

Philemon & Onesimus- the slave, @ Colossae

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. ²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- the shortest letter of the Pauline corpus
- The only example in the Pauline writings that may be characterized as a personal note

¹ Paul, **a prisoner for Christ Jesus**, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier,
 and the church in your house:

- **a prisoner for Christ Jesus** – Paul usually says “Apostle of Jesus.” Here he is “prisoner.”
- Philemon – affectionate, or beloved
- Apphia – ^{fem.} Probably the wife of Philemon, and in charge of the servants.
- Archippus –
- **church in your house** – So, this was to be read to the church also.
 - It is the church at Colossae – [Colossians 4:9](#) – *and with him **Onesimus**, our faithful and beloved brother, **who is one of you**. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.*
 - There were probably slaves and servants who were also part of this church in Philemon's house.
 - There was at least one slave who did not appear to be a believer while he worked for Philemon.
 - A Christian boss can not command people into the kingdom.
 - The Christian servants & other members probably prayed for each other
 - Christ unites people from diverse backgrounds!
 - House churches are mentioned in [Romans 16:5](#) and [Colossians 4:15](#).

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Typical greeting from Paul

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,

- How important it is to thank God when we pray for others
 - Thank him for the person you are lifting up
 - Thank Him for what they mean to you and the body of Christ
 - This can lead to successful intercession.

⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,

- When our love for Jesus and for one another is what people notice about us, it deeply encourages those who pray for us and watch our lives.

⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

- **Sharing** – κοινωνία; koinonia; koy-nohn-ee'-ah: fellowship, the close association between persons, emphasizing what is common between them; by extension: participation, sharing, contribution, gift, **the outcome of such close relationships**
- - Notice: not that they would be healthy, wealthy, and wise, but effective in fellowship & sharing faith!
 - Let this be our prayer for others, and for us as a body!

⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

- Hearts of the saints, refreshed – He was a blessing to the body and that blessed Paul
 - Those who are a blessing to the body of Christ bring Joy to those serving, and to the Lord!

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,

⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—

- Paul begins his request.

^{10a} I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus,

- my child
- Onesimus – Profitable/ useful 😊

^{10b} whose father I became **in my imprisonment**.

¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

- Formerly
- **useless to you** – Paul is playing with the words here! Onesimus means “**Profitable/ useful.**”
 - It is thought that he stole from Philemon
- **but now** – The difference Christ makes in us is the key!

- He is now living up to what his name means!
- We were once useless regarding the things of God, now we are servants!
- **in my imprisonment** – Onesimus deserted and made his way to Rome and somehow found Paul and was found by Christ!
 - Paul shared the gospel with him there in Rome, and he received Christ!
 - Do you think the believers at Colossae prayed for that runaway slave?
 - People we pray for to come to faith might not do so when we want.

¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

- back to you – Back to the scene of the crime
 - Philemon (meaning: affectionate, or beloved) had every right to be upset!
 - Can he now live up to his name?
- very heart – Distinct level of sentiment in his description.
 - Not just: “Brother-in-Christ” or “Believer.”

¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,

- might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment – my servant while I am imprisoned for the gospel!

¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.

- might not be by compulsion
- To the Elders of the church Peter writes: 1 Peter 5:2 –² *shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;*

¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,

¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a **beloved brother**—especially to me, but how much more to you, **both in the flesh and in the Lord.**

- Bondservant – there were 60,000,000 in the Roman Empire and there was a real potential for revolt¹

¹ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series : The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Revised (Philadelphia, Pa: Westminster, 1975). 270

- **beloved brother** – Look at how Christ heals and unites
- **both in the flesh... in the Lord.** – Practically & spiritually, he’s now more than a slave!

¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

- wronged you at all, or owes you anything – This is where scholars think Onesimus stole from Philemon
- Roman law required that rendering hospitality to a runaway slave made one liable to the slave’s master for the value of each day’s work lost² 😊
- **Charge that to my account!** – The Debt was to be transferred from Onesimus!
 - The Good Samaritan did the same thing. [Luke 10:29-37](#) – ²⁹ *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”* ³⁰ *Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and **whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.**’*
 - Jesus is our Good Samaritan
 - ★ Jesus paid a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay!
 - Just because Onesimus was now in Christ, he still had a practical debt to pay.
 - If this crime were forgiven, what would that mean for the other slaves? Philemon has a decision to make!
 - Sometimes the decisions we face have practical consequences that can be very difficult! We need wisdom and the Spirit to lead us!

¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

- your owing me – The person or people who shared the good news with you saved your lives!

² <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Epistle-Philemon>

²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

- benefit from you in the Lord – Vs. 6: *the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.*

²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

- you will do even more –

²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

- guest room for me – by the way, I'll be visiting you so keep that in mind!

Final Greetings

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so

do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

- Epaphras – possibly the pastor/ teaching elder at Colossae
- Mark – John/Mark
- Aristarchus,
- Demas,
- Luke

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- About 50 years later, **Ignatius**, one of the early church's martyrs, wrote to the church at Ephesus and said a great deal about their wonderful bishop.
 - **The bishop's name was Onesimus.**
 - **John Knox** (The Scottish Protestant reformer from the 1500s) stated that, "Onesimus played a major role in ensuring Philemon was included with Paul's letters in Scriptures, and that his voice as a bishop carried weight."³
- Have you been wronged by someone who is now in Christ?

³ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/onesimus-a-lesser-known-story-with-a-lasting-impact.html>

Chiastic Structure

