

## Philemon

Greetings (vv. 1-3)

**VERSE 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon**

**our beloved *brother* and fellow worker** (Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς Φιλῆμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν [*nom.m.s. Paulos + noun nom.m.s. desmos prisoner + noun gen.m.s. Christos + noun gen.m.s. Jesus + conj + noun nom.m.s. Timothy + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. adelphos + noun dat.m.s. Philemon + d.a.w/adj.dat.m.s. agapetos beloved, dear + conj + adj.dat.m.s. sunergos fellow-warker*]),

**VERSE 2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the**

**church in your house** (καὶ Ἀφφία τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ [*conj + noun dat.f.s. Apphia + d.a.w/noun dat.f.s. adelphe sister + conj + noun dat.m.s. Archippus + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. sustratiotes fellow-soldier + pro.gen.m.s. ego + conj + d.a.w/noun dat.f.s. ekklesia + prep kata + noun acc.m.s. oikos house, home + pro.gen.s. su*]):

**VERSE 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

(χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [*noun nom.f.s. charis + pro.dat.p. su + conj + noun nom.f.s. eirene peace + prep apo + noun abl.m.s. theos + noun abl.m.s. pater + pro.gen.p. ego + conj + noun abl.m.s. kurios + noun abl.m.s. Jesus + noun abl.m.s. Christos*]).

**ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-3**

1. As in Colossians, Paul begins by identifying the letter's coauthor and recipients and offering a brief greeting (vv. 1-3).
2. Paul refers to himself as "a prisoner", but not as a prisoner of Rome, but "of Christ Jesus." (v. 1a).
3. Paul's self-identification does not merely reflect the reality of his own imprisonment, but serves here a rhetorical force in the letter to influence Philemon with respect to his estranged slave, Onesimus.
4. The repeated designation in v. 9 along with other references to his imprisonment (cf. vv. 10, 13, 23) is designed to influence Philemon to make the higher application.
5. "Of Christ Jesus" is designed to show that Paul is fully acclimated to his present situation and that his incarceration is not without purpose and meaning.
6. As in Col. 1:1, Paul mentions "Timothy our brother" as a co-sender of this letter.
7. His name also appears in another prison letter (Phil. 1:1).
8. Paul was under a fairly loose house arrest where visitors were not only allowed, they were necessary to supply a variety of services for the prisoner(s).
9. The presence of Timothy's name in the salutation serves as a rhetorical device to evoke the endorsement of another Christian leader in the cause of Onesimus.
10. "Our brother" points the family relationship within the household of God.
11. "Philemon" is obviously the primary recipient of this letter as he is mentioned first, and is the subject of Paul's appeals in the body of this letter (vv. 8ff.).
12. Philemon was the head of a large household and hosts a church in his house (v.2), who is a patron to others (vv. 5-7), and who is able to entertain guests (v. 22).
13. The adjective "beloved" is often translated "dear friend."
14. As Philemon is the object of love, he must also act accordingly.
15. The title "co-worker"/"fellow worker" (*sunergos*) points to the common cause with respect to the plan of God that all are privileged to serve.
16. Here the appeal is that all parties concerned will rise to the occasion on behalf of a man who has no civil standing and who is a worthy object of grace even though Onesimus failed in a serious manner.
17. Early Christian interpretation identified "Apphia" as Philemon's wife and "Archippus" as Philemon's son.
18. While the household setting may point to the possibility of a family relationship among these three individuals, the way they are introduced focuses on their own standing within the Colossian church.
19. "Our sister" is equivalent to "our brother" and highlights the independent standing of a believer who in some way stood out as a patron of this local assembly (cf. Rom. 16:1).
20. A different title is applied to "Archippus": "our fellow soldier."
21. In Phil. 2:25 this designation along with "co-worker" is applied to Epaphroditus.
22. In this context, therefore, "fellow soldier" points to Archippus' role as the pastor-teacher of the Colossian church.
23. In Col. 4:17 Paul exhorts this man to "fulfill the ministry you have received from the Lord."
24. Also note 2Tim. 2:3 and 4 where Paul refers to himself and Timothy under the role as communicator of doctrine.

