

PHILEMON

Chapter 1

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Paul a prisoner, &c.** This is a notable Epistle, and full of worth; each word having its weight, each syllable its substance. From an abject subject, the receiving of a runaway servant, St Paul soars like a heavenly eagle, and flies a high pitch of heavenly discourse. *Elocutione tota gravis et brevis, densus sententiis, sanus iudiciis, &c.*, as Lipsius saith of Thucydides, may we say of our apostle, *Plena roboris et lacertorum est tota epistola.* (Lips.) This entire letter is full of strength and muscle.

Our dearly beloved. ἀγαπητῷ, *diligibili*. Or our lovely one, as Jerome renders it.

And fellow labourer. This shows, say some, that Philemon was a minister of the gospel. That he was a master of a family, is out of the question; and his name, which signifies a lover, suits well with his condition; as doth likewise his servant Onesimus, which signifieth profitable. They are not complete Christians that are not good at home as well as abroad; they walk not in a perfect way, that look not to do domestic duties, **Psalm 101:2**, by the careful performance whereof we are fitter to serve God or converse with men; as may appear by the situation of the fifth commandment, which stands between the two tables, and hath an influence upon both. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And to our beloved Apphia.** For Appia, but this was the manner of pronounciation at Tarsus, St Paul's country. This Apphia was (saith Theodoret) Philemon's wife; whose goodwill might make much to the furtherance of St Paul's suit.

And Archippus our fellowsoldier. Who seems to have sojourned with Philemon. (*See Trapp on "Colossians 4:17"*)

And to the church in thy house. Every Christian family is a church. But Philemon's house was (belike) a public meeting house, and so continued for many years after, as Theodorct witnesseth. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Grace to you, &c.** (*See Trapp on "1 Corinthians 1:3"*) (*See Trapp on "2 Corinthians 1:2"*) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I thank my God.** Thus the apostle begins most of his Epistles. As any man is more or less gracious, so is he thankful. The same Greek word for grace signifieth thankfulness, χάρις. Neither is there anything that seals up more comfort to the soul than for a man to be able from the bottom of his heart to praise God. Self-love may make a hypocrite pray from the bottom of his heart, &c. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Hearing of thy love and faith.** Love is first mentioned, as more noticed. But faith is the mother grace, the womb wherein love and all the rest of that heavenly offspring are conceived. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That the communication, &c.** This is that which St Paul prayed for Philemon, **Philemon 1:4**. For **Philemon 1:5**) comes in by a parenthesis. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The bowels of the saints are refreshed.** Gr. ἀνατέταυται. Rested, as it were after much toil and travel, which made their hearts ache. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That which is convenient.** τὸ ἀνήκον, or, that which is thy duty. *Officium autem est ius actionis ad quemcunque statum pertinens*, saith Jul. Scaliger. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yet for love's sake, &c.** Here is brave oratory, such as might well mollify the hardest heart; *Petendo movet, et movendo petit.*

Paul the aged. And therefore venerable. *Cognata sunt.* Old age and honour are in the Greek tongue very near akin; *γῆρας* and *γῆρας*. It is a crown (saith Solomon), and that of glory, when found in the way of righteousness, **Proverbs 16:31**. These bear a resemblance of the Ancient of days, **Daniel 7:9**. These are like flowers which have their roots perfect when themselves are withering; these, like roses, keep a sweet savour though they lose their colour. These give greatest glimpse at their going down. *Magna fuit semper capitis reverentia cani*, **Acts 21:16**. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My son Onesimus.** Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, maketh mention of Onesimus, as pastor of Ephesus, next after Timothy. The Roman Martyrologue saith, that he was stoned to death at Rome, under Trajan the emperor. Paul calleth him his son because his convert. See **1 Corinthians 4:15**; so Cyprian calleth Caecilius (who converted him) *novae vitae parentem*, the instrument of his life; and Latimer saith the like of his blessed St Bilney, as he calleth him. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**But now profitable.** So is every true convert; there is little cause that men should boast they are no changelings, since whosoever is in Christ is a new creature. Sir Anthony Kingstone came to Mr Hooper the martyr a little before his death, and said, I thank God that ever I knew you; for God did appoint you to call me, being a lost child. For by your good instructions, whereas I was before both an adulterer and fornicator, God hath brought me to forsake and detest the same. Savoy, for the narrow passages infested with thieves, was once called Malvoy, or ill-way; till a worthy adventurer cleared the coasts, and then it was called Savoy or Salvoy, the safe way. Such a change there is in every good soul. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That is mine own bowels.** Pray for me, mine own heart root in the Lord (said Mr Bradford in a letter to Mr Saunders), *Quem in intimis visceribus habeo ad convivendum et commoriendum.* {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**In the bonds of the gospel.** Which is bound after a sort, when the preachers thereof are imprisoned. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Would I do nothing.** *Posse et nolle nobile est.* He that goes to the utmost of his chain may possibly break a link. *Concedamus de iure ut careamus life.* Part with somewhat for peace' sake. (Augustine.) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For perhaps he therefore.** God hath a hand in ordering our disorders to his own glory and our good. He teacheth us by our temptations. This made Mr Fox say that his graces did him most hurt, and his sins most good.

