

A reading from the book of Philemon 1:1-21

Salutation

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To our beloved coworker Philemon, ² to our^(a) sister Apphia, to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church in your^(b) house:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴ I thank my God always when I mention you^(c) in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that the partnership of your faith may become effective as you comprehend all the good that we^(d) share in Christ.^(e) ⁷ I have^(f) indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

⁸ For this reason, though I am more than bold enough in Christ to command you to do the right thing, ⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.^(g) ¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful^(h) to⁽ⁱ⁾ you and to me. ¹² I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.^(j) ¹³ I wanted to keep him with me so that he might minister to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. ¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for the long term, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my

heart in Christ.¹⁴ ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God

Woodbury United Methodist Church 4 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798