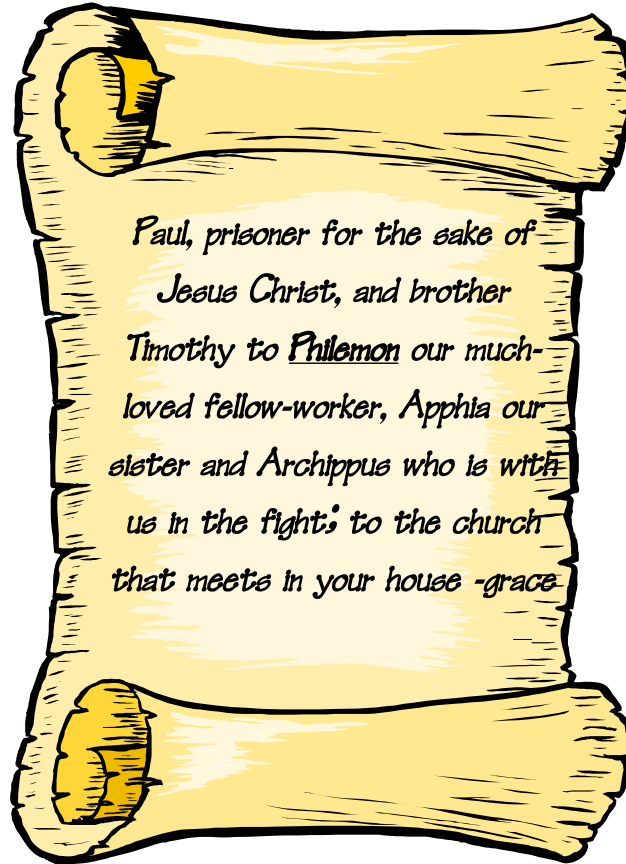


PAUL'S LETTER TO HIS DEAR FRIEND PHILEMON



A STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER
TO HIS DEAR FRIEND PHILEMON
©2008-2009 BY WAYNE E. McMORRAN

The texts used for this study were the NASB (1995 edition)
and the UBS Greek New Testament, 4th Edition
unless noted otherwise.

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INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison. James Stalker, D.D. "The Life of St. Paul," wrote of Paul's visitors in prison.

Visitors.—But he had other visitors. All who took an interest in Christianity in Rome, both Jews and Gentiles, gathered to him. Perhaps there was not a day of the two years of his imprisonment but he had such visitors. The Roman Christians learned to go to that room as to an oracle or shrine. Many a Christian teacher got his sword sharpened there; and new energy began to diffuse itself through the Christian circles of the city. Many an anxious father brought his son, many a friend his friend, hoping that a word from the apostle's lips might waken the sleeping conscience. Many a wanderer, stumbling in there by chance, came out a new man. **Such a one was Onesimus, a slave from Colossae, who arrived in Rome as a runaway, but was sent back to his Christian master, Philemon**, no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved.

The Life of St. Paul.

According to T. R. Glover, Paul had no "friends."

It is remarkable that Paul does not use anywhere the word "friend" (φίλος). "Beloved" (ἀγαπητός) is applied by him to ten persons—Timothy, Tychicus (twice), Epaphroditus, Onesimus (twice), Philemon, "Luke the beloved physician," and four less known people in Romans 16. The general community often receives this pleasant word. Meanwhile the "brothers" occupy two columns in the concordance. But the σὺν- compounds suggest even closer relations, in the case of such a man as Paul. We naturally ask what they share with him; and above all and first comes work. Priscilla and Aquila, Urbanus, Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Clement, Aristarchus, mark, Jesus Justus, Philemon—eleven "fellow-workers" (συνεργοί) are greeted or mentioned by name, and others are indicated in the plural.

Paul of Tarsus.

