

# Thank God for Fellow Believers in Christ Jesus

September 4, 2016 – Philemon 1:1-25

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*“Paul, a prisoner of **Christ Jesus** and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**. I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have **in Christ**. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints. Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul – an old man and now also a prisoner of **Christ Jesus**. I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him – who is my very heart (inner parts) – back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will pay it back – not to mention that you owe me your very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart (Inner Parts) **in Christ**. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in **Christ Jesus**, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke my fellow workers. The grace of **the Lord Jesus Christ** be with your spirit.”*

If you just read the previous 25 verses, you have finished reading an entire book of the Bible! Congratulations!

Someone might be tempted to think that because a book of the Bible is short in length that it does not have anything of value. Yet those early New Testament Christians who gathered the books of the Bible together, saw something of importance even in the letter to Philemon.

What are some of the things that we see in this Book of the Bible?

1. A Fellowship of believers. A number of believers are mentioned (11 listed names)
2. The Apostle Paul acts as the mediator between Philemon and Onesimus to help them reconcile. Philemon was a slave owner who also owned a house in which Christians gathered together to worship. Onesimus was the runaway slave. (Paul by the way is not promoting slavery.) It was simply a practice at the time and Paul is encouraging Onesimus to be a faithful Christian worker, and Philemon to be forgiving. Since Onesimus had run away, Philemon had the right to have Onesimus punished by whipping and branding on the forehead and putting an iron shackle around his neck with instruction on who the owner was. Or Philemon could even have Onesimus put to death.
3. We see how Onesimus, is no longer an Unbeliever, but a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, this sin of Onesimus led him to being brought to faith in Jesus.

Philemon was obviously penned by the Apostle Paul. Paul was in Prison. (Rome) Timothy a fellow Pastor was also with Paul.

In the Letter to Philemon by The Apostle Paul we see some of what believers do which includes:

- **I always thank my God**
- **I remember you in my prayers,**
- **Hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus**
- **Active in sharing your faith,**
- **Your love has given me great joy**
- **And encouragement**
- **You, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints (fellow Believers).**

In this Letter to Philemon we learn of a runaway slave by the name of Onesimus who fell into sin and took some money from his master.

Paul is willing to pay the damages.

Paul also points out that now, despite the sin of Onesimus, he is not only a slave, but also a brother in Faith in Christ Jesus.

Included in this short book of the Bible there is also a list of other fellow Christians. As Christians we do not live in the world all alone. God provides fellow Christians. May we take as many opportunities as possible to enjoy the fellowship which we have in Christ Jesus our Risen and Ascended Savior Who will come again in all glory to take us and all believers to our heavenly home.

We Thank God for our Blessed Fellowship of Believers who have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ.

AMEN