

1 PAUL, A PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS, AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER, TO PHILEMON OUR DEAR FRIEND AND FELLOW WORKER— 2 ALSO TO APPHIA OUR SISTER AND ARCHIPPUS OUR FELLOW SOLDIER—AND TO THE CHURCH THAT MEETS IN YOUR HOME: 3 GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU [A] FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

4 I ALWAYS THANK MY GOD AS I REMEMBER YOU IN MY PRAYERS, 5 BECAUSE I HEAR ABOUT YOUR LOVE FOR ALL HIS HOLY PEOPLE AND YOUR FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS. 6 I PRAY THAT YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH US IN THE FAITH MAY BE EFFECTIVE IN DEEPENING YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF EVERY GOOD THING WE SHARE FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST. 7 YOUR LOVE HAS GIVEN ME GREAT JOY AND ENCOURAGEMENT, BECAUSE YOU, BROTHER, HAVE REFRESHED THE HEARTS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

PAUL'S PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

8 THERE IS ONE PERSON WHO WOULD BE IN ORDER FOR YOU TO DO AS YOU WISH TO DO, 9 YET I PREFER TO PLEASE YOU IN THE LORD. NONE OF THEM HAS BEEN MENTIONED IN MY LETTERS—AND MAY I NOW ALSO ASK YOU TO HELP ME IN THIS MATTER. I AM WRITING TO YOU ABOUT ONESIMUS, MY SON WHILE HE WAS IN THE CHAIN. 11 HE WAS MY USEFUL SERVANT, BUT HE HAS BECOME MORE USEFUL TO YOU AND TO ME.

12 I AM SURE HE HAS BEEN HEARTY TO YOU AND TO ME. YOU HAVE LIKED HIM, AND HE HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO ME SO THAT HE WOULD TAKE YOUR PLACE IN HELPING ME WITH MY WORK. 14 I WOULD NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING WITH YOU WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT, SO THAT I CAN SHOW YOU HOW I AM WORKING. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU MUST HAVE HIM BACK. HE IS A SLAVE, BUT BETTER THAN A SLAVE, HE IS A DEAR BROTHER. HE IS VERY DEAR TO ME BUT EVEN DEARER TO YOU, BOTH AS A FELLOW MAN AND AS A BROTHER IN THE LORD.

17 SO IF YOU CONSIDER ME A PARTNER, WELCOME HIM AS YOU WOULD WELCOME ME. 18 IF HE HAS DONE YOU ANY WRONG OR OWES YOU ANYTHING, CHARGE IT TO ME. 19 I, PAUL, AM WRITING THIS WITH MY OWN HAND. I WILL PAY IT BACK—NOT TO MENTION THAT YOU OWE ME YOUR VERY SELF. 20 I DO WISH, BROTHER, THAT I MAY HAVE 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 ASK.

22 AND ONE THING MORE: PREPARE A GUEST ROOM FOR ME, BECAUSE I HOPE TO BE RESTORED TO YOU IN ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYERS.

23 EPAPHRAS, MY FELLOW PRISONER IN CHRIST JESUS, SENDS YOU GREETINGS. 24 AND SO DO MARK, ARISTARCHUS, DEMAS AND LUKE, MY FELLOW WORKERS.

25 THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT.

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PAUL'S PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

8 THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH IN CHRIST I COULD BE BOLD AND ORDER YOU TO DO WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO, 9 YET I PREFER TO APPEAL TO YOU ON THE BASIS OF LOVE. IT IS AS NONE OTHER THAN PAUL—AN OLD MAN AND NOW ALSO A PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS— 10 THAT I APPEAL TO YOU FOR MY SON ONESIMUS,^[B] WHO BECAME MY SON WHILE I WAS IN CHAINS. 11 FORMERLY HE WAS USELESS TO YOU, BUT NOW HE HAS BECOME USEFUL BOTH TO YOU AND TO ME.

12 I AM SENDING HIM—WHO IS MY VERY HEART—BACK TO YOU. 13 I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO KEEP HIM WITH ME SO THAT HE COULD TAKE YOUR PLACE IN HELPING ME WHILE I AM IN CHAINS FOR THE GOSPEL. 14 BUT I DID NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT, SO THAT ANY FAVOR YOU DO WOULD NOT SEEM FORCED BUT WOULD BE VOLUNTARY. 15 PERHAPS THE REASON HE WAS SEPARATED FROM YOU FOR A LITTLE WHILE WAS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE HIM BACK FOREVER— 16 NO LONGER AS A SLAVE, BUT BETTER THAN A SLAVE, AS A DEAR BROTHER. HE IS VERY DEAR TO ME BUT EVEN DEARER TO YOU, BOTH AS A FELLOW MAN AND AS A BROTHER IN THE LORD.