This whole letter deals, primarily with one person, "Onesimus." (pronounced on-ay'-sim-os). There is an interesting play on words in this letter because the name means "Useful" - *who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.*

Others have noted that this letter is unique in the Scriptures. It is

- the only personal letter (letters to Timothy and Titus were addressed to their churches also.)
- the only book in the Bible containing no (explicit) doctrine.
- the only book where the writer "lets his hair down" and gets "up close-and personal."
- here is a peculiarity in the use of proper names in this epistle which is not found in any other part of St. Paul's writings

VERSES 1-3 : THE SALUTATION

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.

Philemon 1:1-3 (NASB)

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus . . .

Paul introduces himself differently here than in his other epistles. In writing **to** Timothy, he uses,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,

1 Timothy 1:1 (NASB)

This was Paul's way of greeting the churches to which he wrote. Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus. Here he is not writing to any church. He is writing a personal note to a good friend (I guess it is not very personal now!)

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Romans 1:1 (NASB)

Many of his epistles begin as above with Paul calling himself a "bond-servant" of Christ. The term is one of four he might have used, according to Trench, below.

therapōn = Servant
hypēretēs = Officer

doulos and oiketēs = slave

diakonos = Minister, Deacon

— Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament

When we have "Paul, a prisoner," none of the words listed above as synonyms are used. The term Paul uses here is ***desméo, to bind. One who is bound, a prisoner, captive***¹ The reason is that Paul is not referring here to his relationship to Christ, he is referring to the fact that he is chained to a guard in a Roman prison. This is, likely, the first of the "Prison Epistles" written about 61 AD. His mention of Timothy here may be because, since Paul was in chains, someone had to act as a stenographer - perhaps it was Timothy. In his second letter to Timothy, I presume Dr. Luke may have been the stenographer as Paul states "only Luke is with me,"²

¹Complete Word Study Dictionary

²II Timothy 4:11

. . . and Timothy our brother, . . .

Timothy, though younger than Paul and the others was a very valuable man in the Lord's service. He is mentioned by name in no less than twenty-four times in the New Testament (Ac 16:1, Ac 17:14, Ac 17:15, Ac 18:5, Ac 19:22, Ac 20:4, Ro 16:21, 1Co 4:17, 1Co 16:10, 2Co 1:1, 2Co 1:19, Php 1:1, Php 2:19, Col 1:1, 1Th 1:1, 1Th 3:2, 1Th 3:6, 2Th 1:1, 1Ti 1:2, 1Ti 1:18, 1Ti 6:20, 2Ti 1:2, Phm 1:1, Heb 13:23). A few of the more notable passages are below.

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is **my beloved and faithful son in the Lord**, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV)

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, **that I also may be encouraged** when I know your state.

Philippians 2:19 (NKJV)

Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

Hebrews 13:23 (NKJV)

The last reference is of note. Apparently Paul was not the only one who was imprisoned for Christ, but Timothy at some time was as well. (I will not get into a debate about whether or not Paul write Hebrews - if God wanted us to know, he would have told us!)

To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker . . .

Who was "Philemon?"

Philémonos, masc. proper noun. Philemon, meaning **affectionate**, a member of the church of Colossae who owed his conversion to the Apostle Paul

Complete Word Study Dictionary

Technically we have introduced you to Philemon, but Paul has more. He was a "beloved brother" The Greek expansion on this is "Beloved, dear, *but spoken only of Christians as united with God or with each other in the bonds of holy love.*"

and to Apphia our sister . . .

We know nothing about this Christian woman other than she is mentioned here.

and to Archippus our fellow soldier . . .

Archippus is a strange name for a man to have, The last part of the name is from the same Greek word that we get hippopotamus = "river-**horse**." The first part of the name refers to someone who is in charge. So Archippus was the "head cowboy!"

There are some who believe that Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus their son. It could be but this is only conjecture and if it made any difference the Bible would tell us!

. . . and to the church in your house.

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread from house to house**, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

Acts 2:46 (NKJV)

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when **she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.**

Acts 16:14-15 (NASB)

The churches of Asia greet you. **Aquila and Priscilla** greet you heartily in the Lord, with **the church that is in their house**.

1 Corinthians 16:19 (NKJV)

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and **Nymphas and the church that is in his house**.

