

# Philemon • Living as citizens of heaven

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— <sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to

## For Class & Family Discussion:

- ▶ Notice how Paul describes the three people mentioned in **verse 2**. What can we know about them from those descriptions? What sort of people are these?
- ▶ Paul often used greetings in his letters similar to what he uses in **verse 3**. How is this letter an especially good example of what those words really mean?
- ▶ What does Paul appreciate about Philemon? What sort of life is Philemon living? What sort of example has he been setting?
- ▶ Why does Paul feel like he has the right to “command” Philemon “to do what is required”?
- ▶ And yet, “for love’s sake,” Paul prefers to “appeal” to Philemon. Why? What’s the power of an “appeal” that can sometimes be even greater than the power of a command?

keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. <sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

<sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

<sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

### For Class & Family Discussion:

- ▶ What can we know about Onesimus?
- ▶ Why would Paul think it good and right to “send” Onesimus “back” to Philemon?
- ▶ Notice carefully what Paul writes in **verse 15**: “For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while...” What do you think Paul means with this thought?
- ▶ If Onesimus does what Paul is encouraging him to do, in what ways would this be a living, powerful picture of “grace” and “peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”?
- ▶ In what ways is this a great example to draw our entire study of living as citizens of heaven to a close? What can we learn from this very personal letter that continues to have the power to “refresh” our hearts “in Christ”?