



In this letter, Paul urges a wealthy Christian named Philemon to forgive Onesimus, a slave who had run away. Onesimus had become a follower of Christ and a friend to Paul. Paul urges Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ.

¹ From Paul, who is in jail for serving Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, who is like a brother because of our faith.

Philemon, you work with us and are very dear to us. This letter is to you ² and to the church that meets in your home. It is also to our dear friend Apphia and to Archippus, who serves the Lord as we do.

³ I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴ Philemon, each time I mention you in my prayers, I thank God. ⁵ I hear about your faith in our Lord Jesus and about your love for all of God's people. ⁶ As you share your faith with others, I pray that they may come to know all the blessings Christ has given us. ⁷ My friend, your love has made me happy and has greatly encouraged me. It has also cheered the hearts of God's people.

Paul Speaks to Philemon about Onesimus

⁸ Christ gives me the courage to tell you what to do. ⁹ But I would rather ask you to do it simply because of love. Yes, as someone ¹⁰ in jail for Christ, I beg you to help Onesimus! He is like a son to me because I led him to Christ here in jail. ¹¹ Before this, he was useless to you, but now he is useful both to you and to me.

¹² Sending Onesimus back to you makes me very sad. ¹³ I would like to keep him here with me,

where he could take your place in helping me while I am here in prison for preaching the good news.

¹⁴ But I won't do anything unless you agree to it first. I want your act of kindness to come from your heart, and not be something you feel forced to do.

¹⁵ Perhaps Onesimus was taken from you for a little while so that you could have him back for good, ¹⁶ but not as a slave. Onesimus is much more than a slave. To me he is a dear friend, but to you he is even more, both as a person and as a follower of the Lord.

¹⁷ If you consider me a friend because of Christ, then welcome Onesimus as you would welcome me.

¹⁸ If he has cheated you or owes you anything, charge it to my account. ¹⁹ With my own hand I write: I, PAUL, WILL PAY YOU BACK. But don't forget that you owe me your life. ²⁰ My dear friend and follower of Christ our Lord, please cheer me up by doing this for me.

²¹ I am sure you will do all I have asked, and even more. ²² Please get a room ready for me. I hope your prayers will be answered, and I can visit you.

²³ Epaphras is also here in jail for being a follower of Christ Jesus. He sends his greetings, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who work together with me.

²⁵ I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you!

Notes

▷ **1.9** *someone*: Greek "a messenger" or "an old man."