

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO
PHILEMON

O U T L I N E

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Introduction (vv.1-7)

1 Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother, to Philemon the beloved and our fellow-workman, **2** and to the sister Apphia and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the assembly which is in thine house. **3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. **4** I thank my God, always making mention of thee at my prayers, **5** hearing of thy love and the faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all the saints, **6** in such sort that thy participation in the faith should become operative in the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in us towards Christ *Jesus*. **7** For we have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Body (vv.8-22)

8 Wherefore having much boldness in Christ to enjoin thee what is fitting, **9** for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Bondage and Freedom. Onesimus is like many who are seeking freedom, freedom from

many forms of bondage. He thought rebellion would give him freedom. But rebellion against authority never truly gives liberty. When Onesimus met Paul, the apostle was in chains. Perhaps it was the first time Onesimus had seen a prisoner that was truly free! Paul viewed himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus (v.1). To be totally free is to be totally submitted to the will of God.

10 I exhort thee for “my” child, whom I have begotten in *my* bonds, Onesimus, **11** once unserviceable to thee, but now serviceable to thee and to me: **12** whom I have sent back to thee: *but do “thou” receive him*, that is, “my” bowels: **13** whom “I” was desirous of keeping with myself, that for thee he might minister to me in the bonds of the glad tidings; **14** but I have wished to do nothing without thy mind, that thy good might not be as of necessity but of willingness: **15** for perhaps for this reason he has been separated *from thee* for a time, that thou mightest possess him fully for ever; **16** not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother, specially to me, and how much rather to thee, both in *the* flesh and in *the* Lord? **17** If therefore thou holdest me to be a partner *with thee*, receive him as me; **18** but if he have wronged thee anything or owe anything *to thee*, put this to my account. **19** “I” Paul have written *it* with mine own hand; “I” will repay *it*: that I say not to thee that thou owest even thine own self also to me. **20** Yea, brother, “I” would have profit of “thee” in *the* Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. **21** Being confident of thine obedience, I have written to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say. **22** But withal prepare me also a lodging; for I hope that I shall be granted to you through your prayers.

Conclusion (vv.23-25)

23 Epaphras salutes thee, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; **24** Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workmen. **25** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.

The Importance of Having a Right Spirit. As the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9), the Lord is correcting our attitude. There are a number of times where we are exhorted to have a right spirit at the very close of Paul's epistles. Each occasion corresponds to a circumstance where it would be easy to develop a bad attitude or spirit:

- 2 Timothy 4:22. It is easy to get a bad attitude when we look around and see failure in a day of public ruin.
- Galatians 6:18. It is easy to get a bad attitude when we have been carrying on in a legal way, and when we have been corrected.

- Philemon 25. It is easy to have a bad attitude when called on to forgive one who has offended us.