Greetings from Paul, a prisoner for Jesus Christ, and from Timothy, our brother.

To Philemon, our dear friend and worker with us. Also to our sister Apphia, to Archippus, who serves with us in the Lord’s army, and to the church that meets in your home.

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

Philemon’s Love and Faith

I remember you in my prayers. And I always thank my God for you.

I thank God because I hear about the love you have for all of God’s holy people and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus.

I pray that the faith you share will make you understand every blessing we have in Christ.

My brother, you have shown love to God’s people, and your help has greatly encouraged them. What a great joy and encouragement that has been to me.

Accept Onesimus as a Brother

There is something that you should do. And because of the authority I have in Christ, I feel free to command you to do it. But I am not commanding you; I am asking you to do it out of love. I, Paul, am an old man now, and I am a prisoner for Christ Jesus. I am asking you for my son Onesimus. He became my son while I was in prison. In the past he was useless to you. But now he has become useful for both you and me.

I am sending him back to you, but it’s as hard as losing part of myself. I would like to keep him here to help me while I am still in prison for telling the Good News. By helping me here, he would be representing you. But I did not want to do anything without asking you first. Then whatever you do for me will be what you want to do, not what I forced you to do.

Onesimus was separated from you for a short time. Maybe that happened so that you could have him back forever, not to be just a slave, but better than a slave, to be a dear brother. That’s what he is to me. And I know he will mean even more to you, both as your slave and as one who shares your faith in the Lord.

If you accept me as your friend, then accept Onesimus back. Welcome him like you would welcome me. If he has done any wrong to you or owes you anything, charge that to me. I, Paul, am writing this in my own handwriting: I will pay back anything Onesimus owes. And I will say nothing about what you owe me for your own life. So, my brother, as a follower of the Lord please do this favor for me. It would be such a great encouragement to me as your brother in Christ. I write this letter knowing that you will do what I ask, and even more than I ask.

Also, please prepare a room for me. I hope that God will answer your prayers and that I will be able to come and see you.

Final Greetings

Epaphras is a prisoner with me for Christ Jesus. He sends you his greetings. Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke send their greetings. They are workers together with me.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.