Colossians 4:15 (NKJV)

The church, at Pentecost, begin by new believers forming “house churches.” This continued throughout the first century. In fact,

First-century churches met in homes, church buildings being unknown until the third century. The oldest known church was found at Dura Europos, on the bank of the Euphrates River in the Syrian desert. It dates from the first half of the third century, and had been made by joining two rooms of a house and building a platform (E. M. Blaiklock, "Dura Europos," in The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology, ed. E. M. Blaiklock and R. K. Harrison [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], p. 165).

— MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Are “house churches” good to have? They are if they have a leader that is well grounded in the faith. This is probably what Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy,

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust **these to faithful men** who will be **able to teach others also**.

2 Timothy 2:2 (NASB)

Paul wanted an steady supply of men who were prepared to lead in the “house churches.” I do not believe the Lord intended a church to be a mammoth building with a thousand people in attendance! I sincerely believe a local church must be one where all (or most) of the members know each other. In a large building, I think that what results is there are, technically, a number of small church groups who meet under one pastor.

As we have seen, sometimes local stands for a church in a house. This is as local a unit as is pictured in the New Testament. But the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) must have included several house churches. Yet it was “local” in that it was confined to the city of Corinth and did not include other churches in Greece such as the church in Thessalonica

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

This is the same greeting Paul used in all of his epistles (except Galatians).

VERSES 4-7 : APPRECIATION OF PHILEMON'S CHARACTER

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 Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Philemon 1:4-7 (NASB)

I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers . . . Paul did a lot of praying for the churches. He says this specifically in Ro 1:10, Eph 1:16, 2Ti 1:3, and here at Phm 1:4.

because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints. . . There is something missing here!

But now **faith, hope, love**, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NASB)

He mentions Philemon's love and faith but not hope! But hope would come from these. As Christians, I believe we all have faith and love for Christ. But Paul, here, adds "*toward all the saints.*"

I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective . . . What does Paul mean by the "fellowship of your faith?" The KJV omits the statement that Paul is praying for this. The context requires it.

Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

Philemon 1:5 (KJV)

"Effective" is the source of our English word "energy," or "energetic." Paul's prayer is that Philemon's love and faith would "energize" him on the work of the Gospel.

. . . through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake

Trench lists several Greek terms used for "knowledge."

sophia = Wisdom phronēsis = Prudence gnōsis = Knowledge and
epignōsis which is an intense form of "gnosis"

Epignōsis and gnōsis differ. Epignōsis is the complete comprehension after the first knowledge [gnōsin] of a matter. It is bringing me better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off. That little portion of knowledge which we had here shall

be much improved, our eye shall be raised to see the same things more strongly and dearly.

— Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament

One other form of the word which has an α in front of it.

I was still **unknown** by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

Galatians 1:22 (NASB)

We use the word “agnostics” for people who claim it is impossible for man to know if there is a God. Here Paul uses the intensive form of gonsis to indicate how much we should know about “every good thing,” more specific those good things in you for Christ’s sake. Now, understand that the Lord does not reach down with a syringe and inject this knowledge, it is up to you to seek it diligently “in Christ.”

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

Paul really appreciated his true friends. One of them was Philemon and another Onesimus, both the subjects of this short letter. He states what their friendship meant to him. “much joy.” The Greek word for “joy” means, pretty much, just that. I believe we all know what joy is. Paul also received great comfort in their love. “comfort” is found below.

The act of exhortation, encouragement, comfort. All of Scripture is actually a paráklēsis, an exhortation, admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith

Complete Word Study Dictionary

We usually think of all the things Paul imparted to the people he brought the Gospel to. We do not usually think of what he might have received in exchange. One of the things he got from friends like Philemon was encouragement. He continues to note how the hearts of the saints that had been touched by the witness of Philemon. He talks about the “hearts” so let us do the same.

