former life as a sinner in contrast to his new life in Christ, and his potential as a new man both to Philemon and to the Lord.
- c. **Isn’t that amazing?**
 - i. **Philemon isn’t just a brilliant letter. Philemon is a genius letter.**

7. The Threes

- a. **If that doesn’t blow your mind, I’ve got more. Are you ready for more?** Check this out. This is amazing. I also couldn’t help but notice that Paul’s letter to Philemon is filled with patterns of three everywhere. It’s crazy!
 - i. There are 3 principles figures - Onesimus, Paul, and Philemon.
 - ii. 3 people in this letter are called “*beloved*”
 - 1. Philemon, Apphia, & Onesimus (vs 1, 2, 16).
 - iii. 3 men are called “*brother*”

1. Timothy, Philemon, and Onesimus (vs 1, 20, 16). Timothy, “brother,” Onesimus “brother beloved,” and Philemon, “Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord.”
- iv. 3 runaways are referenced:
 1. Onesimus, Marcus (John Mark), and Demas.
 - v. There is also what I like to call “The 3 Fellows of Philemon”
 1. Fellowsoldier (2), fellowprisoner (23), and fellowlabourer (1, 24).
 - vi. In the first 3 verses, we have 3 circles of 3 names all centered around Philemon. Let’s talk about that. First, we have in verse 1...
 1. **Paul, Timothy, and Philemon** – These 3 men knew each other when Paul spent those 3 years in Ephesus. I think Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus left their home, went to Ephesus to hear Paul and got saved. Not only that, they became close friends and there was a great love between them. Paul calls Philemon “dearly beloved,” “fellowlabourer,” “partner,” “brother,” and later, he mentions in vs. 13 that Onesimus could minister unto Paul “in thy stead”. Philemon wasn’t just a follower of Paul. He got involved in the ministry. He helped Paul in the ministry in the same way that Onesimus was now helping Paul in the ministry *in his stead*. **Philemon’s name means “friendly.”** So he is commonly referred to as “Friendly Philemon.” And then we have in verse 2...
 2. **We have Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus.** Some think we’re looking at one family unit. We don’t know that, but it’s possible. It certainly seems likely to me that Apphia was Philemon’s wife. She is only mentioned here and nowhere else in the Bible. There is some dispute about her name. It’s not Greek. Most, like Strong’s, would say her name probably has a foreign origin or they’d say it has no known origins. Vincent Word Studies suggested that her name may have had Phrygian origins. I really love that thought. That makes a lot of sense to me. **SS** The story of the Phrygians: hundreds of years before Christ, that same area of central Asia used to be dominated by the ancient Phrygian people who had their own language, a language that’s all but lost now except for maybe a dozen words. So it would make sense to me that Apphia had deep roots in central Asia going all the way back to the Phrygian people and probably had a Phrygian name. Some Bible writers would try to suggest that her name means “fruitful,” which makes no sense whatsoever. How can you tell us what her name means if you don’t even know what language that is? But, of course, because of Apphia’s prominent placement in the letter, it seems clear to me that she held the role of chief female leader in Philemon’s household. I just love the way Paul addresses her.

He calls her, “*our beloved Apphia.*” She wasn’t just loved by Philemon. She was loved by everyone. **Now let’s talk about Archippus.** His name means “master of horses.” He’s called a “*fellowsoldier*”. I think “*fellowsoldier*” is a term probably given to someone who is fearless about engaging in spiritual warfare in the face of real persecution. He’s a soldier. It may be possible that Archippus had a military background. I think Archippus had to have been the pastor of the church that was in Philemon’s house. We know he was in the ministry because Paul told Archippus in Col. 4:17 to “*Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*” I also suspect Archippus was single and a pastor just as Timothy was single and a pastor at Ephesus. I also think that if Archippus had a wife, Paul would have never needed to send that message to Archippus in Col. 4, because his wife would have already told him that! “Archippus, get up! Get to work and fulfill the ministry the Lord gave you!”

