

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

{ *Philemon was a citizen of Colossae in whose house a church met. His slave Onesimus had run away, having stolen from his master. Paul appeals to Philemon concerning the value of Onesimus despite his past, for now Onesimus also had become a Christian. The name Onesimus means "useful and profitable one". This provides material for a pun in verse 11. The name Philemon means "loving". This brief letter perhaps was brought to Colossae along with the Epistle bearing that name. If that is the case Onesimus must have accompanied the one who carried the letter.* }

SALUTATION

<Philemon 1-3>

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and our brother Timothy: To Philemon, our beloved fellow worker and to the church that meets in your house ² as well as to our sister Apphia and our comrade in arms (*or, fellow soldier*), Archippus: <*In the Second Century it was assumed that Apphia was the wife of Philemon and Archippus was their son. The name Paul means "little". Timothy means "revere God". Apphia perhaps means "cunning". Archippus means "master of the house".*

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³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <*Some scholars feel that "the church that meets in your house" refers to Archippus' house. This would add meaning to Colossians 4:17. Most scholars would say "the church that meets in your house" refers to Philemon. Some scholars feel that Archippus was ministering to the church in Laodoea but definite proof thereof is not obtainable.*

PHILEMON'S LOVE AND FAITH

<Philemon 4-7>

⁴ I always offer thanks to God, mentioning you in my prayers ⁵ for I kept hearing about your love and the faith you show toward the Lord Jesus and toward all believers (*literally, holy ones; saints*). ⁶ I pray that their participation in (*or, sharing in*) your faith might result in a deeper understanding of the good you are able to enjoy together, that the sharing of your faith might bring about the result of a deeper recognition of all the blessings that become a part of our lives through Christ. ⁷ Your love has provided great joy and comfort because the hearts of the believers (*or, saints*) have been and are being refreshed through you, my brother.

PAUL PLEADS FOR ONESIMUS

<Philemon 8-22>

⁸ In the light of this, even though I could speak with the authority of Christ in a free manner and could order you to do what is appropriate, ⁹ it is because of love that I do this in lieu of a command. Here I am -- **Paul** -- the old man -- now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus. <*With a slight emendation the text would read, "--an ambassador -- now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus".*> ¹⁰ I appeal to you concerning (*or, on behalf of*) my child whose spiritual father <*The Greek word "γενναω" implies a superior rank.*> I have become during my imprisonment (*literally, being in chains*). ¹¹ My child, Onesimus, who once was of little profit to you, but, true to his name <*cf. introductory comment*> he is of great profit to you and to me. I am sending him back to you and in so doing ¹² I am sending a part of myself (*or, my heart*) also.¹ ¹³ I should have gladly kept him for

1 {B} This verse is written with numerous variants in the early manuscripts, all of which have the same basic meaning.

myself in order that he might attend to my wants as your representative during my imprisonment because of the Good News. ¹⁴ I, however, did not desire to do anything without your consent so that your kindness would not be based on compulsion but of your own free will (*or, desire*). ¹⁵ It was perhaps for this very reason that he (*i.e. Onesimus*) was separated (*or, away*) from you for a brief time (*literally, an hour*), so that you might have him forever -- ¹⁶ now not simply as a slave (*or, servant*), but as someone who is better than a slave (*or, servant*) and as a fellow believer in the Lord.

¹⁷ If then, I am regarded as your partner in the faith, welcome Onesimus as you would welcome me! ¹⁸ If he has defrauded you at all, or owes you anything, charge it to me (*or, to my account*). ¹⁹ **I, Paul**, am writing this with my own hand. I will compensate you in full -- to say nothing of the fact that, over and above all this, you owe me no less than your very own self. ²⁰ Well then, brother, do me this favor. Let me receive this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart (*or, cheer me up*) in Christ.

²¹ I am writing this to you with full confidence that you will accede to my wishes. I know that you will do even more than I request. ²² At the same time, I would desire that you prepare a place of lodging (*or, a guest room*) for me for it is my hope that through your prayers I will be restored to you (*or, permitted to come to you*).

FINAL GREETINGS

<Philemon 23-25>

²³ Epaphras, <A shortened version of Epaphroditus. The name means "charming".> my fellow prisoner <The Greek word "συναιχμαλωτος" is usually used to denote 'a prisoner of war'.> in Christ Jesus sends you <The word "you" is singular. In other verses it is plural. cf. verse 25.> greetings, ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. <These were traveling companions of Paul. Mark, also Marcus, was a common name of the time and means "large hammer". Aristarchus means "best ruler". Demas is a shortened version of Demetrius, a common name during and following the Maccabean period, meaning "popular". Demas forsook Paul, cf. II Timothy 4:10. Luke is a shortened form of the Latin Lucanus or Lucius. Greeks would have used the word Loukas. The name means "of light". He was a physician and companion of Paul.>

²⁵ May the grace of [the Lord] ² Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [Amen.] ³

SUBSCRIPTION

{ "To Philemon" Aleph, A, C, Psi, 33 & D with a slight variant. "To Philemon from Rome" P & 048. "To Philemon and Apphaia, Masters of Onesimus and to Archippus, the Deacon of the Colossian Church" L, 626 & 1241. "To Philemon, written by Paul and sent by means of Tychicus to the owner of Onesimus" 1739. 1881 inserts "the fugitive Onesimus" Variants occur in 0278, 323, 365, 629, 630 & 1505. }

2 {C} So: Aleph, P, a number of minuscules, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac & Armenian. "our Lord" A, C, D, K, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic.

3 {B} So: Aleph, C, D in the third corrective hand, K, P, Psi many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic. Omitted by A, D in the original hand, some minuscules, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian.