

Philemon Outline and Guide

Why Philemon?

Philemon is a rather unique writing contained within the Bible and is often overlooked in teaching and preaching contexts. This personal letter from the Apostle Paul to Philemon is short and can seem insignificant even for personal devotion. This short guide and outline is by no means meant to be exhaustive but merely a launching point for devotional study, discussion, and even Bible Study. Let the questions and brief categories enrich your personal Bible study.

Philemon New American Standard Bible (NASB)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy [a]our brother,

To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker, 2 and to Apphia [b]our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the [c]saints; 6 *and I pray* that the fellowship of your faith may become effective [d]through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you [e]for Christ's sake. 7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the [f]hearts of the [g]saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

8 Therefore, though I have [h]enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*—since I am such a person as Paul, [i]the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

10 I appeal to you for my child [j]Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my [k]imprisonment, 11 who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. 12 I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *sending*

my very heart, ¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my ^[i]imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while, that you would have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ If then you regard me a partner, accept him as *you would* me. ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to ^[m]mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹ Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

²² At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. ^[n]

Footnotes:

- a. **Philemon 1:1** Lit *the*
- b. **Philemon 1:2** Lit *the*
- c. **Philemon 1:5** Or *holy ones*
- d. **Philemon 1:6** Or *in*
- e. **Philemon 1:6** Lit *toward Christ*
- f. **Philemon 1:7** Lit *inward parts*
- g. **Philemon 1:7** Or *holy ones*
- h. **Philemon 1:8** Lit *much*

- i. **Philemon 1:9** Or *an ambassador*
- j. **Philemon 1:10** I.e. useful
- k. **Philemon 1:10** Lit *bonds*
- l. **Philemon 1:13** Lit *bonds*
- m. **Philemon 1:19** Lit *say*
- n. **Philemon 1:25** One early ms adds *Amen*

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Philemon Flow

- ❖ Verses 1-3 Opening Greetings/Address to Philemon- We learn within the context of the letter that Philemon is a slave master
- ❖ Verses 4-7 Further Greetings/Compliments- These words seem related to Philemon and his good works.
- ❖ Verses 8-22-The Appeal- Paul moves from a sympathetic plea (look at verse 8 and mentioning his age and prison status) to one of pressure. (see verse 19)
- ❖ Verses 23-25- Closing Remarks and Goodbyes

Simple Observations

- Onesimus is a slave belonging to Philemon but ran away and somehow became a Christian after interacting with Paul.
- Paul seems very familiar with Philemon and his community.
- There are a few different appeal techniques employed by Paul.

Thoughtful Questions

1. Why does Paul seem to employ different appeal styles? In your own life, why do your parents or loved ones employ different styles?

2. Why does Paul send Onesimus back?

3. Why do you think Paul does not take this opportunity to not condemn slavery outright?

4. What is the significance of this personal letter in the Bible? Are there any Gospel implications?