3. And then we have in vs. 3, **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** with a message of grace and peace to Philemon.

vii. There are other types of threes also!

viii. Did you know Paul mentions “*love*” 3 times?

1. Twice he references Philemon’s love and then he says, “*Yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee.*” (vs. 5, 7, 9)

ix. Paul mentions his “*bowels*” three times (vs 7, 12, 20).

x. 3 times he tells Philemon to “Receive him”:

1. that is, receive Onesimus who is mine own bowels, receive him forever, and receive him as if you were receiving me.

xi. Three times Paul reminds him of his imprisonment:

1. A prisoner of Jesus Christ (vs 1), a prisoner of Jesus Christ (vs 9), Onesimus ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel (vs 13)

xii. Paul’s prayer had 3 points:

1. He says he mentions his name, thanks God for what he heard about Philemon’s love & faith, and we read his request that Philemon would effectively energize the saints “*by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*”

xiii. Onesimus is identified with Paul 3 different ways:

1. Identified as “*my son*”, “*mine own bowels*”, and “*myself*”.

xiv. Three light-hearted moments.

1. 9 – Paul the aged, which was not some crass attempt at sympathy. Paul’s being crass to be funny.
2. Unprofitable joke. Vs. 11 is hilarious. He writes, “*Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.*” In the Greek, Onesimus’ name meant “profitable.” So the

servant who is named profitable who wasn't really profitable is now actually profitable to you and me! That's hilarious!

3. 19 – We have the “you owe me” verse, which I love. Paul's like, “Whatever Onesimus stole, I'll pay it, but I don't know what kind of value you put on your own soul and eternal life, but just remember, I'm the guy who helped you get saved for all eternity.” That's the kind of humor you'd hear between mature believers.

- xv. The phrase “*Lord Jesus*” is mentioned 3 times (vs. 3, 5, 25).

- xvi. The phrase “*the Lord*” is mentioned 3 times (16, twice in 20).

- xvii. Paul talks about being “*in Christ*” 3 times (vs. 6, 8, 23).

- xviii. He also talks about being “*in the Lord*” 3 times (vs. 16, twice in 20).

- b. I could go on. So what is the point to all these threes in the letter?

- i. All of these threes point to something Pastor Jordan pointed out – a great illustration of imputation. I'm going to talk about that tomorrow.

- c. **Philemon isn't just a brilliant letter. Philemon is a genius letter.**

8. Laodicea

- a. **If that doesn't blow your mind, I've got more.** Next, I want to talk about where Philemon lived. This section just might be the most mind-blowing of them all.

Turn to Col. 4. Every single commentary says that Philemon lived in Colosse. I'm here to tell you that they are all wrong, and I can prove it from Scripture.

- b. **Col 4:15** *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea (lah-od-ik'-iah), and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. Col 4:16* *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. Col 4:17* *And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

- c. Let's start with this whole region. **SS (9x)** Colosse is part of a tri-city region that includes Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Less than 10 miles apart. Laodicea was the wealthiest and the greatest of those 3 cities. Laodicea was known for its manufacturing of clothing and its school of medicine. And do you know what they are famous for developing? Eye drops. They mixed water with this powder made from ground Phrygian stone. They put it in a collyrium and – voila! – you had eye drops. And of course, the Laodicean church is mentioned in Rev. 3 as the church that's neither hot nor cold. He's not talking about this church. He's talking about a synagogue of Jews who are part of that prophetic program about His kingdom on Earth. But interesting enough, in Rev. 3:18, the Lord tells them, “*and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*” The word “*eyesalve*” isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. And some suggest that the Lord may have been referencing the very eye drops that were developed in Laodicea.

