Study #12 Bible Reading: Philemon 1-21

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and our brother Timothy, to Philemon, our dear fellow worker, 2 Apphia, our fellow Christian, Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets at your home: 3 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace!

4 I'm always thanking my God when I mention you in my prayers, 5 because I hear how you believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him and all the holy people, 6 so that, knowing every good thing you have in Christ, the sharing of your faith may be effective. 7 Your love delighted and encouraged me very much because you, my fellow Christian, have refreshed the hearts of our holy people.

8 For that reason, although I feel bold enough in Christ to order you to do what is right, 9 I am moved by love just to urge you. As Paul, an old man and now a prisoner of Christ Jesus, 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I have been in chains. 11 Once he was useless to you, but now he's quite useful to you and me.

12 I'm sending him back to you – and my heart goes with him. 13 I would have liked to keep him with me and have him serve me in your place while I'm in chains for the good news, 14 but I don't want to do anything without your approval. I don't want you to be kind because you must but because you want to be. 15 Perhaps Onesimus left you for a while only to be yours again forever, 16 no longer a slave but more than a slave, a dear fellow Christian, especially to me, but how much more to you, as a man and as a Christian.

17 Now if you think of me as your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he cheated you or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I Paul, am writing this with my own hand – I'll pay it back. I don't want to mention that you owe me more than that – your own self. 20 Yes, my fellow Christian, I want you to be useful to me in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 As I write to you, I'm sure you'll do this. I know you'll do even more than I ask.