17 SO IF YOU CONSIDER ME A PARTNER, WELCOME HIM AS YOU WOULD WELCOME ME. 18 IF HE HAS DONE YOU ANY WRONG OR OWES YOU ANYTHING, CHARGE IT TO ME. 19 I, PAUL, AM WRITING THIS WITH MY OWN HAND. I WILL PAY IT BACK—NOT TO MENTION THAT YOU OWE ME YOUR VERY SELF. 20 I DO WISH, BROTHER, THAT I MAY HAVE 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 ASK.

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PHILEMON



PHILEMON

the transformative power of the gospel

PHILEMON

A personal appeal for

the transformative power of the gospel

in our relationships

PHILEMON

6 Big Ideas...

the transformative power of the gospel

PHILEMON

6 Big Ideas...

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation

the transformative power of the gospel

PHILEMON

6 Big Ideas...

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation
- Equality and Christian brotherhood

the transformative power of the gospel

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6 Big Ideas...

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation
- Equality and Christian brotherhood
 - Love over coercion

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- Partnership and fellowship

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- Partnership and fellowship
- Transformation of purpose

PHILEMON

6 Big Ideas...

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation
- Equality and Christian brotherhood
 - Love over coercion

the transformative power of the gospel

- Partnership and fellowship
- Transformation of purpose
- Vision of a new humanity

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.

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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.

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

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Greek: parakaleó

to urge, to comfort, to implore, to exhort, to encourage

1. to call near (as to receive or give help)
2. to implore, entreat (to urgently ask for mercy or help)
3. to exhort (to urgently counsel, encourage or admonish)
4. to comfort, to beseech, to call for, to urge

parakaléō pará, "from close-beside" and *kaléō,* "to call"

– properly, "to make a call or request" from being "up-close and personal"

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Onesimus: Greek name meaning “useful”

- Probably a young twentysomething looking to escape his servitude and trying to hide among the thousands of slaves in Rome. Probably 40% of Rome was populated by slaves.
- He may have been acquainted with Paul if he accompanied Philemon to Ephesus. Philemon pursued the gospel and went to Ephesus to hear for himself the gospel, in like manner of Epaphras.

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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 so that he might serve

Greek: splanchnon

bowels, inward affection, tender mercy

Properly: the internal organs (viscera);

Figuratively: gut-level compassion (visceral feelings);

the capacity to feel deep emotions (sympathy, empathy, etc.).

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Greek: agathos

good, good thing, good man, generous, goodness, benefit

–something that is inherently (intrinsically) good;

as to believers, describes what

originates from God and is empowered by Him in their lives,
through faith.

12

I am sending you, sending my very heart.

13

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

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I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—

10 I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus,

11 A sense of personal responsibility
12 breeds *character* and *compassion*.
13

14 me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,
but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that
your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own
accord.

Critics argue that *systems of coercion* undermine character development by eliminating individual autonomy, discouraging personal responsibility, and enforcing ideological conformity. By prioritizing the collective over the individual, these critiques suggest that elite-controlled systems stifle the traits traditionally associated with robust character, such as ambition, free will, and moral agency.

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To feel and embrace the heavy-weight of responsibility is a gift from God and a critically important dimension of growing into maturity and becoming the person we are meant to become. There are no short cuts, no alternatives, no substitutes for exercising the muscles of personal responsibility and accountability.

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accord.

When we exercise **personal responsibility**, we are declaring that we understand we are made for doing good. Unfortunately, we willfully walked away from the individual responsibility of mirroring the goodness of God. However, God's redemptive work in us through Christ restores our heart to willfully join Him in demonstrating His goodness in all that we say and all that we do.

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**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.

15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while,
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the transformative power of the gospel

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“in the flesh”

The reality that we experience earthly relationships with each other on a day in and day out level.

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

“in the flesh”

The reality that we experience earthly relationships with each other on a day in and day out level.

This highlights the importance of the fundamental common humanity we share with one another.

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.

“in the flesh”

The reality that we experience earthly relationships with each other on a day in and day out level.

This highlights the importance of the fundamental common humanity we share with one another.

“in the Lord”

The reality that we have a spiritual, soulish, eternal level of relationship with each other as God’s children.

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The reality that we experience earthly relationships with each other on a day in and day out level.

This highlights the importance of the fundamental common humanity we share with one another.

“in the Lord”

The reality that we have a spiritual, soulful, eternal level of relationship with each other as God’s children.

This highlights the importance of being brothers and sisters in Christ forever.

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.

Greek: koinonia

fellowship, connection, a partner, a joint-participant,
a partaker of a deeply meaningful and intimate personal relationship

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The real me, and the real you, relating to the real God.

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Greek: splanchnon

bowels, inward affection, tender mercy

Properly: the internal organs (viscera);

Figuratively: gut-level compassion (visceral feelings);
the capacity to feel deep emotions (sympathy, empathy, etc.).

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.

