

HANDFULS ON PURPOSE SAMPLE

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Handfuls on Purpose
New Testament Studies
Philemon

This is the briefest of all Paul's Epistles. It is the only sample of the Apostle's private correspondence that has been preserved. It is known as "The Courteous Epistle. " Its object was to persuade Philemon not to punish, but reinstate, his runaway slave, called Onesimus, and as he was now converted, treat him as a brother in the Lord.

THE TASK AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.
PHILEMON.

I. The Task.

Invariably, in those days, runaway slaves were crucified. Paul must try to conciliate the master-Philemon—without humiliating the servant—Onesimus; to commend the repentant wrong-doer, without extenuating his offence; thus he must balance the claims of justice and mercy.

II. Its Solution.

1. Touching Philemon's heart by several times mentioning that he was a prisoner for the Gospel's sake.
2. Frankly and fully recognised Philemon's most excellent Christian character, thus making it difficult for him to refuse to live up to his reputation, and to lead him to deal graciously with the defaulter.
3. Delayed mentioning the name of the penitent until he had paved the way.
4. Referred to Onesimus as his "son," thus establishing the new kinship in Christ.
5. After presenting his request, assumed Philemon would do as he had requested (21) .
6. Refused to command with the authority of an apostle, but entreated as a brother, as a bosom friend. See verses 8, 9, 20; especially "Dearly beloved" (v. 1).
7. Frankly acknowledged the wrong done (11), and promised to make good any loss (18, 19) .
8. By a careful choice of words, avoided irritation, as, for example, he says "departed" (15), not fled or runaway, etc., etc.
9. Feels the slave must not encounter his outraged master alone, so arranges for Philemon's friend, Tychicus, to accompany him and act as mediator. It is clear that Tychicus conveyed this letter to Philemon with Onesimus. (See Colossians 4. 7-9).
10. Mentions his plans to visit Philemon (22) ; and how could he meet him if he had refused to carry out his request ?

A FOURFOLD FELLOWSHIP. PHILEMON .

I. Fellow-believer. TRUSTING (6).

1. "Fellowship of thy faith" is R.V. "This faith which you share with us" (Way.).
2. What a glorious fellowship is this of faith. What an honour to be numbered as a member of the Lord's Household of Faith.

II. Fellow-soldier. FIGHTING (2).

1. Apphia is called "The Sister" in R.V. Was she Philemon's wife or daughter?
2. It is generally understood that Archippus was Philemon's son.
3. Fighting follows trusting. Soon the young believer discovers this. Fightings without—yes, and fightings within—"Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5. 17). Remember it was immediately after God had given water (type of Holy Spirit) to Israel, that Amalek (type of flesh) fought Israel. (See. Exod. 17. 1-8). Observe force of "Then" in verse 8. But in this fight, through our Heavenly Moses on the Mount—our Lord Jesus as Great High Priest—we are more than conquerors.

III. Fellow-labourer. WORKING (1).

1. Philemon is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians, but Archippus, whom Paul associates (in Philemon 2) with Philemon, is mentioned in such a way as to imply that both were office-bearers (Col. 4. 17) . "Sharer in our toil" is Way's translation. Philemon was one of Paul's converts.

2. "Our fellow-workman" (J.N.D.).

IV. Fellow-prisoner. SUFFERING (23).

1. Only Epistle where Paul begins by simply calling himself a "prisoner." Six times does he allude to this (1,9, 10, 13, 22, 23).
2. The Epistle begins with Paul in bonds, but leads up to Paul in prayer.
3. Observe, "prisoner for Jesus Christ" (I, R.V.). He does not dwell on this in any spirit of boasting or proud display, but for a benign purpose.
4. Suffering for the Lord falls naturally to the lot of all born-again ones. The lustings of the flesh, for example, cause suffering. Then grace does refine, making us more sensitive to the jeers and taunts of the world, and to the unkind and uncharitable criticisms of fellow-believers.
5. But let us never forget we are not the only sufferers, for this is the common lot of all believers. 'Fellow-prisoner.'
6. It is generally understood that the prominent brethren took turns in voluntarily sharing

the Apostle's imprisonment, so as to minister to him in his bonds, "not being ashamed of his chain" (2 Tim. 1. 16) . By such a fellowship of suffering they must have refreshed the heart of the Apostle.

