

**MASTER'S VOICE  
ALBUM**


**PHILEMON**

**LEGEND**

**LOVE AND FREEDOM**

**ALBION BIBLE CLASSICS  
NO. 18**

# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

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## INTRODUCTION

*This is shortest document from the hand of Paul. He professes to write personally-in all or in part. The Gregory Aland fragment AD250 is the earliest extant fragment we have –the letter was known to Marcion in 150AD & probably to Polycarp 69-156AD. If we take the Aramaic “Pela” to mean “soldier” then there are two military men referred to –one of whom is Philemon himself. The Colossian church was never visited by Paul but Epaphras was a leader amongst them and he must have forged a very important link between Paul and Philemon.*

*The signal event of Onesimus arrival in Rome and in the whereabouts of Paul may have owed something of the company or even mischief he got up to in the capitol. One Roman writer speaks of Rome as a sink that drew undesirable elements of the empire. Onesimus may have fled for freedom. Paul calls his thrust for freedom “a dream moment” or the Aramaic could equally mean “a crazy moment”. The man made a break for freedom in a world of slaves where had not Philemon become a Christian his discovery at Rome would have meant death.*

*It is clear that Paul led Onesimus to faith and that Epaphras who stood in similar relation to Philemon as a father in God so to speak had brought decisive help from the great Colossian benefactor from whom Paul could anticipate a lodging should he be released.*

*The treatment of the case of Onesimus shows Paul outside his comfort zone for the Jews were not slave managers as Mosaic law forbid it and Egyptian hardships set the Jewish mind as a flint against its enormities. Paul appears to offer a model for manumission of slaves the use of which he did not live to replicate in the empire. The letter in its release by Philemon or someone close to him and its appearance in the Canon in the first century shows that New Testament believers embraced the equality of all men and truly sought a society where there is neither bondman nor slave, neither male nor female in Christ but all are one in the Lord. I could put it that Paul erected a pyramid in holy writ that has stood for millennia showing not what slaves built but how slaves are freed. Its great stones exist even today-faith & love, the joy and abandon of having only Christ as Master; the freedom that is man’s birthright and the Right to live as a free man and citizen and testify even in bonds to the gospel that heralds deliverance to captives of every sort.*

### THE APPEAL OF A GOSPEL BONDSLAVE FOR A RUNAWAY SLAVE

1 Paul a prisoner of Yeshua **the Messiah** and Timothy a brother to Philemon the beloved [فيليمون] and soldier/labourer [فيلسوف] of our company. *Philemon may have been addressed as a physical labourer but it would appear equally likely that he may have been a soldier*

2 To Aphia our beloved and Archippus a soldier/labourer [ארכיפוס] of our company and to the assembly that is in your house.

3 Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus **the Messiah**.

4 I am thanking my God on every occasion (of thanksgiving/prayer) and have been actively remembering you in my prayers when I lean on the Lord.

5 Behold from when the time I heard of your faith and love that lives(1) [אמונה] **growing** in your case intimately with our Lord Jesus and intimately toward all the saints.

6 That there will be partnership[אחידנות] of your faith offering fruit in its time [זמן] in service and in personal experience & knowledge of every good or grace that is in Jesus **the Messiah**.

7 For there lives/exists(2)[אמונה] **great joy** [ (A)אמונה ושמחה is the Christmas angelic word-(B)אמונה ושמחה is the Pauline phrase-the first emphasizes the pure scale of the joy-the second the increase of joy with **growing** partnership]and comfort where we are concerned for through the power of your love the tenderhearted affections, philanthropy or benevolence of the saints has been eased or rested. *This is a Pauline tour de force which being interpreted means that because Philemon was so generous others did not need to input so much. The resultant joy had grown steadily.*

8 Because of this there exists (3)[אמונה] **growing** freedom[חירות]for me in **the Messiah** to give you instructions or command for you those things that are righteous. *Again there is room for liberty to spread its wings and expand its domain.*

9 **Conversely** because of this one thing I continue to beg [Hebraismאני אבקש] “begging I beg”]I Paul who lives on or exists[אמונה] as a **man growing** older as you know exactly –**conversely** now also as a **prisoner** (in bonds)of Jesus **the Messiah**.

10 And I plead with you over my son –the one that I begat in bondage-Onesimus. *The proper name is Aramaic transliteration of the Greek for “useful”.*

11 He who oftimes was by himself of **use to you-conversely** now both to you and **to me is of good use** [אני מועיל לך]



17 If you living or **growing** (4) [ **كلمة** ] as my partner receive him exactly as mine. *Paul has asserted “Love lives, joy lives, freedom lives and grows and partnership also lives and grows stronger as increasingly it shares.”The whole pyramid of manumission depends on a base of growing love, the support of joy and growing freedom and the glorious apex of equality, growing partnership, fellowship and increased sharing. If faith and love lives joy not sorrow must follow and freedom in its wake and absolute parity in [partnership] as in marriage and every relationship of life.*

18 And if you lack anything or this person has debt reckon it up for me or account it to me. *Paul was in this matter prepared to lose something of the friendship of Philemon and pay the debt encountering the chagrin if “attitude” there should be in the matter. The letter is polite but one should not mistake this hypothetical for anything less than a real offer.*

19 I Paul have written in my own hand-I myself will honour the debt or pay the debt [ **دين** ] without saying that you owe your soul to me!

20 Yes [ **نعم** ] my brother I have been refreshed by you in our Lord –give my compassion rest or satisfaction through Messiah. *Paul refers to his refreshment through Philemon and now asks that his **philanthropy** be given a rest through Messiah. He is not calling for his “compassion” to cease nor discarding care but he calls on Philemon to assume first responsibility as next of kin to Onesimus because his(Paul’s) commitment would be critically endangered by an untoward sentence under Nero.*

21 Because I am sure and can rely on it [ **بالتاكيد** ] that **you will listen** to me I have written to you and I know that you will do more than I have said.

22 **Conversely** also **at once** prepare for me a house where I may lodge for I hope that by your prayerful leaning on God I will have been given to you (plural) at Colossae.

23 Epaphras a fellow captive intreats or requests everything best for you-your Shalom by Jesus Messiah.

24 As also do my helpers Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. The grace of our Lord the Messiah be with your spirits. Amen.

**FINIS**

Bob Coffey Albion Court 24 December 2018