

A Walk Through Philemon

Introduction

Paul is in house arrest in Rome, and Epaphras brings him news and a gift. The believers in Philippi, ever supportive and caring for Paul, have sent funds so he can pay for his lodging and expenses. But there's news of conflict and false teaching in Colosse, Laodicea and even Philippi.

Paul then pulls his thoughts together and writes three letters via Timothy, and sends them through Tychicus to Colosse, Philemon, and Ephesus.

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Chapter 1

'This letter is from Paul, a prisoner for preaching the Good News about Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. I am writing to Philemon, our beloved co-worker, and to our sister Apphia, and to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church that meets in your house. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. '

Philemon 1:1-3

Locked in chains in Rome, Paul writes back to the churches which have joined together in Greece. He immediately reminds his fellow workers of the grace and peace we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace over us as God has considered Jesus in our place, and sees us as whole, precious, and pure. Peace smothers us as there is no second guessing, no bad news coming, no shoe to drop. We are completely enveloped in God's love and grace, and all we can do is cry out, "Daddy! Abba! Father!"

And Paul writes to Philemon, his fellow worker in the Gospel. He writes to our sister Apphia, also a diligent worker in Christ. And he writes to Archippus and all the people meeting in his home. These leaders are the unsung heroes of the faith, shepherding and pastoring the believers in their home, declaring the truths of Christ, and encouraging all to continue their trust and obedience to Jesus!

Likewise for us, we are also under grace, and we have peace with God. Start your day there. Continue through all that is ahead. Encourage brothers and sisters. This is how we do it!

'I always thank my God when I pray for you, Philemon, because I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ. Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people. '

Philemon 1:4-7

When there's a hard message coming, we must first encourage the hearer with what is true. For Paul, Philemon needed a reminder of the grace and kindness in which he was living. He was known for it, and many believers were blessed because of him. Paul himself was greatly filled with joy and comfort because of Philemon's living. So Paul reminds him of this.

We must all live this way, caring for others, and leveraging all the good things we have in Jesus Christ! And we must remind others of the same.

'Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people. That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. I could demand it in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do. But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you. Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus.

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I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison. Onesimus hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us. I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart. I wanted to keep him here with me while I am in these chains for preaching the Good News, and he would have helped me on your behalf. But I didn't want to do anything without your consent.

I wanted you to help because you were willing, not because you were forced. It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever. He is no longer like a slave to you. He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me. '

Philemon 1:7-18

This is the big ask. Paul is reaching to Philemon to forgive and free up Onesimus. Philemon was the owner of the slave, Onesimus, who fled. Then Onesimus came to faith, and began working in the gospel with Paul.

So Paul sends him back, with a request for freedom and partnership by Philemon. This is miniscule in the annals of eternity, but a huge shift in the mindset of Philemon. Onesimus had stolen and fled. Justice was due. Paul is asking him to receive the change as from the Lord, and to release Onesimus as a brother in Christ for the sake of the gospel.

What about you? Salvation is wonderful, and Holy Spirit is at work. But will you release the old things that were once yours, for the sake of the King and His Kingdom? What must you give up?

'I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it. And I won't mention that you owe me your very soul ! Yes, my brother, please do me this favor for the Lord's sake. Give me this encouragement in Christ. I am confident as I write this letter that you will do what I ask and even more! One more thing—please prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that God will answer your prayers and let me return to you soon. '

Philemon 1:19-22

Paul is asking Philemon for an exchange. A trade. Will you give up your worldly claims on this brother, and instead receive God's power over every aspect of your life?

Onesimus is in your hands, and you can keep control. But you can instead free him for ministry, and trust God to pour all of His power through you instead. Christ's authority can be your lead, and you can relish His work as you follow Him.

Who will you allow to be in charge? Are you willing to trust God?

Make it so!

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'Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.'

Philemon 1:23,25

Greetings come from all of us – we are a family. A family who lives by grace!