

The letter that Paul wrote to Philemon (The book in the Holy Bible called Philemon) About this letter

Paul wrote this letter to Philemon about 2,000 years ago, more than 20 years after Jesus went back to heaven, and it is now in the Holy Bible.

After Jesus went back to heaven, God sent Paul to lots of countries to tell people about Jesus. Philemon was in one of those countries. He heard what Paul said, and he believed in Jesus. After that, Paul went to other places to tell more people about Jesus.

At that time, the Roman people were the bosses over all the countries where Paul went. They didn't like Paul telling people about Jesus, so they grabbed him and put him in jail. Paul wrote this letter while he was in jail.

In those days there were some people that had to work for no pay. They were like prisoners, but they were not in jail. They lived with the boss they worked for, and they were not allowed to go away from them. They were called *slaves*. You see, if somebody borrowed money, and if they didn't pay it back, they had to be a slave of the person they borrowed that money from. Or if the Roman soldiers caught some of their enemies, they might force them to be slaves.

Onesimus was a slave of Philemon, but one day Onesimus left him and ran away. After that, Onesimus heard Paul talk about Jesus, and he believed in Jesus. Then Paul told him, “You have to go back to your boss, Philemon.” Philemon was a Christian too. So Paul wrote this letter for Onesimus to take with him, to give to Philemon.

Paul wrote this letter to Philemon, but we can learn from what Paul said to him.

Dear Philemon,

¹ I am Paul, and this letter is from me. I work for Jesus Christ. The bosses didn’t like me doing that, so they put me in jail. Our friend Timothy is here too. He is helping me write this letter.

We are writing to you, Philemon. You work for Jesus, just like we do, and you are our good friend. ² And we are also writing this to our friend Afia, and to our friend Arkipus. He is like a soldier for Jesus, just like me and Timothy. And we are also writing this to all you Christians there in the church that meets at Philemon’s place.*

³ I am asking God our father, and Jesus Christ our leader, to be good to you, and to make you feel happy and quiet inside yourselves.

Paul thanked God for Philemon

⁴⁻⁵ People tell me good things about you, Philemon. They say that you believe in our leader, Jesus, and you love all God’s people, so whenever I pray for you, I always thank God for you. ⁶ I ask God to help you know more about all

* **1:2** Colossians 4:17

the good things that Jesus Christ gives us after we join with him, and I ask God to help you tell other people about him, and tell them what you believe. That is what I pray for you. ⁷ I know, my friend, that you have been good to God's people. You have helped them, and you have made them happy. I know that you love Jesus and you love all God's people. That makes me very happy, and it makes me want to keep on working for God.

Paul asked Philemon to help Onesimus

⁸ So I'm asking you to do something for me. You know, Jesus Christ says that I can talk strong to you, like a boss, and I can tell you straight what you've got to do, but I will not talk to you like that. I'm not telling you to do it, I'm asking you to do it. ⁹ You see, I love you a lot.

You know me, Paul, and you know that I'm an old man. I work for Jesus Christ, so the bosses here put me in jail. ¹⁰ And I'm asking you to do something for this man here. He is like my own kid. I told him about Jesus while I was here in prison, and now he believes in Jesus. I'm talking about Onesimus.* ¹¹ You see, he used to work for you some time ago, but he didn't help you. But now he can help both of us, you and me.

¹² I love Onesimus so much that he is like a part of me. But I'm sending him back to you. ¹³ You see, I told the people here the good news about Jesus, and the bosses didn't like me doing that, so they put me in jail. And I know that you can't come here to help me, so I want to keep

* **1:10** Colossians 4:9

Onesimus here, to help me instead of you helping me. ¹⁴ But first I have to ask you about it. I don't want to do anything unless you agree. I don't want to force you to do anything. It's better if you, yourself, want to do it.

¹⁵ Maybe God let Onesimus leave you for a short time so that now you can have him back for ever. ¹⁶ You can have him back again now, but not just as a work-man that you don't have to pay. Now he can be something much better than your work-man. He can be like your brother, and you can love him. I love Onesimus very much, but you will love him even more than I do. You see, he is your work-man, but you will like him more than a boss likes his work-men, because he is also your brother. You and he both belong to our leader, Jesus, so he is your brother, and you will love him a lot.

¹⁷ Remember that I'm your friend, and we do things together. If you reckon I'm your friend, be happy to see Onesimus when he comes back to you, and be good to him, just like you are happy to see me, and you are good to me whenever I visit you. ¹⁸ If Onesimus did something wrong to you while he worked for you, I will fix it up for you. If he has to pay you some money, I will pay that money for him. ¹⁹ *This is me, Paul, writing this with my own hand so you can be sure I mean it, I will pay that money back to you.* But remember you already got a lot from me. I told you about Jesus, and he gave you real life.

²⁰ Yes, my friend, you and me, we both belong to our leader, Jesus Christ, so I really want you

to help me. Then I will feel really happy. ²¹ Yes, I'm sure that you will always do what I ask you, so I'm writing to you like this. And I know that you will do even more than I ask you.

The end of Paul's letter

²² Now I will tell you a bit about myself. I know that you mob are praying for me at this time, so I reckon they will soon let me go out of this jail. Then I will come and visit you again. So get a place ready for me to live in while I stay with you.

²³ Do you remember Epafras? He belongs to Jesus Christ, so they put him in jail here with me. He says *hello* to you.*

²⁴ And remember Mark, Aristarkus, Demas and Luke. They work with me here, and they say *hello* to you too.*

²⁵ I ask our leader, Jesus Christ, to be very good to you, and to be with your spirit too.

From Paul

* **1:23** Colossians 1:7; 4:12 * **1:24** Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39; 19:29; 27:2; Colossians 4:10, 14; 2 Timothy 4:10-11

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