

Paul to

Philemon

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and brother Timothy, to Philemon, the beloved, and our fellow worker, and to sister Apphia, and to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the ecclesia at your house.

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

I am thanking my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, hearing of your love and the faith ^{which} you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, so that the fellowship of your faith may become operative in the realization of every good thing ~~which is~~ in us for Christ Jesus. For much joy have I had and consolation in your love, seeing that the compassions of the saints are soothed through you, brother.

Wherefore, having much boldness in Christ to be enjoining you as to what is proper, because of love I am rather entreating, being such an one as Paul the aged, yet now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus. I am entreating you concerning my child, whom I beget in my bonds, Onesimus, who once was useless to you, yet now is useful to you as well as to me, whom I send back to you. Him—this means my very compassions—take to yourself, whom I intended to be retaining for myself that, for your sake, he may be serving me in the bonds of the evangel. Yet apart from your opinion I want to do nothing, that your good may not be as of compulsion but voluntary. For perhaps therefore is he separated for an hour, that you may be collecting him as an eonian repayment, no longer as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved, especially to me, yet how much rather to you, in the flesh as well as in the Lord! If, then, you have me for a mate, take him to yourself as me. Now if in anything he injures you, or is owing aught, this be charging to my account. I, Paul, (I write with my own hand), I will refund it. (Not that I may say to you that

Philemon

you are owing me even yourself!) Yea, brother, may I be “profiting” from you in the Lord! Soothe my compassions in Christ!

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, being aware that you will do even above what I say. Now, at the same time, make ready also a lodging for me, for I am expecting that, through your prayers, I shall be graciously granted to you.

Greeting you are Epaphras, my fellow captive in Christ Jesus, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit! Amen!

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Archippus, whom Paul salutes in the greetings, is referred to in Colossians, in the concluding admonition “Look to the service . . .” Paul had become aware that Archippus had been somewhat dilatory in service, therefore there must have been communication from Colossae, and this almost certainly would have been brought by Onesimus, whom Philemon had sent back to be of service to Paul.

Yet here Paul speaks of Mark being with him, and this accords with his request to Timothy: “Taking Mark, lead him back together with you, for he is useful to me for service.” It is therefore reasonable to assume this letter was subsequent to 2Timothy.

Perhaps this is the last letter Paul wrote, for he speaks of himself as “Paul the aged.” Philemon was to make ready a lodging for him, for he had been rescued out of the mouth of the lion.