He departed for a season. Here the apostle makes the best of an ill matter. Converts are to be gently handled, and their former evil practices not to be aggravated. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Both in the flesh.** Perhaps Onesimus was Philemon's kinsman.

And in the Lord. *Sanctior est copula cordis quam corporis.* "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," **1 Corinthians 6:17**. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A partner.** *κοινωνόν.* One in common with thee. *Amicorum omnia communia.*

Receive him, . *προσλαβοῦ.* Take him to thee, put him in thy bosom, make much of him. How

effectually doth this great apostle plead the cause of this poor fugitive, now happily brought home to Christ. He deals as one that had himself received mercy, **1 Corinthians 7:25**. Steep thy thoughts (saith one) in the mercies of God, and they will dye thine, as the dye vat doth the cloth, **Colossians 3:12**. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:18]]{{field-on:Bible}}**If he hath wronged thee.** His shameful escape the apostle sweetly mitigateth by the name of wrong; his theft, of debt. See **Philemon 1:15**; cf. **Genesis 14:5**.

Put that on mine account. To the like effect speaks the Lord Christ on our behalf to his heavenly Father, in his daily intercession. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:19]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thou owest unto me, &c.** If Cleanthes gave himself to his master Socrates; if Alexander could say that he owed more to Aristotle than taught him than to Philip that begat him; if another could say that he could never discharge his debt to God, to his parents, and to his schoolmaster; how deeply then do men stand obliged to their spiritual fathers and teachers in Christ!

I will repay it. Philemon, though rich, is suspected to be somewhat too covetous, from this expression.

*"O quam difficile est opibus non tradere mores;
Et cum tot Croesos viceris, esse Numam!"*

Howbeit in both the Testaments we shall scarcely read of any godly man tainted with covetousness. Luther saith of himself, that though he otherwise had his flaws and frailties, yet the infection of covetousness never laid hold on him. *Heu Germann illa bestia non curat aurum*, said one of his adversaries, wiser than the rest, that would have stopped his mouth with money. But Seneca was naturally covetous, which he shrouds covertly in that sentence of his in his book de Tranquillitate, *Nec aegroto nec valeo*, I am neither sick nor well. It had been well for him if he could have said with that dying saint, My body is weak, my soul is well. As for those Epistles pretended to be written to him by St Paul, they are bastard and counterfeit, they savour not of his apostolic gravity and majesty, which shineth even in this to Philemon, being the least of all his Epistles. In those forged Epistles far higher matters are spoken of; but, alas, how coldly, how dryly and poorly! yet here behold a poor petty matter is set forth with that pithiness and powerfulness of speech, as is admirable. (Dyke.) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:20]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yea, brother, let me have joy.** ὀναίμην, or benefit by thee; an elegant allusion it is in the original to the name of Onesimus; and it is as if the apostle embracing Philemon, and hanging about his neck, should say, I pray thee now let me be so far beholden to thee. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 21. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:21]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Knowing that thou wilt, &c.** Who could ever have the heart to resist such rhetoric? Is not here the very marrow of most powerful persuasion (*Suadae medulla*), a golden flood of eloquence? as Cicero saith of Aristotle's Politics. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 22. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:22]]{{field-on:Bible}}**But withal, prepare, &c.** Thus he despatcheth his own private business in one word, as it were; his main care was, that Onesimus might do well: a fair mirror for ministers. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 23. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:23]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Epaphras my fellowprisoner.** Clapped up, belike, for visiting and countenancing St Paul, to whom he was sent by the Colossians with relief, while he was prisoner at Rome. The ecclesiastical history telleth us of one Phileas a martyr, who going to execution, seemed as one deaf at the persuasions and blind at the tears of his friends, moving him to spare himself. And when one Philoramus defending him said,

Quomode potest terrenis lachrymis flecti, cuius oculi caelestem gloriam contuentur? How can he be moved with earthly tears, who hath his eyes full fed with heavenly glory? he also was taken in, and both presently beheaded. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 24. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:24]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas.** Here Demas was in good credit with the apostle, but soon after fell away; like as glass, and some baser metals, shine brightest in the fire when nearest of all to melting, or as the candle giveth a great blaze when going out with a stench. Hypocrites have their *non-ultra* when the godly man's motto is (as was Charles V's) *Ulterius*, Further yet, on, on. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 25. [[@Bible:Philemon 1:25]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The grace of our Lord.** Say the world what it will, a grain of grace is worth a world of wealth. The blessings that come. out of Sion are better than any that come out of heaven and earth, ***Psalm 134:3***; for they outlast the days of heaven, and run parallel with the life of God and line of eternity. Pray for them therefore in the behalf of ourselves and others, as Paul constantly doth for grace, not with graceless Nero, but with the Lord Jesus Christ, one good cast of whose pleased countenance was better to David than his crown and sceptre, ***Psalm 4:7-8***.