Philemon 1: my study Bible

Greek New Testament

Created with Biblical Mastery Academy's Tutor. Sign up at https://tutor.biblicalmastery.academy

Introduction

Big idea

Paul writes seeking a good standing for a runaway slave who has been converted. The recipient is Philemon, someone who has benefited from, and was possibly saved under, his ministry.

Author

Paul, one of his uncontested letters.

Date and setting

During Paul's imprisonment after he returned from his third missionary journey.

Audience

Philemon and his wife and son seem to be addressed together, though Philemon himself is assumed to be the primary reader and actor.

Purpose

Onesimus would have been subject to punishment, but by the Lord's providence he has been converted to Christ. It is not clear whether Onesimus is seeking forgiveness himself, though he may be. Certainly Paul is seeking a good standing for Onesimus regardless of his previous crime.

Themes

Hospitality and the refreshment of the saints. Love rather than compulsion.

Key passages

Verse 19 is a key passage indicating obligation between Paul and Philemon.

Outline

Introduction 1:1–7

- Introduction And Encouragement 1:1–7

Letter Purpose and Coming Visit 1:8–25

- Paul's Request On Onesimus's Behalf 1:8–21
- Paul's Coming Visit And Final Greetings 1:22–25

Philemon 1

Introduction And Encouragement

1 Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ
ἀδελφὸς Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν
2 καὶ Ἀπφίᾳ τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ
συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ᾽ οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ·
3 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ
κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. 4 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου
πάντοτε μνείαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν
μου, 5 ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἣν
ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς
ἁγίους,

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy the
brother, to Philemon, the beloved, and our fellow
worker 2 and to Apphia the sister, and to Archippus
our fellow soldier and to the church at your house;
3 grace to you and peace from God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I give thanks to my God
always making mention of you when I pray,
5 hearing of your love and faithfulness which you
have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,

1:2 Ἀπφίᾳ τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ

Apphia is likely Philemon's wife and Archippus is possibly their son. The use of fellow soldier is possibly a way for Paul to relate to Archippus in a diminutive sense.

WORD STUDY

ποιέω

On ποιούμενος, Philemon 1:4

This very common word does not have a single English gloss, but has a variety of uses.

Action generally

Judges 15:7 LXX

- Ἐὰν ποιήσητε οὕτως ταύτην
- If you **act** in this way

Judges 15:10-11 LXX

- καὶ ποιῆσαι αὐτῷ ὃν τρόπον ἐποίησεν ἡμῖν.
- and to act with him the way he acted with us

6 ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργὴς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν·

6 so that the participation of your faith may become effective in the knowledge of every good thing that is in us for Christ;

ARTICLE

Participation and union with Christ

At Philemon 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:9

Paul frequently uses terms such as "in Christ", "in Him," and similar prepositional phrases as shorthand for union with Christ. However, outside of Paul we don't find this language as often. However, there is a shared language that encapsulates this theological concept that is shared by most of the authors of scripture, which is contained in the concept of κοινωνία.

Typically κοινωνία is translated as "fellowship," which may have been an acceptable translation in the 17th century, but the meaning of which is largely lost today. Today, "fellowship" is often associated with what takes place over a cup of tea or coffee after church. But the Greek word has a much richer lexical range than this. Often the word is better translated as participation, signifying an interactive working together between two parties. When we understand the word in this way, we can see a commonality between the theology of Paul and the theology of John in particular, which indicates that the union with Christ concept behind this participation was largely a shared concept too. The key distinction then is that Paul often emphasizes the positional reality of union with Christ, but John and James more often emphasize the participatory element of union with Christ.

We find for example, that in 1 Corinthians 1:9, Paul says we were called into participation with Christ. Similarly in Philemon 1:6 we read Paul's commendation of Philemon because "the participation of your faith has become effective in the knowledge of every good thing in us for Christ." Faith is seen as a causal force leading to participation with Christ that results in effective ministry.