7. Epaphras is the shortened or provincial form of Epaphroditus.

AN ANALOGY OF OUR SALVATION. PHILEMON.

I. Original Position. God created man perfect, and thus man was His property. But in sinning he not only departed from God, as Onesimus had done, but also robbed Him of His rights and just dues.

II. Sad Plight. As Onesimus fled to Rome, and was in a parlous position, so with man. As Roman law gave a slave no right to asylum, so the Law of God affords man no right of asylum, no resting place, no way of escape. The Law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

III. God has a Partner (17). It is thought by some that Philemon and the Apostle had been partners in some business concern. In Jesus, God has a Partner utterly and entirely one with Him. He interposes on our behalf. Knowing to the full how much we have wronged God, and how much we owe Him, Jesus says, "Put that on Mine account." All our debt is put to Christ's account.

IV. Grace Intervenes. Roman law permitted a slave to flee to his master's friend, who could plead for him. Onesimus sought out his master's friend, Paul the Apostle, and he was born again—"whom I have begotten in my bonds" (10). Sinners fly to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, and through Him, they receive pardon, are begotten anew as sons, and find both a Saviour, an Intercessor, and a Father. The sinner returns to God, and is received, not as a runaway slave, but as Christ Himself (16).

IN CHRIST JESUS. PHILEMON 5-8.

THERE are eleven references to the Lord Jesus by name in this short Epistle of but one chapter. The specially significant phrase, "In Christ Jesus," occurs oftener than in the same number of verses anywhere else in Scripture.

The Lord Jesus is referred to in many offices, as follows:

I. The Object of the faith and love of His people (5).

"A faith that looks up to our Lord Jesus" (Way).

II. The Channel through which God's grace and peace becomes ours (3, 25) .

III. The Source of any good thing in us (6)

IV. The Transforming Power (16) . In verse 11 we have two pictures of one man. Here is a play upon the meaning of the name of Onesimus. which is "profitable." Profitable by name, he became, through sin, unprofitable to his Master, but through the grace of the Lord, and through Christ's wonderful transforming power, profitable to both Paul and his friend Philemon. The Lord transforms waste into wealth. "In the Lord" (16), that is the explanation of the wonderful transformation in Onesimus

V. Gives Boldness to His servants (8).

VI. Gives Satisfaction and refreshment to workers, by prompting their converts to generous and praiseworthy actions (20)

VII. Gives Restfulness in the consciousness that He knows all, and that nothing can come to us save by God's permission (1, 9, 23). Observe, Paul calls himself, not a prisoner of the Roman authorities, true though that was, but of Jesus Christ. Behind Rome he saw the Lord, and knew his imprisonment could not have been but for Divine permission.

**RECEIVE.
PHILEMON.**

This may be taken as the key-word of the Epistle, and forms both its heart and radiating centre. Observe the gathering emphasis in his repetition of this word, how he strikes each time a louder note and a higher key.

I. The Act. What was he to do? Receive (12).

II. The Manner.---How was he to receive Onesimus?

1. As PHILEMON WOULD RECEIVE PAUL HIMSELF (12, 17). "As my own flesh and blood" (C. & H.). "As piece of my very heart" (Way). "I send part of myself (W.). As Dr. Scofield has pointed out, "Receive him as myself"--reckon to him my merit. "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that to my account"--reckon to me his demerit. Striking illustration of the Divine reckoning in our justification.

2 As A BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD (16). In the flesh , Philemon as his brother-man for his slave; in the Lord Jesus he has the slave for his brother. By conversion, one sinner becomes son to Paul and brother to Philemon, his owner and master.

III. The Period. "Receive him for ever" (15). "For perhaps he therefore departed for an hour (lit), that thou shouldst receive him for ever." What a contrast we have here. Paul suggests a loving Providence over-ruling.

