

Paul's Letter to Philemon

Introduction

¹ From Paul, now a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, a fellow follower of the Lord. ² To our dear friend and fellow worker Philemon, to our sister Apphia, to our fellow soldier Archippus; and to the church that meets at Philemon's house; ³ may God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ bless you and give you peace.

Request regarding runaway slave

⁴ I always mention you in my prayers and thank God for you, ⁵ because I hear of the love and the faith which you show, not only to the Lord Jesus, but also to all his people; ⁶ and I pray that your participation in the faith may result in action, as you come to a fuller realization of everything that is good and Christlike in us. ⁷ I have indeed found great joy and encouragement in your love, knowing, as I do, how the hearts of Christ's people have been cheered, friend, by you.

⁸ And so, though my union with Christ enables me, with all confidence, to dictate the course that you should adopt, ⁹ yet the claims of love make me prefer to plead with you – yes, even me, Paul, though I am an ambassador for Christ Jesus and, now a prisoner for him as well. ¹⁰ I plead with you for this child of mine, Onesimus, to whom, in my prison, I have become a father. ¹¹ Once he was

of little service to you, but now he has become of great service, not only to you, but to me as well; ¹²and I am sending him back to you with this letter – though it is like tearing out of my heart. ¹³For my own sake I should like to keep him with me, so that, while I am in prison for the good news, he might attend to my wants on your behalf. ¹⁴But I do not wish to do anything without your consent, because I want your generosity to be voluntary and not, as it were, compulsory. ¹⁵It may be that he was separated from you for an hour, for this reason, so that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave, but as something better – a dearly loved friend and follower of the Lord, especially dear to me, and how much more so to you, not only as a person, but as your fellow Christian! ¹⁷If, then, you count me your friend, receive him as you would me. ¹⁸If he has caused you any loss, or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹I, Paul, put my own hand to it – I will repay you myself. I say nothing about your owing me your self. ²⁰Yes, friend, let me gain something from you because of your union with the Lord. Cheer my heart by your Christlike spirit.

²¹Even as I write, I have such confidence in your compliance with my wishes, that I am sure that you will do even more than I am asking. ²²Please also get a lodging ready for me, for I hope that I will be given back to you all in answer to your prayers.

Messages and Blessing

²³ Epaphras, who is my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, sends you his greeting; ²⁴ and Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers, send theirs.

²⁵ May the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ rest on your souls.

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