

Posted July 17, 2020

Read all of Philemon in your Bible. I am printing the Net-2 translation.

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Salutation

1 From Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our dear friend and colaborer, 2 to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your house. 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks for Philemon's Love and Faith

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. 6 I pray that the faith you share with us may deepen your understanding of every blessing that belongs to you in Christ. 7 I have had great joy and encouragement because of your love, for the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

PAUL'S REQUEST FOR ONESIMUS

8 So, although I have quite a lot of confidence in Christ and could command you to do what is proper, 9 I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—I, Paul, an old man and even now a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus— 10 I am appealing to you concerning my child, whose spiritual father I have become during my imprisonment, that is, Onesimus, 11 who was formerly useless to you, but is now useful to you and me. 12 I have sent him (who is my very heart) back to you. 13 I wanted to keep him with me so that he could serve me in your place during my imprisonment for the sake of the gospel. 14 However, without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your good deed would not be out of compulsion, but from your own willingness. 15 For perhaps it was for this reason that he was separated from you for a little while, so that you would have him back eternally, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a dear brother. He is especially so to me, and even more so to you now, both humanly speaking and in the Lord. 17 Therefore if you regard me as a partner, accept him as you would me. 18 Now if he has defrauded you of anything or owes you anything, charge what he owes to me. 19 I, Paul, have written this letter with my own hand: I will repay it. I could also mention that you owe me your very self. 20 Yes, brother, let me have some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Since I was confident that you would obey, I wrote to you, because I knew that you would do even more than what I am asking you to do. 22 At the same time also, prepare a place for me to stay, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given back to you.

Concluding Greetings

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you. 24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my colaborers, greet you too. 25 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

COMMENTS:

This Epistle is closely linked with the Epistle to the Colossians. Both were carried by the same bearer, Onesimus (with whom, however, Tychicus is joined in the Epistle to the Colossians), Col. 4:9. The people sending greetings are the same, except one, Jesus called Justus (Col. 4:11). In both Archippus is addressed (Phile. 2; Col. 4:17). Paul and Timothy are in the headings of both. And in both Paul appears as a prisoner (Phile. 9; Col. 4:18). Hence it follows, it was written at the same time and place as the Epistle to the Colossians (which was about the same time as the Epistle to the Ephesians), namely, at Rome, during Paul's first imprisonment, a.d. 61 or 62.

BASIC BACKGROUND

Onesimus, of Colosse ("one of you," Col. 4:9), slave of Philemon, had fled from his master to Rome, after having probably defrauded him (Phile. 18). Here he was converted to Christianity by

Paul who induced him to return to his master. He was given this Epistle, recommending him to Philemon's favorable reception.

For he was now no longer a mere servant, but also a brother in Christ. Paul ends by requesting Philemon to prepare a guest room for him, as he intended to visit him. He believed he would be set free and soon he would visit Colossae.

This Epistle is addressed also to Apphia, thought to have been Philemon's wife, and Archippus (a minister of the Colossian Church, Col. 4:17), thought to be a close relative.

Onesimus in the Apostolical Canons, is said to have been emancipated by his master. The Apostolical Constitutions (7.46) state that he was consecrated by Paul, bishop of Berea, in Macedonia, and that he was martyred at Rome. Ignatius (Epistle to the Ephesians, 1), speaks of him as bishop of the Ephesians.

WRITING STYLE

It has been happily termed, from its graceful and delicate urbanity, "the polite Epistle." Yet it is not an insincere compliment. It is manly and straightforward, without misrepresentation or suppression of facts. It both captivates and persuades.

Alford quotes Luther's eloquent description, "This Epistle shows a noble, lovely example, of Christian love. Here we see how Paul offers himself for the poor Onesimus. He pleads his cause with his master. He sets himself up as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Philemon. He stripped himself of his right, and thus encouraged Philemon to forego his rights.

He is imitating what Christ did for us with the Father. Now Paul does it for the sake of Onesimus with Philemon. Christ stripped himself of his right, and by love and humility the Father set aside his wrath and power. Thus we are enfolded into God's grace for the sake of Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTION: We are hearing a lot of people from both the right and left side of issues taking about what are MY rights. When we start with ourselves first, we going to make a selfish decision 99% of the time. Our God keeps telling us to think of others first. DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO, is not just the cry of children. Adults use the same arguments to get their way in life. This concludes our study of the Prison Epistles.

A new Bible Study will begin either Monday or Tuesday. It will depend on how my schedule works out for this weekend and Monday. I can tell you we will be doing an Old Testament study. I'm waiting for some information before I make my final decision. Posted July 17, 2020

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