BESEECH.
PHILEMON 8-10.

NOTE the intensity of feeling apparent by Paul's use and repetition of the strong word "beseech." But pray also note the Apostle's great wisdom in waiving his authority to command.

I. Paul's Authority (8). "Therefore, though I might with Christ's authority speak very freely and order you to do what is fitting, it is for love's sake that—instead of that—. I entreat you" (W.). Paul had authority to command Philemon to reinstate Onesimus, because-

- 1st. He was an Apostle.
- 2nd. He was Philemon's spiritual father.
- 3rd. Philemon was an office-bearer under Paul.

II. Paul's Wisdom (9). Paul wisely decided, in this case, not to exercise his authority, but to appeal to their mutual love, and to his aged and suffering condition. Elder brethren, and Christian leaders in Churches, would be well advised to more frequently emulate Paul's example, and to take care that their responsible position does not create a permanent, officious, domineering, autocratic, and dictatorial spirit. Such can easily be developed. Note the frequency in Paul's Pastoral Epistles of his commendation of a "gentle" spirit. There is a world of wisdom in that exhortation.

III. Paul's Success (10). 'There is no doubt whatever that Paul succeeded in his plea. His skill in presenting his case, and, above all, his gentle, loving entreaties were overwhelming. More success would be granted in many difficult Assembly and Church matters if Paul's example were more frequently copied.

HEBREWS

HEBREWS is an anonymous book. Though no one can dogmatise with regard to its authorship, it does seem to be of Paul's thinking and Luke's composition and writing. It was addressed to the converted Jews living in Judea, who, on account of bitter persecution, were wavering in their allegiance to Christ. It is an epistle of exhortation, comfort, and warning.

HOW TO PRESENT THE GOSPEL TO JEWS.
HEBREWS.

THOSE who are called to evangelise Jews declare that there is no better statement of the Gospel to present to Jews than this Epistle. Let us trace the method of presentation, as seen in this Epistle.

We notice first, that -

THE AUTHOR HERE PROVES TO THE JEWS THAT THE JESUS OF NAZARETH THEY PUT TO DEATH ON THE HATED CROSS IS NONE OTHER THAN CHRIST THEIR MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD, THE SECOND PERSON IN THE BLESSED TRINITY. This is an important point. We cannot but admire the courage and faithfulness of the Apostle, for the Jews then, as now, were prepared to admire much in Jesus, but would not listen to His claim to Deity. Observe how slowly and methodically he declares and proves this.

I. Greater than Prophets. The prophets whom all Jews value, were great, but Jesus was greater than any or all of them (1. 1-3) . Why? Jesus is the-

1. ORIGIN of all things: "By whom also He made the worlds" (2) .
2. SUSTAINER of all things: "Upholding all things" (3).
3. GLORY of all things : "Brightness of His glory" (3) .
4. UNIQUE amidst all. Here the writer points out the absolute uniqueness of Jesus. However great were the prophets, none shared Deity, none were the "express image of" God.

II.. Greater than Angels. Angels are great beings, but Jesus is greater than any or all of them put together (1, 4-14), because:

1. Divine NAMES are given to Him (1. 2, 5, 8, 10).
2. Divine WORSHIP was offered Him (1. 6).
3. Divine NATURE is announced as His (1. 8).
4. Divine MAJESTY is ascribed to Him (1. 8).
5. Divine ANOINTING bestowed upon Him (1. 9).
6. Divine WORKS are assigned to Him (1. 10).
7. Divine ATTRIBUTE OF IMMUTABILITY (or Permanence, of constant continuity) residing in Him (1. 11, 12).
8. Divine COMPANIONSHIP was His-companion of the Most High (1. 13).
9. Divine RULE committed to Him (2. 5-8).
10. Divine REDEMPTION worked out by Him (2. 9-18).

