

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Greeting and Prayer of Thanks

From Paul, a prisoner for^a Christ Jesus, and from my brother Timothy. To Philemon,^b our dear friend and co-worker, and to our sister Apphia,^c and to Archippus^d our fellow soldier, and to the community^e that meets in your house. Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to God for you all the time, as I mention you in my prayers. Because I am hearing about your love, and about the faith that you show^f towards the Lord Jesus, and to all the holy ones. I'm praying that your partnership in the faith^g will result^h in your recognition of all the goodness that's in us in Christ. Because I've had a lot of joy and encouragement from your love: you've refreshed the hearts of the holy ones,ⁱ my brother!

Paul Calls in a Favor on Behalf of Onesimus

So, although I have plenty of confidence in Christ that I could order you to do what's right, I'd rather appeal to you on the basis of^j love. I'll just speak as^k Paul the elder^l—and now, also as a prisoner for^m Christ Jesus. I appeal to you about my child, Onesimus,ⁿ that I fathered while I was in prison.^o Once he was no use to you, but now he's valuable both to you and to me. I've sent him to you—which means I'm sending my very heart! I had wished that I could keep him here with

^a Lit. "Christ Jesus' prisoner." He is literally in prison.

^b Prn. fye-lee-man.

^c Prn. ap-fee-a.

^d Prn. ar-kipp-us.

^e That is, the Christian community.

^f Lit. "have," or "hold."

^g Lit. "the partnership of your faith."

^h Lit. "will become effective." Some translations have, "that the sharing of your faith will become effective by the knowledge of all the good that's in us in Christ."

ⁱ Lit. "...your love, because the innards of the holy ones have been refreshed through you."

^j Lit. "because of."

^k Lit. "Being such a person as."

^l Or, possibly, "ambassador."

^m Lit. "of." See the nt. on v. 1.

ⁿ Prn. oh-ness-im-us.

^o Lit. "chains."

me—that way, he could help me on your behalf, while I'm in prison^a for the good news. ¹⁴But I didn't want to do anything without your permission. That way, your good deed wouldn't be forced: it would be by choice.^b ¹⁵After all, maybe this was why he was separated from you for a while—so that you'd get him back forever. ¹⁶But not as a slave anymore—no, more than a slave. Now he's a dear brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both humanly and in the Lord!

¹⁷So if you consider^c me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸And if he's done you any wrong, or owes you something, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing this myself: I will pay you back. (That way I don't have to mention to you that you also owe me yourself!) ²⁰Yes, my brother, I'd like this favor from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹I've written to you convinced that you'll obey me. I know that you'll do even more than I ask. ²²And at the same time, get a room ready for me too. Because I'm hoping to be given to you through your prayers.

Final Greeting

²³Epaphras,^d my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, says hello to you. ²⁴So do Mark, Aristarchus,^e Demas,^f and Luke, my co-workers. ²⁵The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your^g spirit!

^a Lit. "chains."

^b Lit. "...permission, so that your good deed wouldn't be as though according to necessity, but rather according to willingness."

^c Lit. "hold."

^d Prn. **epp**-a-fras.

^e Prn. **arr-i-stark**-us.

^f Prn. **deem**-us.

^g This is plural.