- d. **Back to Col. 4. Notice what we read.** Paul wants these men to go to Laodicea. In vs. 16, he says he wants them to go to *THE church of the Laodiceans*. There is only ONE church in Laodicea. He wants them to go to that one church. He wants the Colossian epistle to be read in that one church. And he wants those men to

read the epistle to the Laodiceans. And then what does he say? In vs. 17, he says, "AND say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Where is Archippus located? He has to be in Laodicea, right? Paul's saying "Go to Laodicea. Share this Colossian epistle. Read *their* epistle. AND while you're there, give this message to Archippus." Vs. 17 starts with the word "And." It's a continuation of his thought in vs. 16. Archippus had to be in Laodicea. And do you remember Archippus? The "Master of horses." The "*fellowsoldier*," referenced in the letter to Philemon, and most likely, he was the pastor of the church in Philemon's house. So if Archippus lived in Laodicea, then so must Philemon, Apphia, and the church that's in Philemon's house. If there's only ONE church in Laodicea, then that church can ONLY be the one that's in Philemon's house. Which means that this reference to the "*epistle from Laodicea*" had to be, nothing less than, Paul's letter to Philemon.

- i. Why would Paul call his letter to Philemon the "*epistle from Laodicea*"? Because that letter wasn't only addressed to Philemon. That letter was addressed to his family and the entire church that's in his house! A lot of people write that Philemon was "a personal letter." It was never personal because it was addressed to everyone in that church!
- e. **And I know what some are thinking.** "Now, wait a minute, Joel. What about that Nymphas guy in vs. 15? Wasn't he in Laodicea? And didn't he have a church that's in his house?" Yes, he did. I'm going to talk about Nymphas in a bit. I have a lot to say about Nymphas. Just stick with me. Let's first talk about Archippus.
- f. **Why did Paul send that message to Archippus?** Why did Paul tell Archippus to "*Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it*"? What happened to Archippus? Everybody says, "we can't know what happened to Archippus." That's not true. You can totally figure out what happened to Archippus. Some guys, like Bullinger, speculate that Colossians was written around 61-62 A.D. Do you know what happened before that in 60 A.D.? Laodicea had a massive earthquake that leveled the entire city. This mega-disaster had the entire Roman Empire talking. And Rome itself sent word to the Laodiceans that they'd be willing to send men, money, and resources to help rebuild their city. And do you what they said? They told Rome, "No. You can keep your men. We're going to rebuild our city, thank you very much." And that's exactly what they did! Even Tacitus, considered to be a Roman Senator, wrote in his book called "Annals," that "One of the most famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was in the same year overthrown by an earthquake and without any relief from us recovered itself by its own resources." Isn't that amazing?
- g. So now you can piece it all together. Colossians was written after that massive earthquake in Laodicea. Archippus was in Laodicea. And now we can understand why Archippus was struggling in the ministry. **He was devastated by that earthquake! In fact, he was so devastated he couldn't function!** He lost people he loved! Archippus! Archippus, who in Philemon was called a "*fellowsoldier*"

was now a broken man! And what does Paul tell him? By inspiration of the Spirit, I think he told Archippus exactly what he needed to hear. He said, *Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.* He talks to him like a soldier. You get back on your feet! You go out there and win that war! That was tough love, but I think those were the very words he needed to hear. Ministry is never so important as it is in the wake of a giant disaster.