III.. Greater than Moses. Moses was very great, but Jesus was, and is, greater. This must have staggered the Jews. But the writer proves this point thus:

1. Moses was only a SERVANT, whereas Jesus was Son of God, and a son is greater than a mere servant (3. 5, 6).
2. MOSES WAS "IN God's House" (3. 5), but Jesus "OVER" God's House.
3. Yea, more, Moses was only in GOD'S House," but Jesus "over His OWN House" (3. 5, 6).

IV. Greater than Joshua. Joshua was a great leader, but Jesus far greater (4. 1-13) . Because Jesus renders a more conspicuous service in the bestowal of a Rest far better than the one Joshua (R.V., verse 8) led Israel into. Study verses 5 and 8 in contrast to verse 9.

V. Greater than Aaron. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was great, but Jesus greater (5. 4 to 8; compare 7. 10 to 28). How can this be?

1. His TITLE. Aaron was High Priest, but Jesus called "Great High Priest" (4. 14).
2. His SONSHIP. No high priest ever was called "The Son of God" (4. 14). Note, not "a" Son, but "The Son."
3. HIS PERFECT SYMPATHY. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities" in a more perfect fashion than any earthly priest (4. 15).
4. His SINLESSNESS. All priests, or high priests, are only sinful men, but even the bitterest enemies of Christ have had to acknowledge His sinlessness (7. 26).
5. His KINGSHIP. Jesus is King and Priest, a combination not permitted to any king of Israel or Judah (7. 1). (Study Num. 16. 40; 18. 7; 2 Chron. 26. 18). He was made Priest after the order of Melchisedec, and Abraham acknowledged Melchisedec to be his superior (7. 4-10).
6. His SPHERE. Jesus ministers in a far better sanctuary than Aaron or any of his successors (8. 1-4; 9. 1-15) .

**WHY JESUS CHRIST CAME DOWN TO THIS
WORLD OF OURS.
HEBREWS 1. 3.**

Much confusion exists in the minds of many men and women as to our Lord's chief errand in coming here to this world of ours. Was He sent into the world

I. To be the Prophet of God? He did come with a message from the Most High, and such a message! It was entirely original and unique. He was and is the (not a) prophet of God, yet that was not His primary mission.

II. To be the Revealer of God? "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us," said the disciples to our Saviour, thus articulating man's agelong hunger and passionate desire. Now Jesus did reveal the Unseen. He declared "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—marvellous statement. Yet that was not His supreme mission.

III. To be the Ruler of God? He was not only born of the tribe of Judah, but of the family of David, thus of the Davidic line. He entered Jerusalem as King after three and a-half years' ministry. He claimed the Throne of David. But He was rejected. Yet He must ascend that throne by and by. The next king of united Israel must present and prove his descent from David. Only one Person can do this—the Man Christ Jesus.

For all genealogical registers were burned at the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple, A.D. 60, and the only descendant of David who can present his genealogy is Jesus, for that has been preserved in perpetuity in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Yet He came to do something very important, ere He could reign.

IV, To be the Lamb of God? Yes. Heb. 1. 3 declares the primary work lie came to do. This was the work for which He came. lie came to be a man and die. Seeing He came to purge our sins, why spend so much time in these early chapters of Hebrews to prove His Deity and His Majesty? Ah, the importance of the work performed is proved by the greatness of the Agent. The more important work of the State is entrusted to the most important servants. When the King entrusts a duty to his own firstborn Prince, all are conscious of the importance of the task.

THE ETERNAL FRESHNESS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

HEBREWS 10. 20; REVELATION 5. 6.

DR. CHADWICK draws attention to the Greek word rendered "New," stating that it is unknown elsewhere in Scripture, and means "newly slain." Thus is declared the perpetual freshness of the offering of Christ. This is further taught in that pregnant sentence in the Revelation, "A Lamb as it had been slain," as if freshly slain. Luther saw this point, and remarked, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the Cross." A modern poet also saw this truth and crystallised it in that line of poetry: "Dear dying Iamb, Thy precious Blood Shall never lose its power. "

THE ETERNAL COMPLETENESS AND EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

HEBREWS 8. 12.

