

Philemon

¹Greetings from Paul, a prisoner for Jesus Christ, and from Timothy, our brother.

To Philemon, our dear friend and worker with us. ²Also to our sister Apphia, to Archippus, who serves with us in the Lord's army, and to the church that meets in your home.

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

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴I remember you in my prayers. And I always thank my God for you. ⁵I 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. ⁶I pray that the faith you share will make you understand every blessing we have in Christ. ⁷My 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

⁸There is something that you should do. And because of the authority I have in Christ, I feel free to command you to do it. ⁹But 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. ¹⁰I am asking you for my son Onesimus. He became my son while I was in prison. ¹¹In the past he was useless to you. But now he has become useful^a for both you and me.

¹²I am sending him back to you, but it's as hard as losing part of myself. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴But 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.

¹⁵Onesimus was separated from you for a short time. Maybe that happened so that you could have him back forever, ¹⁶not 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.

¹⁷If you accept me as your friend, then accept Onesimus back. Welcome him like you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he has done any wrong to you or owes you anything, charge that to me. ¹⁹I, 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. ²⁰So, my brother, as a follower of the Lord please do this favor^b for me. It would be such a great encouragement to me as your brother in Christ. ²¹I write this letter knowing that you will do what I ask, and even more than I ask.

²²Also, 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

²³Epaphras is a prisoner with me for Christ Jesus. He sends you his greetings. ²⁴Also Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke send their greetings. They are workers together with me.

²⁵The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

^a **11 useless ... useful** Paul here makes a play on words with the name Onesimus, which means "useful."

^b **20 please do this favor** Paul here makes another wordplay on the name Onesimus, using a verb related to it.

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