



Charge It To My Account
Philemon 1
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I. Intro

A. Text: **Philemon 1**

*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. (Philem. 1)

B. Background

1. Philemon was a wealthy slaveowner in the city of Colosse, who benefited from the ministry of Paul in the general vicinity.
2. Paul had never been to Colosse, but just 100 miles to the west, Paul spent two years in Ephesus.
 - a. Acts Ch. 19 explains that folks were getting saved all around the region while Paul was in Ephesus.
 - b. God was working unusual miracles at the hand of Paul. **(Acts 19:11)**
 - i. The sick were getting healed (handkerchiefs).
 - ii. Devils were getting cast out (handkerchiefs).
 - c. Entire industries were shut down (Demetrius the silversmith).
 - d. Riots and more.
3. It was around this time that a man named Epaphras likely traveled to Ephesus, got saved, then took the gospel back to his hometown of Colosse.
 - a. A city church was born.
 - b. At some point they met in the house of a man named Philemon.
4. But Philemon was a slave owner.
 - a. Slavery was legal AND normal in the Roman Empire.
5. So you have a wealthy slaveowner who's name means, **"the one who loves"**.
 - a. Hosted the citywide church in his house.
 - b. Philemon was apparently close to the Apostle Paul, who did incredible work in nearby Ephesus.

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. (Philem. 1:4-7)

6. Philemon had apparently established a history and reputation of showing hospitality and love for the saints.
7. Somehow, despite his love for others, Philemon had a slave named Onesimus.
 - a. Something mysterious happened with Onesimus that triggered him to flee for his own well-being.
 - b. Whatever happened caused significant financial loss to Philemon.
 - c. What we know now is that Onesimus owed his master a debt (that he could not repay).
8. Somehow Onesimus ran into Paul as Paul was in a Roman prison, and messed around and got saved.
 - a. Paul disciplined him.
9. And now Paul realized that he had a problem.
 - a. He loved Onesimus.
 - b. But Onesimus had unfinished business with Philemon.
10. The same Gospel that reconciled Onesimus to God (in that Roman prison) is the same Gospel that had the potential to reconcile Onesimus back to his master, Philemon.
 - a. The Gospel not only reconciles vertically, but confronts what's been broken horizontally.

II. Body

A. Homecoming

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. (Philem. 1:8-10)

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1. Once Onesimus was delivered by the risen Christ... Once he was discipled and mature, Paul knew he had to send Onesimus back to face the ones he wronged.
 - a. Onesimus had become a son to Paul.
 2. Paul wrote a letter that accompanied this return, appealing to Philemon, not on the basis of obligation, but he appealed on the basis of love.
 - a. Forgive this man, Onesimus, for love's sake.
 - b. You've both been reconciled to God; now be reconciled to one another.
 3. Paul wasn't sending back a slave. He was sending back a brother.

16 no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother... (Philem. 1:16)

4. Don't be reconciled to who he was. Receive him according to who Christ has made him.

B. Charge It To My Account

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. (Philem. 1:17-20)

1. Whatever honor you think I am worthy of, give this brother that same honor.
2. If you would have prepared the special guest quarters for me, then make the same arrangements for him.
3. If Onesimus owes you anything, recognize that he has no ability to repay it.
 - a. Release him of that debt.
 - b. Not because he deserves forgiveness.

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- c. But grant him this thing called grace: Undeserved, unearned favor.
 - 4. You yourself know what grace feels like.
 - a. You know what it feels like to owe a debt that you cannot pay (by the way, you owe me)
 - 5. Philemon was challenged, not just with forgiveness, but reconciliation.
 - 6. Paul wasn't merely asking Philemon to NOT punish Onesimus.
 - a. Paul was asking Philemon to change the way he saw Onesimus.
 - 7. Reconciliation isn't always immediate or even possible (particularly if the other party is unsaved, unrepentant, or unsafe).
 - a. This story is beautiful because Paul is not just asking for Onesimus to be excused.
 - i. He's asking for Onesimus to be received (as a changed man).

III. Conclusion

A. Recap

- 1. **Homecoming**
 - a. The offender had to go face the offended.
- 2. **Charge It To My Account**
 - a. The offended had to make room for grace.
- 3. But the problem remains: **Somebody has to deal with the debt.**

B. Onesimus's story tells the story of every believer (especially me).

- 1. The Eternal Son of God became a man and paid the debt that I could NOT repay.
- 2. If you've been forgiven, forgiving others isn't merely a command.

C. Useless to Useful

*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. (Philem. 1:10-12)

1. Paul here makes a prophetic declaration by making a play on Onesimus' name.
 - a. Useless $\Rightarrow$ Useful
 - b. Unprofitable $\Rightarrow$ Profitable
2. Here's the problem in our culture: We keep relating to people according to who they were, after God has already settled who they are.
3. All of our debt (all of our past), God has charged to the account of His Son.
4. **"Charge it to My account."**