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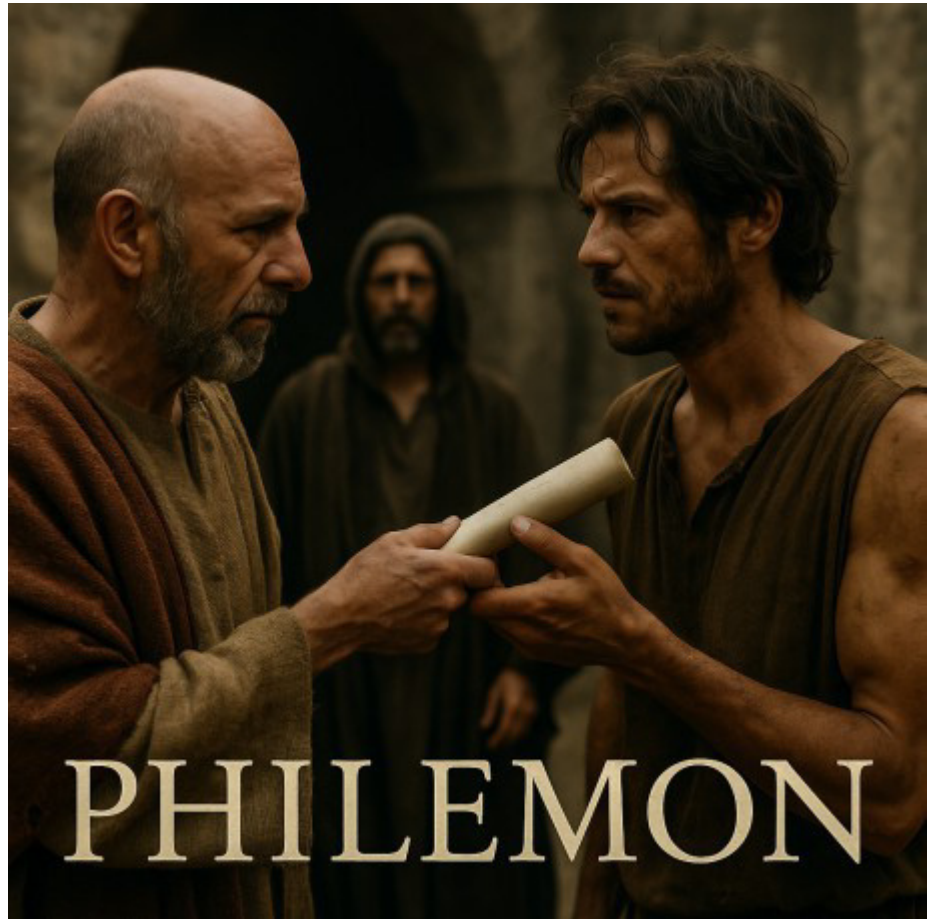
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Philemon This study has not been posted on facebook yet



By Dan Maines

Philemon

Philemon 1-3

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

† Paul identifies himself as a prisoner for Christ, highlighting his suffering for the gospel.

† The letter is personal, addressed to Philemon, but also communal, involving Apphia, Archippus, and the house church.
† Early church leaders often reminded their hearers that the gospel thrived even under chains, as noted by Ignatius (Letter to the Ephesians 1).

Philemon 4-6

I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for the sake of Christ.

† Paul commends Philemon's love and faith.

† Fellowship in Christ is not abstract but practical, demonstrated in good works.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 49) likewise praised love as the bond of Christian fellowship.

Philemon 7

For I have had great joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

† Philemon's reputation was one of encouragement and refreshing others.

† This is a model of Christian hospitality and love.

Philemon 8-9

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you, since I am such a person as Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

† Paul had authority but chose to appeal in love.

† True leadership often works by persuasion rather than

compulsion.

Philemon 10-11

I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I fathered in my imprisonment, who previously was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.

† Onesimus, once a runaway slave, became a believer under Paul's imprisonment.

† His name, meaning "useful," now matches his new life in Christ.

† Ignatius (Letter to the Ephesians 2) called the church to receive restored brothers with joy.

Philemon 12-14

I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wanted to keep with me, so that in your behalf he might be at my service in my imprisonment for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.

† Paul calls Onesimus "my very heart," showing deep affection.

† Paul's respect for Philemon's freedom highlights the voluntary nature of Christian love.

Philemon 15-16

For perhaps it was for this reason that he was separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, 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.

† Paul's words elevate Onesimus beyond slavery to beloved brotherhood.

† The gospel transforms relationships into eternal bonds.

† John Chrysostom (Homily on Philemon) emphasized that

Christianity undermined slavery by calling slaves "brothers."

Philemon 17-19

If then you regard me as a partner, accept him as you would me. But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account, I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it, not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well.

† Paul intercedes on behalf of Onesimus, offering to repay any debt.

† This reflects Christ's intercession, taking our debt upon Himself.

Philemon 20-21

Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord, refresh my heart in Christ. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

† Paul trusts Philemon's obedience will exceed expectation.

† Love is not minimal but abundant.

Philemon 22

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

† Paul expresses hope for release and reunion.

† This highlights the early church's belief in the power of prayer.

Philemon 23-25

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

† Paul closes with greetings from fellow workers, showing the fellowship of the early church.

† The grace of Christ is the sustaining force of all believers.

How it applies to us today

† Philemon shows that the gospel transforms relationships, breaking barriers of status and turning slaves into brothers.

† Christian love is voluntary, not forced, and is demonstrated in action.

† Christ intercedes for us just as Paul interceded for Onesimus, paying our debt and restoring us to the Father.

† True fellowship refreshes the hearts of the saints and reflects Christ's grace.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Ignatius, Letter to the Ephesians 1-2 - Paul as prisoner, receiving restored brothers

† Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 49 - love as the bond of fellowship

† Chrysostom, Homily on Philemon - slaves received as brothers

† Deuteronomy 19:15 - principle of witnesses

† Augustine, On the Spirit and the Letter 31 - examining oneself in grace

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