25. The significance of these names in a letter addressed primarily to Philemon points to the fact that the situation between Philemon and his slave Onesimus is one that would effect the entire church.
26. This does not deny, however, the pivotal role of Philemon since he would be the one who has the power to decide whether to make the contents of this letter known to others.
27. These two believers could weigh in on how Onesimus should be treated.
28. The phrase “the church that is in your house” refers to the Colossian meeting place.
29. “Your” is a singular pronoun and refers to the residence of Philemon who hosted this assembly.
30. As in other opening greetings in Paul’s letters, v. 3 follows the same formula of “grace and peace” (e.g., Rom. 1:7, 1Cor. 1:3; 2Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 2Thess. 1:2; cp. Col. 1:2).
31. “Grace” replaces the typical secular Greek “greeting” (*chairen*).
32. “Grace” is the touchstone of the plan of God for believers living the CWL before God in all their circumstances.
33. There is “grace” for every situation and as believers “grow in grace and knowledge” they are able to properly deal with each and every challenge that comes their way.
34. “Grace to you” (plural) refers to the essentials needed to surmount obstacles and see the way to preserve and apply under anything that confronts believers.
35. “And peace” refers to inner peace that keeps believers free from the turmoil of fear.
36. Both have their source in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hear be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”; 1Tim. 1:2 “To Timothy, nor true son in the faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”; 2Tim. 1:2 “To Timothy, my beloved son. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”; Titus 1:4 “To Titus, my true son in the faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”; Phm. 1:25 “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit.”; Rev. 1:4 “John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from the Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before the throne.”).

#### Prayer Report (vv. 4-7)

**VERSE 4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers** (Εὐχαριστῶ

τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνείαν σου ποιοῦμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου [*pres.act.ind.1s*].

*eucharisteo give thanks + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. theos + pro.gen.m.s. ego + adv pantote always + noun acc.f.s. mneia mention + pro.gen.s. su + pres.mid.part.nom.m.s. poieo do; “making” + prep epi + d.a.w/noun gen.f.p. proseuche prayer + pro.gen.m.s. ego]),*

**VERSE 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the**

**Lord Jesus and toward all the saints** (*pres.act.part.nom.m.s. akouo hear + pro.gen.m.s. su + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. agape love + conj + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. pistis faith + rel.pro.acc.f.s. hos which + pres.act.ind.2s. echo have + prep pros toward + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. kurios + noun acc.m.s. Jesus + conj + prep eis to + adj.acc.m.p. pas + d.a.w/adj.acc.m.p. hagios holy; saint*]);

**VERSE 6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you [in Christ] for Christ's**

**sake** (ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν [*adv hopos that + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. koinonia fellowship + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. pistis + pro.gen.m.s. su + adj.nom.f.s. energeis effective, active + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai become + prep en + noun loc.f.s. epignosis knowledge, full knowledge + adj.gen.nt.s. pas all; “every” + adj.gen.nt.s. agathos good + d.a.gen.m.s. “which” + prep en + pro.loc.m.s. su + prep eis concerning + noun acc.m.s. Christos*]).

**VERSE 7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love** (χαρὰν γὰρ

πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου [*noun acc.f.s. chara joy, happiness, gladness + conj gar + adj.acc.f.s. polus much + aor.act.ind.1s. echo have + conj + noun acc.f.s. paraklesis comfort, encouragement + prep epi over; “in” + d.a.w/noun dat.f.s. agape love + pro.gen.m.s. su*], **because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother**

[ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαιται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ [*conj hoti because + d.a.w/noun nom.nt.p. splagchnon entrails; feelings/emotions + d.a.w/adj.gen.m.p. hagios saint + perf.pass.ind.3s. anapauro give relief; refresh + prep dia through + pro.gen.s. su + noun voc.m.s. adelphos*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 4-7

