

“Going the Extra Mile”
Philemon 19-25

Paul normally had a scribe to write his letters (Rom. 16:22; 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11). This may have been because of his age and eye problems (Gal. 4:15). But he writes to Philemon with his own hand, undoubtedly because of the personal nature of the letter and that he would be bound by the promises he outlined. He reiterates his promise to repay any debt on the account of Onesimus, while reminding Philemon that he owes Paul a greater debt, the sharing of the Gospel which has resulted in Philemon’s salvation (Rom. 1:16). Paul is asking Philemon to voluntarily lay aside the lesser debt of Onesimus, as we are to forgive others as Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32).

Paul again addresses Philemon as a brother, asking him to bring joy *in the Lord* in granting the request. This would mean Philemon recognizes the Lord’s hand in his decision (Phil. 2:13). The Greek word for bowels or heart is *splagchnon*, meaning the inner part of the body affected by emotions (Acts 1:18; Phil. 1:8, 2:1; Col. 3:12). Paul’s anxiety in his heart or stomach would be calmed. God’s will is that our entire body (*soma*), soul (*psuche*), and spirit (*pneuma*) be sanctified (1Thess. 5:23). Psychosomatic illnesses can be caused by disobedience to God’s word. Walking in the truth of God’s word (Col. 3:16) brings great joy to others (Heb. 13:17; 3John 4).

Paul now writes that he has great confidence and trust that Philemon will be obedient to his requests. He even knows (Matt. 6:8, 9:4; John 6:64; Rom. 8:28; James 4:17; 1John 3:2, 5:13; Rev. 2:2, 3:1) that Philemon will do more than requested. There is the saying of “going the extra mile.” Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 5:41 in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount. Under Roman law, a soldier could compel a civilian to carry his equipment for a Roman mile (*milion*, of Latin origin, a thousand paces). The Jews considered this a despicable act because now their oppressors were forcing them to carry the very instruments of their slavery. But Jesus says to carry the pack for *two miles*. In Christ there is freedom (John 8:36). Freedom to illustrate to the world the grace of God, which is freely given (Eph. 2:8-9)! Do you go the “extra mile” in your relationships (Rom. 12:9-21)?

Paul concludes his letter with requests for lodging, prayer, and a list of companions. Mark was an example of Paul’s own heart of forgiveness and “going the extra mile” (Acts 15:38-40; Col. 4:10; 2Tim. 4:11).