The Greek word for “heart” is kardía from which we get “cardioac.” The Greek speaking people knew more about the heart than we do. They knew that our hearts are the central organ so essential for our lives. But, they did not believe you heart had anything to do with ones emotions. For that they referred to as below

splágchnon; gen. splágchnou, neut. noun. An intestine, bowel. tá splágchna, the bowels, viscera. In Class. Gr. writers, it is chiefly spoken of the upper viscera of animals, as the heart, lungs, and liver which were eaten during or after the sacrifice. In the NT, of persons generally, the intestines, bowels:

(I) Used particularly (Acts 1:18).

(II) Figuratively, the inward parts indicating the breast or heart as the seat of emotions and passions. In the NT, of the gentler emotions as compassion, tender affection indicating the mind, soul, the inner man:

Complete Word Study Dictionary.

Actually, I do not think most people in Paul’s day knew the head was used for more than holding up

your hat! Some did!

Between 450 b.c., the time of Hippocrates, and a.d. 150, the time of Galen, Greek medical science came to understand the “head” as the seat of intelligence. The Greek scientists realized that the body was able to operate efficiently only because the brain was capable of interpreting data received from the body (eyes, ears, skin, and so on). They also realized that the brain was able to send out appropriate impulses to the various members of the body based upon the data received. The ability of the brain to interpret and direct made the existence of the body completely dependent upon it

Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words.

Yet they did not associate the brain with the seat of affection. The reference to the “bowels” was reasonable because, when you get “all jazzed up about something,” you feel it in your stomach!

... *refreshed through you, brother*. We see ads all the time about sodas (and other food items) that are so refreshing. The Greek word here has the same connotation. Do you suppose your pastor ever gets tired and depressed, wondering if all the preparation and delivery helped the saints in any way? Then someone will shake his hand and say how much the message meant to him. Then all the previous feeling flee away and he is refreshed.

VERSES 8-20 : PAUL'S PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

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, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; 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. For perhaps he was for this reason 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. If then you regard me 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). Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

Philemon 1:8-20 (NASB)

Now that Paul has dealt with the generalities, he gets to the purpose for this letter to his friend.

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 . . . Confidence! Paul, quite often expressed confidence in the saints. (2Co 2:3, 2Co 7:4, 2Co 7:16, 2Co 10:2, Gal 5:10, 2Th 3:4. He certainly should have confidence in his good friend Philemon.

from páo, all, and rhésis (n.f.), the act of speaking. Freedom or frankness in speaking. NT meanings: freedom in speaking all that one thinks or pleases Complete

Word Study Dictionary

Paul wrote that he could “order” Philemon what to do. The Greek means just that, to give an order.” As an apostle, he did have authority in the early church. Now that there are no more apostles, the highest order in the church is (or should be) that pastor. While there is a definite line of authority within the church, doing things without being ordered to do them is the ideal. Paul did not “use force” but, as a loved brethren in the Lord, appealed to his friend. His appeal reads better in the NIV.

yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul--**an old man and now also a prisoner** of Christ Jesus--

Philemon 1:9 (NIV)

I do not like to say it this way, but in a sense, this is somewhat of a “pity ploy.” But, Paul by this time was a “presbyterian” = an elder(ly) man. He was also unable to travel from church to church as before his imprisonment and so had to ask favors of his friends.

I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment,

“appeal” comes from the same Greek word used for the Holy Spirit.

"But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 14:26 (NASB)

The Greek word has an interesting history. It comes from “para” (along the side of) and “kaleô” (to call) and hence, to call to one’s side to help. In legal cases, your lawyer is a “paraklete” since he (or she) stands “beside” you in court to aid you. This is also the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes here, “I appeal to you.” He is using a legal term as the appeals . . . (the is where we get the term appellate court.) So, while he is not commanding Philemon, he using using a strong term to seek his cooperation.

“Child” here is used in the broader sense that we often use it today, a son or daughter, though grown. Onesimus was a grown man but Paul regarded his as a son in the faith. He emphasizes this concept by noting that he had “begotten” him during his imprisonment.

