

Your Love Has Refreshed the Saints: Philemon 1:1-7 Explained

Scriptures for Today

""Philemon 1-7

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, 2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: 3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, 5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.""

Introduction to Philemon — A Letter of Love, Restoration, and Christian Character

Philemon is Paul's **shortest** letter — but one of the **richest** in practical Christian living. It is a personal letter, not addressed to a church, and written while Paul was in bonds.

Philemon was: a beloved friend of Paul, a faithful Christian man, a man whose home hosted a church, a man known for refreshing the brethren. This letter is tied closely to the events of Colossians because the church in Philemon's house was located in Colosse (Philemon 1:2 compared with Colossians 4:9).

The background is simple: A man named Onesimus, once unprofitable, had fled from Philemon. He encountered Paul. He was saved under Paul's ministry. Paul sends him back — not as a servant, but as a brother. Before Onesimus arrives, Paul sends Philemon this letter.

But before Paul makes any request, he begins with praise — acknowledging the love, faith, and refreshing spirit that Philemon already demonstrated toward God's people.

Verses 1–7 show us a picture of **Christian character**, **Christian encouragement**, and **Christian usefulness**.

Verse 1 — Paul, a Prisoner of Jesus Christ

""Philemon 1:1

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,""

Paul does not call himself an apostle here — he calls himself a **prisoner**. Why? Because this letter is not a command from authority; it is an appeal from love. He is imprisoned **for** Christ and **in fellowship with** Christ.

Timothy is included because he is serving alongside Paul, even during suffering. Philemon is:

- “dearly beloved” — deeply loved by Paul
- “fellowlabourer” — a man who labored with Paul in the gospel work

This tells us Philemon was not a casual believer — he was actively serving the Lord.

Verse 2 — The Church in Thy House

""Philemon 1:2

And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:""

Philemon hosted a local assembly in his home. Before huge churches existed, believers gathered in houses. It is a great thing to gather in a home for church. The building is not the important thing here. The wood, drywall, insulation, nails, and shingles on the roof don't make the church.

A church is a gathering together of believers with the order and rules that God gives us in His words.

You see the name Apphia there. Apphia is likely a Christian woman in the household. Archippus is a “fellowsoldier” — a faithful worker in spiritual battle (compare Colossians 4:17).

This shows: Philemon's home was open, His family was committed to Christ, Ministry flowed out of their household. A godly home can become a powerful center for the gospel. And we should do our best to make our homes a place of complete and utter truth at all times.

Verse 3 — The Greeting of Grace and Peace

""Philemon 1:3

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

Grace always comes before peace. Without grace, there is no peace. This greeting reminds us:

- every relationship in the church must operate in grace
- every difficult situation requires peace from God
- every believer's life is built on what God gives, not what we earn

Verse 4 — Paul Prays for Philemon

""Philemon 1:4

I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,""

Paul is imprisoned, but his heart is still with God's people. He doesn't pray for himself first — he prays for others. He thanks God for Philemon specifically: for his testimony, for his service, for his love, for the way he strengthened others.

A good Christian should cause others to thank God. For example, I thank God for you all here right now. You can see the people who are truly putting all the effort forth. It's easy to see those who do and those who don't.

I thank God for the servants of Jesus Christ. We should always be making mention of each other in our prayers. Follow Paul's example here. For example, I have a great Dad and Mom that do their best to serve the Lord. And they do a great job. And I thank God for them. I ask God to bless them greatly right now and into eternal life.

God will have a special place for them in heaven. And I can't wait to spend eternity with them. And we'll all be there not many years from now.

Verse 5 — Love and Faith Toward Jesus and the Saints

""Philemon 1:5

Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;"

Philemon's testimony had spread. Two things marked him:

- 1. Love toward the Lord Jesus.** A heart fully devoted to Christ.
- 2. Love toward all saints.** Not just friends. Not just favorites. Not just those like him. **All saints.**

Genuine Christianity always produces love — not the emotion, but the action. As a true Christian, you **MUST** care for others. For example, I see many of you in here caring for others often. We must continue in this. We must not stop.

Love Jesus Christ by doing what He has asked us to do and we automatically love others.

And look, it doesn't start and end with soul winning as some people might believe. It may start with soul winning, but it cannot end there. The love and faith that we have must continue toward all saints. And the Bible says **ALL SAINTS**.

Verse 6 — The Communication of His Faith

""Philemon 1:6

That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.""

“Communication” means **sharing, living out, and demonstrating** one’s faith. Communicate the Gospel to others in your life. Share your faith with others. Paul is praying that:

- Philemon’s faith will be active
- his Christian character will be visible
- others will clearly see Christ at work in him

“Every good thing which is in you” is **Christ in you** — the source of all godliness. Your faith should not be hidden. Your faith should be doing good works. Your faith should shine. Your faith should communicate Christ.

And I want you to notice: “every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” Our goodness is only because of Jesus Christ. Without Him, we have no goodness at all. We have no righteousness at all. Everything good comes from Him.

Verse 7 — The Saints Are Refreshed by Your Love

""Philemon 1:7

For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.""

This is one of the greatest compliments in all Scripture. Philemon **refreshed the saints**.

His love: strengthened tired believers, encouraged discouraged hearts, lifted burdens, brought joy, provided comfort.

Instead of draining people, he refreshed them. Instead of discouraging people, he strengthened them. Every church needs believers like this. That's what we need here. We need people who refresh others and not drag them down.

"The bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." Bowels means the deepest inward feelings, the seat of compassion, your inner emotions, and the part of you where real affection is felt. It's like saying, "from the bottom of my heart" or "from the core of who I am."

The saints were refreshed or strengthened, revived, encouraged, rested, spiritually renewed. To refresh someone spiritually means: you lighten their burden, you lift their spirit, you restore their courage, you give them strength to continue, and you bring joy back into tired hearts. Philemon is a man that had that type of effect on people.

Hey, listen, we all need that often in our life. We need to do that for each other.

Application — What Philemon 1:1–7 Teaches Us Today

- 1. Your home can be a place of ministry.** Philemon used his household for God's work.
- 2. Your love can refresh God's people.** True Christianity lifts others.
- 3. Your faith should be visible.** Faith communicates Christ.
- 4. Your character can strengthen your church.** Paul thanked God because of Philemon's faithfulness.
- 5. Your life should produce joy in other believers.** A godly Christian is refreshing, not draining.

Closing — Be a Refreshing Christian

Philemon lived out his faith by loving God and refreshing God's people. We are called to do the same in our homes, in our church, in our friendships, in our trials, and in our daily walk with Jesus Christ. This is important.

Let your life refresh the saints. Let your love strengthen the weary. Let your faith shine for Christ.

Be the believer who lifts, not the believer who drains. Be the Christian who refreshes, not the one who burdens others.

Let's pray.