THIS is brought out and emphasised many times in this Epistle (7. 27; 9. 25, 26; 10. 1-3), but particularly in association with Heb. 8. 12. The late James Neill, M.A., has so well pointed out that the New Covenant referred to in chapter 8. 6-13, begins at a point to which the Old Covenant never for a moment reached. For there was no sacrifice to atone for wilful sin under the Old Covenant, with four exceptions only:

1. Wilful concealment of knowledge as a witness (Lev.5. 1).
2. A wilful lie (Lev. 6. 2).
3. Perjury (Lev. 6. 2).
4. A sin of uncleanness (Lev. 19. 20, 22).

As to all else, it is said: "The soul that acts presumptuously . . . that soul shall be cut off" (Num. 15. 30). That shows the force of David's petition, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it" (Psa. 51. 16). He is referring to his wilful sin, for which no provision had been made. But of this New Covenant, well, it begins at a point where the Old Covenant never reached—the full, free, forgiveness of all sin. Praise the Lord! Hence the force of "The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1. 7) .

BETTER.
HEBREWS.

This may be taken as the keynote of the Epistle. The Jewish Christians, to whom this Epistle was specifically addressed, owing to the taunts and jeers of their persecutors, were beginning to undervalue their Christian possessions. Therefore the writer rings the changes on the word "better," conceding they had certain things under the Law, but under Grace far "better."

1. Blessings (11.40).
2. Sacrifice (9. 23) .
3. Blood that Speaks of Better Things (12. 24).
4. Hope (7. 19) .
5. Covenant (8.6; 7.22).
6. Promises (8. 6) .
7. Substance (10. 34).
8. Country (11. 16).
9. Resurrection (11. 35) .

"WE HAVE."
HEBREWS.

THE Jewish Christians were being taunted by their unconverted countrymen that through espousing the cause of Christ they had lost everything. The Apostle proves to them that they have only lost the shadow for the substance. The "We have's " of the Apostle must have greatly impressed them. "We have"

1. A Great High Priest (4. 14) .
2. Such a High Priest (8. 1).
3. A Strong Consolation (6. 18).
4. A Cheering Hope (6. 19) .
5. Boldness (10. 19) .
6. A Better Substance (10. 34) .
7. An Altar--Christ (13. 10).

SALVATION.
HEBREWS.

1. Our Name: HEIRS. "Heirs of salvation" (1. 14).
2. Our Salvation: GREAT. "So great salvation" (2. 3).
3. Our Peril: How? "How shall we escape?" (2. 3) . The unanswerable question. What must I do to be lost? Just nothing. No need to reject salvation or treat it with contempt--just neglect it.

4. Our Benefactor: AUTHOR. "Captain of their salvation (2. 10). Captain means author or originator.
5. Our Destiny: ETERNITY. "Eternal salvation" (5. 9).
6. Our Blessings: THINGS, "Things that accompany salvation" (6. 9).
7. Our Goal: UTTERMOST. "Saved to the uttermost" (7. 25) .
8. Our Hope: WITHOUT SIN. "Without sin unto salvation" (9. 28).

SAVED TO THE VERY END.
HEBREWS 7. 25

This verse has been called "The Gospel for Saints." But why saints? Sinners need the Gosp-1, that is universally admitted. But do saints need a Gospel message? Yes; and when the message of "uttermost" is understood, the for of this word is seen. The meaning of the word in the Greek rendered 'uttermost' is really "to the very end." "The end"-.not end in time but end in place. It is true His salvation is good for both. But we are endeavouring to penetrate into the meaning of this word before us.

Israel was saved from death in Egypt by the sprinkling of the blood, and saved from the power of their enemy when the waters of the Red Sea drowned the pursuing army. But they were not saved "to the uttermost," i.e., "to the very end" (as Rotherham renders it) until, after the forty years' wanderings expired, they crossed the Jordan and took possession of the Promised Land. This is a great word. If a redeemed soul has not yet fully entered into his possessions in Christ, and in consequence is not living the life of victory and communion of Beulah land, he has not yet been saved "to the uttermost ? "

1. His Ability to Save. "He is able."
2. Whom He Saves. "Them that come."
3. Extent of His Salvation. "To the uttermost," right up to Canaan, i.e., the life of fellowship and victory.
4. Period of His Salvation. "To the very end" (R.).
5. Ground of this Salvation. "He ever liveth."
6. Character of His Salvation. "Completely" (J.N.D.).