1. Here we have a perfect example of Paul's typical thanksgiving formula.
2. The formula contains one or more participles that modify the main verb "I give thanks."
3. The adverb "always" is a constant feature in Paul's thanksgiving reports (Rom. 1:8-10; 1Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:3; 1Thess. 1:2-3; 2:13; 2Thess. 1:3; 2:13).
4. "My God" is found 4358 times in the Bible (just 15x in the NT or 4343x in the OT)!
5. The second half of v. 4 can be translated "when making mention of you (Philemon) in my prayers."
6. Paul in his prayers for Philemon is asking God to remember Philemon and his faithfulness.
7. This is detailed in vv. 5ff.
8. Two specific items in v. 5 link Paul's thankfulness to God on behalf of Philemon.
9. The causal participle "because I hear" refers to information Paul was privy to concerning Philemon.
10. The logical source of this report was from the runaway slave Onesimus.
11. To suggest that Onesimus was the source of the positive report my further prepare Paul's argument that Philemon should receive Onesimus consistent with his present spiritual status.
12. Following the Greek word order, this verse reads "because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints."
13. Both "faith" and "love" are directed towards Jesus and the saints.
14. "Faith" as it pertains to the Lord is used in the sense of "trust."
15. Cf. Eph. 1:15 "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints." Also Col. 1:4 "since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus even the love which you have for all the saints."
16. Faith is expressed in acts of "love toward all the saints."
17. Again, this paves the way for Paul's appeal in the body of this letter for Philemon to be consistent in his behavior toward his estranged slave, Onesimus.
18. In v. 6a Paul anticipates his requests in his appeal to Philemon fellowship/partnership with him and his coworkers in the cause of Christ.
19. The term "fellowship" (*koinonia*) here is taken in the active transitive sense of "partnership" instead of simply the passive "fellowship."
20. To further support this rare take on the noun in the active sense note that in the previous verse where Paul gives thanks for Philemon's "love" and "faith" the sense is active faith and love.
21. Also note the parallel in Phil. 1:5 where the sense is clearly used of "partnership": "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."
22. Even more important is the reappearance of the word group in Phm. 1:17, which calls for Philemon to be Paul's "partner" (*koinonon*) in the ministry by receiving back Onesimus as a "brother...in the Lord." (v. 16).
23. Finally, this reading is consistent with the understanding that the placement of the pronoun "your" next to the word "effective" (*enegres*) supports the translation "partnership."
24. This "partnership" between Paul and Philemon as coworkers in the common faith continues unabated if Philemon's faith will rise to the occasion as it pertains to the present and future.
25. Note the verb "may become" is an aorist subjunctive (*ginomai*).
26. Philemon's volition to continue to manifest faith and love is at stake.

27. The continued partnership between Paul and Philemon in God's plan and its dynamic ("effective") requires that Philemon applies "the knowledge of every good thing" that he has learned as a believer.
28. Cf. Col. 19-10.
29. Paul is indirectly encouraging Philemon to apply the knowledge he is already in possession of as per "which is in you in Christ (literal)."
30. "Knowledge" here is the knowledge of God's will (cf. Col. 1:5-8).
31. "Every good thing" refers to "every good work/deed" (cf. Col. 1:10; 2Thess. 2:17; 1Tim. 5:10; 2Tim. 2:21; 3:17).
32. So Paul prays that Philemon's knowledge of God's directive will results in works that are consistent with faith and love for a believer in need.
33. Paul ends this section by highlighting the love that Philemon has already shown to believers around him (v. 7).
34. The focus in this verse on "love" picks up the note on "love" in v. 5.
35. As v. 6 expands the theme of "faith," this verse expands on "love."
36. V. 7 serves as a transition to the main body of the letter.
37. Paul informs Philemon he has been the recipient of "much joy and comfort/encouragement" based on a report on the "love" Philemon has exhibited toward believers.
38. Paul continues to appeal to Philemon to act consistently with his past.
39. Paul rejoices and is comforted because of Philemon's labor of love has resulted in spiritual refreshment to believers he has contact with.
40. The word for "hearts" (*splagchnon*) refers to the "inner parts" of a person or an animal.
41. It expresses in the figurative sense the total personality at the deepest level (also at v. 12 & 20; Col. 2:1; 3:12; cp. 1Jn. 3:17 "But whoever has the world's good, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?").
42. It is a term for a strong emotional response.
43. We can only speculate as to the acts of love Philemon has done for so many.
44. The verb "refreshed" (pf.pass.ind. *anapauro*) is used of physical rest from labors (Mk. 14:41); rest from the tyranny of the cosmos (Matt. 11:28); Ph 3 rest (Rev. 6:11); a life of ease (Lk. 12:19); and a renewed spirit (1Cor. 16:18; 2Cor. 7:13; Phm. 1:7, 20) and of the positive influence of life under the Holy Spirit (1Pet. 4:14).
45. The implication here is that since Philemon has refreshed the hearts of the saints (v. 7), and if Onesimus is in Paul's heart (v. 12), then to refresh Paul's heart, Philemon must refresh Onesimus' heart (v. 20).
46. To be refreshed is to be brought from a place of pressure to a place of relief based on some action on the part of another.
47. A term that closely parallels this is "renewed" (*anakainoo* to renew) occurring in 2Cor. 4:16 and Col. 3:10 which is used in connection with face-to-face teaching.
48. An example of spiritual refreshment is found in 2Cor. 7:13 with the object being Titus and the source the Corinthians.S