*who formerly was **useless** to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. Was Onesimus truly useless before? Probably not - Paul is using a play on words here. Onesimus*

profitable, helpful; from ονησις profit), “Onesimus,” a Christian, the slave of Philemon:

— Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

“Mr. Profitable” was not “profitable” to Philemon because he had run away! He ran away from Philemon and ended up finding Paul in his prison. How did that happen?

If a slave ran away, the master would register the name and description with the officials, and the slave would be on the "wanted" list. Any free citizen who found a runaway slave could assume custody and even intercede with the owner. The slave was not automatically returned to the owner, nor was he automatically sentenced to death. While it is true that some masters were cruel (one man threw his slave into a pool of man-eating fish!), many of them were reasonable and humane. After all, a slave was an expensive and useful piece of personal property, and it would cost the owner to lose him

Bible Exposition Commentary

I have searched all the commentaries I have on Philemon and not one of them even ventured to guess how Philemon ended up with Paul. Some might say, “well he was a runaway slave, he probable was caught and thrown into the same prison. If that were the case, Paul would not be

sending him anywhere. There is only one word to explain it - providence³ , God's providence! Onesimus was one of God's Elect!

I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me . . . Yes, Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with two things: (1) this letter which we are reading, and (2) an implied hope that, once the letter was read by Philemon, Philemon would say "Onesimus, go back and continue to be a helper to Paul." Paul makes that quite clear,

so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; Paul was seeking for Philemon to release Onesimus to go back to Paul. Actually, if you think of it, it is not at all unreasonable to wish for that. He was not legally compelled to even let Philemon know where Onesimus was. He could have continued to help Paul. This is what the world would think, but not a true Christian like Paul!

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. I think the only word that may need expansion here is "compulsion."

1. "necessity," imposed either by the external condition of things, or by the law of duty, regard to one's advantage, custom, argument: κατ' αναγκην perforce

— Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

Paul is saying, "I wouldn't keep Onesimus because that wouldn't be right -- although I thought of it. If you willingly want to send him back to me, that will be all right." Did Philemon send Onesimus back to Paul? Again, that is something we do not know. I think he did. I would imagine that on the next boat going to Rome, there was Onesimus with a lot of things to add to Paul's comfort.

Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while,

Estimates suggest that there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, men and women who were treated like pieces of merchandise to buy and sell. A familiar proverb was "So many slaves, just so many enemies!" The average slave sold for 500 denarii (one denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer), while the educated and skilled slaves were priced as high as 50,000 denarii. A master could free a slave, or a slave could buy his freedom if he could raise the money (Acts 22:28).

Bible Exposition Commentary

Through God's providence, one of these 60 million slaves ended up with Paul and received Christ as Savior and so was no longer the man/slave he used to be. This was the "reason" for all this. Perhaps there was one other reason - we would not have this epistle to study and learn from if it had not happened!

³providence >n. 1 the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power

that you would have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother,

Slaves could run away - Onesimus did! But true friends do not do so.

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks **closer than a brother**.
Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)

Paul does not use the simple term “brother” but a “beloved brother.” Having friends which one treats as brothers is not restricted to Christians. But, having a “beloved brother” is something that only Christ brings out.

Was Paul saying that Onesimus would no longer be Philemon’s slave - *no longer as a slave*? Paul wrote “more than a slave.” He would, potentially, still be Philemon’s slave. Technically this would be so, but spiritually it would be impossible for Philemon to do so.

especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Onesimus had become a Christian and was a valuable helper to Paul. But, I suspect Paul had a guilty conscience regarding him. He valued Onesimus’ help and brotherhood, but it was marred by the fact that there was an obligation to restore him to his owner. He would be more valuable with Philemon. Why? We will come to that!

If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. Dr. McGee always seemed to have a practical view on things. Here he wrote,

"Since you count me as a partner, I want you to receive him just like you would receive me. You always put me up in that guest room. Don't send him out in the cold; put him up in the guest room."
Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

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

I don’t know if Paul had a Visa Card or what sort of credit he had. Paul’s credit was his position with the Lord.