- h. **So this begs the question.** If Archippus lived in Laodicea and there was a massive earthquake in 60 A.D., what happened to Philemon? What happened to Apphia? I think they died. Both of them. I think this for a couple of reasons.
- i. 1) Both of their deaths would explain how someone like Archippus, who was once called a *"fellovsoldier,"* how he would in such a short span of time become so devastated he couldn't function, which would necessitate why Paul had to send him that message. And it would be even more devastating if they were both his parents.
 - ii. 2) There's that little verse in **2Ti 1:15** *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me...* That verse bothered me because Laodicea is in Asia. Philemon was in Asia. And after really studying the character of Philemon, I just can't wrap my head around the idea that Philemon would've turned his back on Paul like the rest of Asia. If Philemon spent all those years doing what Paul said, acknowledging to all the saints every good thing that was in him in Christ Jesus, then he would've easily seen through the lies of the apostasy that later spread throughout Asia. Because we know from 1 Tim. 4 that at the heart of that apostasy was legalism, like forbidding to eat meats. That apostasy was all about you doing good works to earn God's approval, when your salvation is about accepting that perfect work Christ has already done for you! After that, it's just a matter of learning and communicating *every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.* So I don't for a minute believe Philemon would've been duped by the lies of the apostasy in Asia. I don't for a minute believe Philemon would've turned his back on Paul. I think Philemon died in that earthquake in Laodicea in 60 A.D.
- i. **I know what some people are thinking.** "Come on, Joel. All that stuff about the earthquake in Laodicea is all extra-Biblical. You can't take that as truth." Let me ask you a question. How would you know that something like Daniel 11 was perfectly fulfilled, right down to the smallest details, except in light of world history? If you're reading a history book about WWII, are you going to deny that WWII existed simply because it's in a history book? That's a well-established fact. The same is true about the earthquake in Laodicea. That's a well-established fact just as the fire in Rome in July 64 AD is a well-established fact. You can't take everything in history books as truth, but you can't reject major events either.
- j. **I want to show you something.** I went nuts about this on the podcast last year. I think it's very possible that, a year ago, archeologists found Philemon's house in

Laodicea. Look at this article. **SS** [“House with church unearthed in Laodicea”](#). This is from Hurriyet Daily News, which is a big news source in Turkey. The article would explain that this was a wealthy first century house that had a room for a Christian church, and this house had been probably leveled by that 60 A.D. earthquake. What did it look like? We know in that it had a peristylum (an open-aired courtyard surrounded by columned corridors). Looks like this. **SS** And the church was in a room off to the side of that courtyard. They also said they “unearthed very rich marble coverings on the walls of the eastern hall, which was converted into a church...” In the middle of the house, there is a hall with 18 columns. And he had 20 rooms (!!), baths, shelters, and other sections that were used as places of business. The most surprising thing about this house is that we know why they were so wealthy. The house was adjacent to an amphitheater. **SS** They ran an amphitheater and that’s how they were enormously wealthy. **SS SS** I wonder, what shows did they put on in that amphitheater? Cicero once wrote of gladiator games in Laodicea. But then, after that earthquake, they lost everything, including that big amphitheater. Everything was destroyed.

- k. So I think Philemon was written first. I think Philemon released Onesimus. Sent him back to Rome. Then we had the earthquake in Laodicea in 60 A.D. Colossians was written a few months after that. And I think Philemon and Colossians were the last two prison epistles Paul wrote before he was released from prison. But we’ll cover all of that in greater detail in tomorrow’s message.
- l. **This brings us back to the question about Nymphas.** Look at [Col 4:15](#) *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.* Do you see what happened? Colossians was written after the earthquake in Laodicea. Philemon died and his house was destroyed. So the church that was meeting in Philemon’s house relocated to the house of Nymphas. That’s what happened. That’s why Nymphas is mentioned in vs. 15 *and* why Archippus is *also* mentioned in vs. 17 *and* why there’s still only one church in Laodicea. The people of that church had to relocate to Nymphas’ house. This is also why the house the archeologists discovered in Laodicea last year couldn’t have been Nymphas’ house because it’s apparent from Col. 4 that Nymphas’ house wasn’t destroyed.
- m. **I want to want to close with this.** There is a book called “*Archeology and the New Testament*” by John McRay. **SS** You can get it on Kindle. He had a section devoted to Laodicea. And he wrote that archeologists discovered an ancient inscription in Laodicea dedicated by a servant to the master who freed him. Do you know what the master’s name was? **Marcus Sestius Philemon.**

9. Conclusion

- a. Are your minds blown yet? If not, I have a lot more for you tomorrow! **Philemon isn’t a brilliant letter. Philemon is a genius letter.**