Participation is not only related to our union with Christ, but stemming from our union with Christ it extends to other believers, so that we participate together with them in the work Christ is doing through them. For example, in Philippians 4:14-16 we find Paul using the verb cognate to explain the Philippians participating with Paul through their active engagement with his ministry, hearing his needs, and working to supply what was necessary for him.

WORD STUDY

πίστις, πιστεύω

On πίστεώς, Philemon 1:6

The root idea of this set of words has to do with faithfulness or allegiance. There are times where this is more cognitive and other times when it is more affective and volitive, and other times where it encapsulates all three, or the whole heart.

Cognition

A set of propositions constituting consistency with Christ's teachings

This use of the noun suggests that faithfulness can in a sense be reduced to propositional ideas or teachings, or more specifically to faithfulness to that set of beliefs.

Ephesians 4:13 - the articular use seems to refer to a set representation of what is considered faithful - "the faith."

Jude 1:3 - treads the word similarly to Eph 4:13.

Affective and Volitive

The verb is also used regularly to incorporate both cognition, beliefs, propositions, as well as a commitment to those sets of beliefs.

Continued on next page →

7 χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαυται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.

7 for I have much joy and encouragement on the basis of your love, because the affections of the saints are refreshed through you, brother.

Paul's Request On Onesimus's Behalf

8 Διό, πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνῆκον, 9 διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ, τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ— 10 παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς Ὀνήσιμον, 11 τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὔχρηστον, 12 ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα· 13 ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν, ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 14 χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ᾖ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἑκούσιον· 15 τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς, 16 οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ. 17 Εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ.

8 Therefore having great confidence in Christ to command you with reference to what is necessary, 9 on account of love rather I exhort, such as being as Paul the elder, but now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus - 10 I exhort you concerning my child whom I begot in chains, Onesimus, 11 Who once was to you useless, but now to you and to me is useful, 12 whom himself I sent to you, that is my own affections 13 whom I resolved to keep back for myself, in order that he may serve me on your behalf in my chains of the gospel, 14 but without your consent I wanted to do nothing, in order that your good [deed] may not be as according to compulsion, but according to willingness; 15 For perhaps for this reason he was separated for an hour in order that forever you may receive him back, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, and much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 Therefore, if you have participation with me, receive him as me.

1:9 μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ,

The object or indirect object is assumed from verse 8, σοι.

1:11 ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὔχρηστον,

The use of two words with the same stem but different prefixes requires the same stem in English also. The alpha privative on the first negates it - useless, where the prefix ευ on the second indicates good use - useful.

πίστις, πιστεύω (continued)

1 Corinthians 15:2 - a message trusted, cognition with volition.

Affective or Volitive

Acts of faithfulness that indicate alignment with a person or position.

Philemon 1:5 - the noun here in the accusative describes behavior, alongside of love. The following prepositional phrase relates this love and faithfulness to Christ first, and to the saints. In Phile 6, the participation of your faithfulness is similar though without an object or direction stated in the text, rather is focused on the results of this faithfulness.

18 εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα·
19 ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω·
ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι ὅτι καὶ σεαυτόν μοι προσοφείλεις.
20 ναί, ἀδελφέ, ἐγώ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ·
ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ.
21 πεποιθὼς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι, εἰδὼς ὅτι
καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις.

18 And if he has acted unjustly to you or owes anything, account this to me; 19 I Paul write in my own hand, I will repay; that I may not say to you that even yourself you owe to me. 20 Yes, brother, may I benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my affections in Christ. 21 Confident of your compliance I write to you, knowing that also you will do beyond the things I ask.

Paul's Coming Visit And Final Greetings

22 ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἑτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν, ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι
διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν.
23 Ἀσπάζεταί σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν
Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 24 Μᾶρκος, Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς,
Λουκᾶς, οἱ συνεργοί μου. 25 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

22 And at the same time also prepare for me a guest room, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you. 23 Epaphras my fellow captive greets you in Christ Jesus, 24 [along with] Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke my fellow workers. 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.