“Partner” was often a formal business term. In status-conscious Roman society, Paul is telling a social superior who respects his ministry: we are equals, and if you accept Onesimus as my agent (authorized representative), you must accept him as an equal. Ancient letters of recommendation commonly appealed to friends to consider the bearer of the letter “as if he were me.”

Bible Background Commentary

I am writing this with my own hand . . .

The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.

1 Corinthians 16:21 (NASB)

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

Galatians 6:11 (NASB)

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Colossians 4:18 (NASB)

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.

2 Thessalonians 3:17 (NASB)

Paul did not write down what is written, he had a stenographer do it for him. It is my supposition that Dr. Luke wrote most, if not all, of them for Paul. The comment as he closes Galatians gives rise to a number of speculations.

Most letters of this length were dictated to scribes, who wrote small to finish the task quickly. Paul, who may be unaccustomed to writing full letters (or whose hands may have been weakened by leatherworking in cold artisan shops in the winter), cannot write small and quickly. Some documents also seem to have called attention to especially important points at their beginning or end by using larger letters. Whatever the purpose of “large letters” here, the main point is that not a scribe but Paul himself writes this section, as the handwriting shows. Paul’s special effort indicates that they must pay special attention

Bible Background Commentary

Some also insist that his “thorn in the flesh” was poor eyesite and so he had to write in large print. This supposition is not supported by the fact that Paul wrote to Timothy,

When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

2 Timothy 4:13 (NASB)

How would he read the “books and parchments?” I suppose Dr. Luke could read them to it, but I would rather suppose this was not the case.

These arguments are really pointless. Paul told Philemon to charge any expenses to his Visa Card. Whenever I charge something, I have to sign the sales slip. Paul is doing the same here. It makes no sense that this is his formal closing as we still have four more verses to go!

(not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

By ancient social custom, friends were bound by the reciprocal obligation of repaying favors; Philemon owes Paul the greatest favor—his “self,” his new life in conversion.

Bible Background Commentary.

Paul wrote that he wish to “benefit” from Philemon. In the manner of financial affairs today, Paul had sent a \$1000 bill and he only owed \$200 so he would like to have the change!

In the matters of ledgers and debts, once Onesimus’s debt was repaid, Paul would still have a credit, for who can ever repay someone for bringing him or her to eternal life? Thus Paul asked that the balance be paid in kindness to Onesimus as a favor to Paul. Onesimus had been useful to Paul (1:11); Paul hoped that Philemon would find the same. And as Philemon had refreshed the hearts of the saints (1:7 page #9), he could hardly do other than refresh Paul’s heart as well.

— Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary

VERSES 21-25 SALUTATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you. 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.

Philemon 1:21-25 (NASB)

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. Paul, over and over in his epistles expressed confidence he had in the Lord and the Lord's people. (2Co 1:12-15, 2Co 2:3-4, 2Co 7:4, 2Co 7:16, 2Co 8:22, 2Co 9:4, 2Co 10:2, 2Co 11:17, Gal 5:10, Eph 3:12, Php 1:26, Php 3:3, Php 3:4, 2Th 3:4, 1Ti 3:13, Phm 1:8 and Phm 1:21)

He believed Philemon would do even more than Paul asked. The name Philemon is derived from the Greek word *phileo*. What many people do not understand is in the passage below.

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said* to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said* to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that **I love You.**" He said* to him, "Tend My lambs." He said* to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said* to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know **that I love You.**" He said* to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said* to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "**Do you love Me?**" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that **I love You.**" Jesus said* to him, "Tend My sheep.

John 21:15-17 (NASB)

Why did Jesus ask three times if Peter "loved him" The first two times, Jesus used "agape" and Peter refused to use that term and used "phileo" instead. The last time Jesus used the word "phileo" which was why Peter was grieved. The short of it is, since "Philemon" meant a brotherly type of love, Paul assumed he would live up to his name and express his friendship by doing even more than Paul asked for,

"I know" (eido). There are a number of Greek words which refer to knowledge. here we have,

"to perceive" (with the eyes)

— Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

Today we might refer to it as "book learning" as opposed to knowledge gained through experience. I don't know how much "experience Paul had with Philemon but he certainly had a chance to "see" Philemon's character in action.

