

Kids' Chronicle

Paul Befriends a Slave

BY JOE SARNICOLA

My dear friend, Philemon:
Greetings to you, your sister, and all the believers who meet in your house regularly for prayer. May you always experience the grace our Lord offers to us. I write this letter to you from my prison cell. As you know, I am here because of my faith. Whenever God gives me the opportunity, I tell the other prisoners who will listen about Jesus.

I have heard that your faith is strong and that you have been good to the Christians of your home town. Your example has been an encouragement to me, as I know it has been to others. I am writing to you to ask a favor, as if you were my own brother. While here in prison, I have befriended a man who knows you well. He has become a Christian, and his entire life has been transformed. I want you to take that into consideration when I tell you about him. His name is Onesimus, one of your own slaves who tried to run away from your service. Do not hold any harsh feelings against him.

When he was an unhappy slave, he was not very helpful with the tasks that needed to be done. He is scheduled to be released soon, and he wants to return home. I assure he will be a very honest and hard working man. Even though I ask you this favor myself, I do not want you to feel obligated to take him back. I want you to accept him as a Christian brother of your own doing.

He has become much more than a

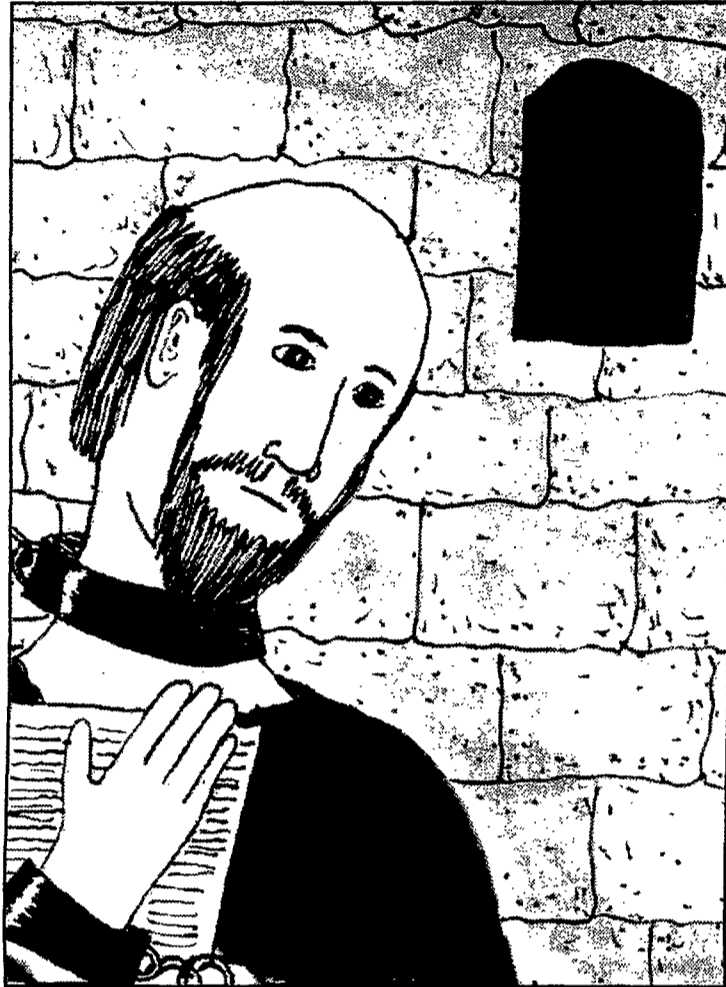


Illustration by Kathy Welsh

slave. He is a brother of ours in the Lord's work. I love him as a son. I wish he could stay here and help me to preach to the other prisoners. If you decide to take

him back, welcome him as you would me. If he owes you anything, I will pay it. Consider his debt my debt. You would make me very happy if you would do as I ask.

I am confident you will receive Onesimus as a fellow Christian. As you prepare for his return, prepare a room for me as well. I know God has heard your prayers to set me free, and I will be out of prison soon, too. I will be sure to stay with you as soon as I can. There are other of our Christian brothers here with me. Pray for us daily, as we pray for you. May God be with you always.

READ MORE ABOUT IT: Paul's letter to Philemon

Q&A

- Q: 1. From where did Paul write his letter?
- 2. Why did Paul write the letter?

Bible Accent

A typical prison in ancient Rome would be dark, damp, and dirty. Prisoners were often kept in crowded cells.

When they were out of their cells they would be bound with chains or heavy ropes around their hands, feet, waists, or necks. They were frequently tied to other prisoners to make escape and movement more difficult.

Although Roman officials tried to prevent extreme abuse of the prisoners, unkind guards would try to make the prisoners or their families give them money in exchange for better treatment.

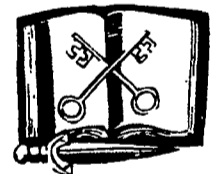
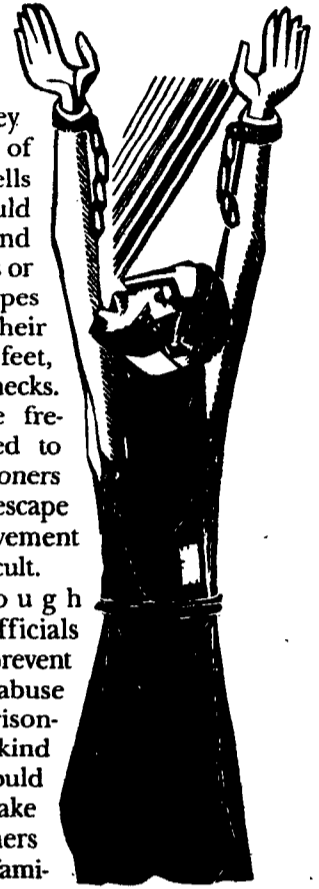
Christians were frequently arrested just because they were Christians. The apostle Paul was arrested many times. He used these times to minister to his fellow prisoners and try to convert them to Christianity. It was during one of these times that Paul helped Onesimus become a Christian.

St. Adrian

Adrian of Nicomedia, a soldier in the army of Rome, lived about three hundred years after the time of Christ. One of his military assignments involved supervising a work party of men in jail for being Christians.

The men had been treated harshly while in jail, some had even been tortured, and none of them had eaten properly since their imprisonment. Yet they never complained. In fact, they often sang songs about God and appeared to be happy. This behavior had a profound effect on Adrian. He asked the men to pray for him, so that he could become a Christian, too.

When Adrian's commanders heard what he had done, they sentenced him to death by fire. He died as a result of his faith in God. He is now the patron saint of prison guards. We honor him on September 8.



Unscramble Puzzle

Unscramble the following verse from Luke 6 to learn what Jesus had to say about being a Christian. Answers can be found on page 16.

"oelv ruyo eecismn dna od ogdo ot mhet."

-Luke 6:36



You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 words or less) answering this question:

Jesus died to set us free from sin. What does that mean to you?

Send your essay — including name, home address, telephone number, school and grade — to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Deadline for entries is Sept. 28, 1995. The winner will be notified by phone and receive the savings bond by mail. In addition, the winner's essay will be published in an upcoming issue of Kids' Chronicle.

Last month's winner was Jessica Sutherland, a tenth-grade student at Bishop Kearney High School. In response to the question **What do you think is the most important problem facing the people of the world today?** she wrote:

I think the most important problem facing the world today is materialism. People are obsessed with money. If they weren't, they wouldn't hesitate to donate their time or money to the many worthy causes, including drug rehab, building homes for the homeless, helping people in 3rd world countries, and helping victims of natural disasters.

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