1 PAUL, A PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS, AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER, TO PHILEMON OUR DEAR FRIEND AND FELLOW WORKER— 2 ALSO TO APPHIA OUR SISTER AND ARCHIPPUS OUR FELLOW SOLDIER—AND TO THE CHURCH THAT MEETS IN YOUR HOME: 3 GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU^[A] FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

4 I ALWAYS THANK MY GOD AS I REMEMBER YOU IN MY PRAYERS, 5 BECAUSE I HEAR ABOUT YOUR LOVE FOR ALL HIS HOLY PEOPLE AND YOUR FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS. 6 I PRAY THAT YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH US IN THE FAITH MAY BE EFFECTIVE IN DEEPENING YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF EVERY GOOD THING WE SHARE FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST. 7 YOUR LOVE HAS GIVEN ME GREAT JOY AND ENCOURAGEMENT, BECAUSE YOU, BROTHER, HAVE REFRESHED THE HEARTS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

PAUL'S PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

8 THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH IN CHRIST I COULD HAVE DEMANDED ORDER FOR YOU TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO, 9 YET I PREFER TO APPEAL TO YOU ON THE BASIS OF LOVE. IT IS AS NONE OTHER THAN PAUL—AN OLD MAN AND NOW ALSO A PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS— 10 THAT I APPEAL TO YOU FOR MY SON ONESIMUS,^[B] WHO BECAME MY SON WHILE I WAS IN CHAINS. 11 FORMERLY HE WAS USELESS TO YOU, BUT NOW HE HAS BECOME USEFUL BOTH TO YOU AND TO ME.

12 I AM SENDING HIM—WHO IS MY VERY HEART—BACK TO YOU. 13 I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO KEEP HIM WITH ME SO THAT HE COULD TAKE YOUR PLACE IN HELPING ME WHILE I AM IN CHAINS FOR THE GOSPEL. 14 BUT I DID NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT, SO THAT ANY FAVOR YOU DO WOULD NOT SEEM FORCED BUT WOULD BE VOLUNTARY. 15 PERHAPS THE REASON HE WAS SEPARATED FROM YOU FOR A LITTLE WHILE WAS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE FOUND HIM MORE USEFUL—NO LONGER AS A SLAVE, BUT BETTER THAN A SLAVE, AS A DEAR BROTHER. HE IS VERY DEAR TO ME BUT EVEN DEARER TO YOU, BOTH AS A FELLOW MAN AND AS A BROTHER IN THE LORD.

17 SO IF YOU CONSIDER ME A PARTNER, WELCOME HIM AS YOU WOULD WELCOME ME. 18 IF HE HAS DONE YOU ANY WRONG OR OWES YOU ANYTHING, CHARGE IT TO ME. 19 I, PAUL, AM WRITING THIS WITH MY OWN HAND. I WILL PAY IT BACK—NOT TO MENTION THAT YOU OWE ME YOUR VERY SELF. 20 I DO WISH, BROTHER, THAT I MAY HAVE 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 ASK.

22 AND ONE THING MORE: PREPARE A GUEST ROOM FOR ME, BECAUSE I HOPE TO BE RESTORED TO YOU IN ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYERS.

23 EPAPHRAS, MY FELLOW PRISONER IN CHRIST JESUS, SENDS YOU GREETINGS. 24 AND SO DO MARK, ARISTARCHUS, DEMAS AND LUKE, MY FELLOW WORKERS.

25 THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT.

So...therefore...what now?

What are we going to do with this letter?

**The world out there is not waiting for
a new definition of Christianity;
it's waiting for
a fresh demonstration of Christianity.**

Leonard Ravenhill, British born evangelist and revival historian

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PHILEMON

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation
- Equality and Christian brotherhood
 - Love over coercion

the transformative power of the gospel

- Partnership and fellowship
- Transformation of purpose
- Vision of a new humanity

PHILEMON

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation

2 things will
refresh the heart of mankind
in a world that drains and degrades
what it means to be fully human.

- Vision of a new humanity

PHILEMON

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation

*The gospel compels us
to take personal responsibility for
mirroring the goodness of God in all
that we say and all that we do.*

- Vision of a new humanity

PHILEMON

- Radical form of reconciliation

*The gospel compels us
to recognize our common humanity
and the profound impact of becoming
equals in the family of God.*

- Vision of a new humanity

PHILEMON

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation

Colossians 3: 9b-11

*...you have put off the old self with its practices
and have put on the new self, which is being renewed
in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

*Here there is not Greek and Jew,
circumcised and uncircumcised,
barbarian, Scythian,*

slave, free;

but Christ is all, and in all.

- Vision of a new humanity

PHILEMON

- Radical forgiveness and reconciliation

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- Vision of a new humanity



First-Century Mediterranean World

0 200 Miles
0 200 Kilometers

Rome

ITALY

Philippi

Black Sea

GALATIA

Colossae

Ephesus

Athens

Corinth

ACHAIA

Crete

Syracuse

Malta

Cyprus

Mediterranean Sea

Jerusalem

Alexandria

EGYPT

