



PHILEMON

Read Philemon

Paul makes a personal appeal to Philemon to welcome back Onesimus, not as a runaway slave but in a different type of relationship, as a spiritual brother. This letter does not address the social institution of slavery. It deals with conversion to Christianity and how this experience changes and creates a new relationship between fellow Christians.

Reflect: Sometimes we base our understanding of others on what they do rather than who they are as persons. How can I change my perceptions, so that I can move from a superficial knowledge of another to a more personal type of relationship?

^a Ck the brother

^b Ck the sister

^c From verse 4 through verse 21, you is singular

^d Other ancient authorities read you (plural)

^e Or as an ambassador of Christ Jesus, and now also his prisoner

Salutation

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,^a

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker,² to Apphia our sister,^b to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

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

Philemon's Love and Faith

4 When I remember you^c in my prayers, I always thank my God⁵ because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we^d may do for Christ. ⁷ I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

8 For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty,⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.^e ¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprison-

Pray: Many are inspired to become Christian converts. Pray that others may accept and welcome them as “fellow Christians.”

Act: Become aware of how you treat others, especially fellow Christians. Is there a need for me, as there was for Philemon, to be more open and embracing of those who are not part of my social class?

ment. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful^a both to you and to me. ¹² I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. ¹³ I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. ¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, 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, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

²² One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Final Greetings and Benediction

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,^b ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

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

^a The name Onesimus means *useful* or (compare verse 20) *beneficial*

^b Here *you* is singular

^c Other ancient authorities add *Amen*