DWELLING AT COURT.
HEBREWS 10. 19-22.

THE Doctrinal part of the Epistle is now ended, and the important application begins. Here we reach the goal. Here we see the child of God at home. That Home is the Holy Place, the very presence of God. "Christianity is a religion of access."

I. The Privilege. "Having therefore liberty" (19, A N., marg.). The privilege of dwelling in the Secret Place is the fruit of Christ's death. And this privilege is for to-day, and all our days, for time as well as eternity.

II. The Enablement. "Let us draw near." Observe: Boldness,' associated with "the Blood of Jesus."

III. The Conditions.

1. A True. HEART. Heart right with God.
2. "Full ASSURANCE." Faith in full, vigorous, healthy exercise.
3. GOOD CONSCIENCE. Through His Blood we find release from the haunting sense of guilt.
4. PURIFIED BODIES. A dedicated and purified body and a life cleansed from all outward degrading and ignoble habits and practices.

FAITH IN OPERATION. HEBREWS 11.

THIS chapter has been called the Westminster Abbey of the Bible. Herein are preserved word-portraits of some members of the family of God in relation to the life of faith.

Have you ever wondered why mention should be made of their faith and not their sins? Why? Obviously because every believer is seen here in the light of chapter 10. They stand in the Covenant of Grace, and are seen as those who have fully accepted the great sacrificial work of the Redeemer, and that means the pardon and blotting out of their sins, never to be remembered again for ever. Praise the Lord!

Let us summarise this chapter:

In verse I we have THE NATURE OF FAITH—that it is not a guess, nor an airy nebulous sort of thing, but "substance," "evidence." In the rest of the chapter we have demonstrated THE POSSIBILITY OF FAITH to all classes and grades of individuals, women and men, servants and master, the weak and the strong, the educated and the illiterate.

FAITH'S: HEBREWS 11.

FAITH.

1. Description, .. Substance and Evidence (1).
2. Report, Elders (2) .
3. Credence, Creation (3).
4. Worship, Abel (4).
5. Witness, Enoch (5, 6).
6. Work, Noah (7).
7. Walk, Abraham (8).
8. Patience,Abraham (9, 10).
9. Willingness, ... Sarah (11, 12).
10. Welcome, .. .Unknown Heroes (13-16).
11. Sacrifice, Abraham (17-19).
12. Triumph, Isaac (20-22).
13. Preservation, Parents of Moses (23).

- 14. Renunciation, Moses (24-26).
- 15. Flight, Moses (27).
- 16. Contagion, .. "He" then "Them" (28, 29).
- 17. Exploit, Israel (30).
- 18. Salvation, Rahab (31) .
- 19. Manifold Activities, Many Saints (32-40).

THE RACE.
HEBREWS 12. 1, 2.

IN the Bible there are various views of life. Here is an athletic one, that of a race. This simile is suggestive.

I. The Race. Speaking of

I. STRENUOUS effort.

2. RUN, not loiter.

3. CHANGEFUL. life implied, with fresh views.

4. A PROGRESSIVE life, calling for

5. CONCENTRATION.

II. The Appointment. "Set before us."

III. The Incentive. A cloud of witnesses. We are being watched, at anyrate by our Blessed Lord.

IV. The Preparation. "Let us lay aside."

"The Weight"—lawful things, yet things not helpful. "The Sin"—besetting sin. V.

The Speed. "Let us run," not loiter.

VI. The Spirit. "Run with patience."

VII. The Inspiration. Looking unto Jesus. VIII.

The Goal. The Glory.

Note.—For a more detailed study of this Epistle, see the Author's "The Outlined Hebrews," where there are 118 separate and distinct studies in addition to these.