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 ends with his personal greetings and greetings from his friends in Christ.

- Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus
- Mark
- Aristarchus
- Demas
- Luke,

How things can change. We need assurance that whatever happens, God is in control. I write this in light of the following

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

Colossians 4:12 (NASB)

Epaphrus was no longer in Colossi, he, like Paul, was now a prisoner.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin **Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

Colossians 4:10 (NASB)

Only Luke is with me. Pick up **Mark** and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

2 Timothy 4:11 (NASB)

Mark, who had caused dissension between Paul and Barnabas, was now useful to Paul. From the above we can see that Aristarchus had also become a prisoner.

for **Demas**, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2 Timothy 4:10 (NASB)

Demas deserted Paul. It is sad, but true, there will always be people who will not remain faithful friends and Christians.

The last person on Paul's list is one who, apparently, never left Paul but was Paul's personal physician.

Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

Colossians 4:14 (NASB)

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and **after they came** to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the

Spirit of Jesus **did not permit them**; and passing by Mysia, **they came down** to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, **immediately we sought** to go into Macedonia, concluding that God **had called us** to preach the gospel to them. So putting out to sea from Troas, **we ran a straight course to Samothrace**, and on the day following to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:6-15 (NASB)

From the pronouns in the above passage, it has been concluded that Luke joined up with Paul when he was in Troas. It is thought that from there he continued to travel with Paul.

Incidentally, it is a bit ironic that the "man of Macedonia" turned out to be a "woman named Lydia!"

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit!

APPENDIX - SLAVERY

I believe there are a lot of Americans that have the mistaken impression that slavery began in the U.S.A. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.



And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

That was 148 years ago! Are there any slaves in the U.S. today? Not that I know of except that most of us are “:enslaved” to our jobs in order to have a place to live and food to eat.

Christianity and slavery

Although Paul never condones slavery, arguing to the contrary in [Gal 3:28](#) that the slave and the free man are one in Christ, he does recognize it as part of the law of the land and an inherent part of Roman culture. As a result, he offers instructions to both slaves and slave owners concerning their behavior under Christ. This should not be interpreted, however, as an acceptance of the practice (cf. Philemon and Onesimus).

Unger’s Bible Handbook

As Christians and citizens (of the U.S. in our case) we are bound by the laws of the Country. Can we protest over one or more of the laws? Yes, if we do so peacefully and not cause a riot or inconvenience to others. But there is a grave concern here. What was Paul most concerned with in the letter. Not that Onesimus was a slave but that he had received Christ, he was a Christian.

Joseph was a slave for a time in Egypt.

It is a night to be observed for the Lord for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the Lord, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; **but every man's slave purchased with money**, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.

Exodus 12:42-44 (NASB)

Moses (God speaking through Moses) did not forbid slavery! Even more . . .

"Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them: "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. "If he comes

alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. "If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. "But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

Exodus 21:1-6 (NASB)

"You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. "He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.

Deuteronomy 23:15-16 (NASB)

Now here is an interesting one.

A slave will not be instructed by words alone; For though he understands, there will be no response. Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. **He who pampers his slave from childhood Will in the end find him to be a son.**

Proverbs 29:19-21 (NASB)

This nearly represents the case with Onesimus! Now, one last thought from the Old Testament.

folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places. I have seen slaves riding on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.

Ecclesiastes 10:6-7 (NASB)

This may be the source of the expression "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

Over the years I have seen a few churches wrecked because the pastor got off on a tangent and begin fighting social issues (smut in the movies and on TV). There was nothing wrong with this, per se, but they got to spending so much time fighting this cause, their congregations suffered and many left.

There are other things we may find in the Scriptures that are not right (the Bible does not say they are right) but they are always side issues and not the case in point.

In short, we do not have (legal) slavery in this country so you need to stick to other issues which are written in the Scriptures for our learning!

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