

# PHILEMON

## THE LETTER FROM PAUL TO PHILEMON

### Address

Rm 1:1+

1 From Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and from our brother Timothy; to our Ac 16:1+  
2 dear fellow worker Philemon, •our sister<sup>a</sup> Apphia, our fellow soldier Archippus Col 4:17  
3 and the church that meets in your house; •wishing you the grace and the peace 2 Tm 2:3  
of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Rm 16:5+

### Thanksgiving and prayer

||Ep 1:15-16  
||Col 1:3f

4 I always mention you in my prayers and thank God for you, •because I hear 1 Co 13:13+  
of the love and the faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all the saints. Ac 9:13+  
5 I pray that this faith will give rise to a sense of fellowship that will show you all Ph 1:9-11  
6 the good things that we are able to do for Christ.<sup>b</sup> •I am so delighted, and com- Col 1:9-11  
7 forted, to know of your love; they tell me, brother, how you have put new heart 2 Jn 4-6  
into the saints.

### The request about Onesimus

8 Now, although in Christ I can have no diffidence about telling you to do  
9 whatever is your duty, •I am appealing to your love instead, reminding you that  
this is Paul writing, an old man now and, what is more, still a prisoner of Christ  
10 Jesus. •I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became<sup>c</sup> while  
11 wearing these chains: I mean Onesimus. •He was of no use to you before, but he  
12 will be useful<sup>d</sup> to you now, as he has been to me. •I am sending him back to you,  
13 and with him—I could say—a part of my own self.<sup>e</sup> •I should have liked to keep  
him with me; he could have been a substitute for you, to help me while I am in the  
14 chains that the Good News has brought me. •However, I did not want to do  
anything without your consent; it would have been forcing your act of kindness,  
15 which should be spontaneous. •I know you have been deprived of Onesimus for  
a time,<sup>f</sup> but it was only so that you could have him back for ever, •not as a slave  
16 any more, but something much better than a slave, a dear brother; especially  
dear to me, but how much more to you, as a blood-brother as well as a brother  
17 in the Lord.<sup>g</sup> •So if all that we have in common means anything to you, welcome  
18 him as you would me; •but if he has wronged you in any way or owes Tt 2:10  
19 you anything,<sup>h</sup> then let me pay for it. •I am writing this in my own handwriting: Col 4:18+

a. Var. 'our beloved Apphia', or 'our beloved sister Apphia'.

b. Lit. 'that the fellowship of your faith may become effectual in a full knowledge of every good thing in us for Christ'; i.e. faith unites a person not only to Christ but to all who are his brothers through their union with Christ. Faith and love go together, v. 5, and Paul expects that faith will produce practical results. 'effectual'; var. (Vulg.) 'manifest'. 'we are able'; var. (Vulg.) 'you are able'.

c. He became his 'father' by converting him,

cf. 1 Co 4:15; Ga 4:19.

d. A pun: 'Onesimus' means 'useful', cf. Ph 4:3.

e. 'And with him ...'; var. (Vulg.) 'and I ask you to welcome him as though he were myself', cf. v. 17.

f. 'Deprived' of him by God who allowed the slave to escape only so that everyone might subsequently benefit.

g. Lit. 'as a brother both in the flesh and in the Lord'.

h. It seems that Onesimus had not only run away but had stolen something from Philemon as well.

I, Paul, shall pay it back—I will not add any mention of your own debt to me, which is yourself.<sup>i</sup> •Well then, brother, I am counting on you, in the Lord; put 20 new heart into me, in Christ. •I am writing with complete confidence in your 21 compliance, sure that you will do even more than I ask.

**A personal request. Good wishes**

There is another thing: will you get a place ready for me to stay in? I am hoping 22  
 Heb 13:19 through your prayers to be restored to you.

Col 4:10+ Epaphras, a prisoner with me in Christ Jesus, sends his greetings; •so do my 23  
 2 Tm 4:10 colleagues Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke.

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

i. Philemon must have been one of Paul's converts.

j. Add. 'Amen', cf. Ph 4:23.

# THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

A LETTER ADDRESSED  
TO A JEWISH-CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## PROLOGUE

### The greatness of the incarnate Son of God

1 At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our  
2 ancestors through the prophets; but •in our own time, the last days, he has  
spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything<sup>a</sup>  
3 and through whom he made everything there is.<sup>b</sup> •He is the radiant light of God's  
glory and the perfect copy of his nature,<sup>c</sup> sustaining the universe by his powerful  
command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to  
4 take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. •So he is now as far  
above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name.

2 Ch 36:15  
Jn 1:3  
Ga 4:4+  
1 Tm 4:1+  
Mt 4:3+  
Jn 1:18+;  
10:34  
Wg 7:22+  
2 Co 4:6,18  
Col 1:13+;  
17  
Ep 1:7  
Col 1:14  
Ac 2:33+  
Ph 2:9-11+

## I. THE SON IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

### Proof from the scriptures

5 God has never said to any angel: *You are my Son, today I have become your*  
6 *father*; or: *I will be a father to him and he a son to me*. •Again, when he brings the  
7 First-born into the world,<sup>d</sup> he says: *Let all the angels of God worship him*. •About  
8 the angels, he says: *He makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire*,<sup>e</sup> •but  
9 to his Son he says: *God, your throne shall last for ever and ever; and: his<sup>f</sup> royal*  
10 *sceptre is the sceptre of virtue; •virtue you love as much as you hate wickedness.*  
11 *This is why God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness, above all your*  
12 *rivals*.<sup>g</sup> •And again: *It is you, Lord, who laid earth's foundations in the beginning,*  
13 *the heavens are the work of your hands; •all will vanish, though you remain, all*  
14 *wear out like a garment; •you will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment<sup>h</sup>*  
15 *they will be changed. But yourself, you never change and your years are unending.*

Ps 2:7  
Ac 13:33+  
2 S 7:14  
Col 1:15+  
Dt 32:43  
Ps 97:7  
Ps 104:4  
Ps 45:6-7

Ps 102:25-27

1 a. To be a son implies having the right to inherit, cf. Mt 21:38, Ga 4:7. Here, however, God is credited with the handing over of the whole creation because the inheritance in question is messianic and eschatological.

b. Lit. the 'aeons', hebraism for the whole of creation.

c. These two metaphors are borrowed from the *sophia* and *logos* theologies of Alexandria, Ws 7:25-26; they express both the identity of nature between Father and Son, and the distinction of person. The Son is the brightness, the light shining from its source, which is the bright glory, cf. Ex 24:16+, of the Father ('Light from Light'). He is also the replica, cf. Col 1:15+, of the Father's substance, like an exact impression made by

a seal on clay or wax, cf. Jn 14:9.

d. Either at the *parousia* or, more probably, at the incarnation.

e. The author, thinking perhaps of the theophany on Sinai, 2:2+, takes this LXX text as a description of the nature of angels, subtle and changeable and therefore inferior to that of the Son reigning from his eschatological throne.

f. Var. 'your', cf. Ps 45 LXX.

g. Following Middle Eastern custom the psalm attributes divinity to the King-Messiah by hyperbole: here it is attributed literally, cf. v. 3. The divine Messiah is to reign for ever.

h. Vulg. omits. 'like a garment'.