

## REFRESH MY HEART

A Letter to Philemon



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### INTRODUCTION

- While only 335 words in Greek, this is a masterful, well-crafted, and gentlemanly letter
- This is a unique example of what we can assume were many letters written by Paul to individuals in churches
- We will see the intensity of Paul's personal relationships
  - We will also see the profoundly Christ-saturated nature of the letter, where the Gospel invades a very difficult situation and changes everything, including existing social norms

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### PAUL'S GREETING (1-3)

Paul, a **prisoner** for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our *brother*,  
 To **Philemon** our *beloved fellow worker* and **Apphia** our  
*sister* and **Archippus** our *fellow soldier*, and **the church** in  
*your house*:  
**Grace** to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord  
 Jesus Christ.

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PAUL'S THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR,  
AND BENEFIT FROM PHILEMON (4-7)

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

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PAUL'S APPEAL TO PHILEMON (8-12)

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet *for love's sake* I prefer to *appeal* to you  
—I, Paul, an *old man* and now a *prisoner* also for Christ Jesus—  
I *appeal* to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.  
(Formerly he was *useless* to you, but now he is indeed *useful* to you and to me.)  
I am sending him back to you, sending *my very heart*.

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PAUL'S DESIRE, PREFERENCE,  
AND A GREATER GOOD (13-16)

I would have **been glad** to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,  
but I **preferred** to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.  
For this **perhaps** is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, 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.

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PAUL'S PLEA, PROMISE,  
AND EXPECTATION (17-21)

So if you consider me your mutual participant, receive him as you would receive me.

If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it —to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord.

Refresh my heart in Christ.

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

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PAUL'S CONCLUSION (22-25)

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.

**Epaphras**, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do **Mark, Aristarchus, Demas**, and **Luke**, my fellow workers.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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RESPONSE

- Jesus in it all...Paul as the Christ-like mediator
  - Paul doesn't appeal to an abstract idea of obedience to law or bare commands found in the bible, but to their relationship of love as family because of Jesus
- Our "private" matters belong to the family of God for their accountability and encouragement - contrary to modern spirit
  - The legitimacy and priority of personal relationships as the family of God over our personal preferences, feelings, legal rights, and economic benefit
- What would be the outcome if Paul's appeal is received?
  - Onesimus forgiven, accepted in the family, freed, provided for, and sent to serve Paul in his chains as a representative

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