

THE GOSPEL CANNOT BE CHAINED

SEARCHING FOR GRACE
IN PAUL'S PRISON LETTERS

- Philemon -

Mick Mooney

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Paraphrase by Mick Mooney www.searchingforgrace.com
This book is also available in paperback format on www.amazon.com

FOREWORD

This letter to Philemon is one of four letters Paul wrote during his imprisonment in Rome, paraphrased, with a great deal of respect, in a way that highlights what I believe to be the heart of his message. I find it amazing that even in prison Paul still knew he was free; he still knew of a far greater reality that was his in Christ. The beauty of his message that lifts up and highlights God's love and grace in his prison letters touches my heart every time I read them. I hope it blesses your heart also. This letter has been taken from my book called: '**The Gospel Cannot Be Chained.**' It is a paraphrase and expression of my understanding of Paul's four prison letters.

Paul's letters reveal so much of his heart of love, his joy in God's grace, and his uncompromising faith in the redemptive work of Jesus. Paul has, in a spiritual way,

become one of my dearest friends; a wonderful brother in my own faith walk who has always encouraged me through his letters that I can truly live by the Spirit of God. Although I haven't yet met him personally, I certainly appreciate the letters he wrote to me, to you, and to all who are part of the body of Christ.

I didn't approach paraphrasing Paul's letters with the mindset that I was rewriting Scripture, but rather, respectfully attempting to clarify the heart of a dear friend who is no longer with us. The best way to read this book is in rest. Relax, and read it as if you are reading a few letters from a dear brother in Christ who is writing you a personal letter to remind you of the wonderful reality of God's grace.

As this is not a Bible, but rather a modern expression of four letters from a friend, I have not formatted it in the way modern Bibles format Paul's letters. There are no verses or chapters. The best way to read these letters is in one sitting, as you would with any letter you received from a friend today.

I hope that through reading my interpretation of Paul's letters it helps highlight for you his message of love and grace in whatever Bible translation you normally read.

Blue skies,
Mick Mooney

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PHILEMON

Paul, chained temporarily by man, but set free eternally by Christ Jesus; together with Timothy, our mutual brother.

To Philemon, my beloved friend and fellow proclaimer of God's abounding love; greetings also to Apphia our sister, Archippus our fellow freedom fighter and to all the believers who meet together in your home. Grace, love, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ.

My beloved brother, I must express once more how truly blessed I am by our friendship; indeed, I thank God every time I am reminded of you. It is a delight to hear of the love you have for our mutual brothers and sisters in Christ, and the encouragement you impart to them, as they continue to grow

in their own faith walk, just as your own faith continues to abound in the revelation of God's love and grace. My heart is full of joy when I think of you, and I want to encourage you to continue, just as you already are, to be active in sharing your faith in the good news that God truly is graceful and abounding in love, in order that the Lord can continue to reveal the fullness of his unfailing, unending and incomparable love to your heart and mind; together with the full measure of every good thing we have been given in Christ. Enjoy the blessing of sharing the good news of God's grace. For I can testify that it is not only a joy to proclaim, but it also reminds our own hearts of all we have been given in Christ. It is so wonderful to remember you and your example of divine acceptance; you are a blessing to the whole Church, for you don't sit in judgement of others for their lack and weaknesses, but allow God's nature of love to truly shine. Your love towards those around you has blessed my heart and encouraged me greatly. Not only have you blessed my heart, but I am assured you have also refreshed the hearts of the saints you so wonderfully lift up and encourage whenever the opportunity presents itself.

In light of knowing your heart, and knowing your way of life, I rejoice that we can also relate with

one another upon the basis of love. For I am assured you don't need to be convinced to do anything from a position of obligation; rather, your whole being rejoices at the opportunity to freely walk in God's nature of love. How wonderful to see the love of God so active in your life. And so, I ask of you my dear friend, bless my heart, for I am now an old man, and although this old body is also locked up by the hands of man, it is certainly not what defines me. Others may see that I am a prisoner to man, but we both know the truth, that I am a free man in the endless love of God! And, by the grace of God, that is where I will forever be kept. The worldly authorities have captured my body, but God's love has captured my heart, and in this truth I rejoice; nonetheless, your grace towards me also comforts me greatly. With this in mind, I appeal to you, on the basis of love, regarding Onesimus, who has become like a son to me during my time here in chains. Although in the past he parted company with you on bad terms, I ask that you extend grace to him now that I am sending him back to you, just as you do to everyone in your world. In the past he proved himself of little value to you, but I can assure you God has done a wonderful work in his life during his time here with me, and I am sending him back to you with the assurance that he will be a

blessing, and a benefit, to you and the other believers who meet in your home.

I am sending him back to you with this letter. He has become so dear to my heart, and, truthfully, I wish I could keep him here with me in order that he could continue to help me with all the work the Lord is doing in and through my life while I am in chains. He is a blessing to me here and is always willing to help me when I am in need, just as indeed you would be, if you were here with me. Indeed, I would be greatly blessed to keep him here with me, but in my heart I know that his place is with you, and so I send him back now. I do so knowing that we both live and trust the Spirit in us, and so I don't seek to pressure you to do anything, but rather follow the leading of the Spirit freely and trust that our God will work all things to his glory.

I don't know why Onesimus was separated from you for this period of time, but I am assured that the Lord's ways are trustworthy, and believe it is entirely possible that all this took place in order that you could now receive him back for good – no longer as merely an employee, but as a dear brother in the faith. I'm sending him back to you as proof of God's abounding grace, for he is so dear to me, and, as you will discover, even dearer to you; for God has taken what was weak and of no use, and

transformed him into a man full of truth, courage and joy. He is a man you can trust, and a brother in the Lord you can embrace into God's family.

I ask that you welcome him, just as you would me, for I know how blessed my heart is every time I am in your company, and I hope that he too can also experience such a blessing. I ask that you treat his past misdeeds as God has treated ours. Forgive him my dear brother, just as I'm sure you would forgive me, and I would forgive you. Let your true nature of love be proclaimed through your grace towards him as he returns to you. If there is anything he must pay back, I will gladly take that debt upon my account. But, as we both know, we don't keep an accounts with one another, for we abide in the nature of God's grace. So then, I ask that Onesimus can come back and be embraced in the freedom and grace that is our mutual identity in Christ. I ask this not only for him, but also for myself, for it will bless my heart in such a beautiful way and I will be greatly benefited from hearing of your acceptance and love for him. Dear brother, refresh my heart in our mutual faith in Christ. I write this letter confident that you already desire to do these very things, and I already feel the joy of God's love flooding my heart as I write these words. In fact, if anything, I am sure you will do even more than I ask, for you are truly a

testimony of God's abounding grace.

One more thing. Be so kind as to prepare a guest room for me, as I believe my release from this worldly prison will take place soon, and I desire greatly to visit you and rejoice once more in our friendship and time together. I know you have been praying for my release, and I am confident of God's gracious answer to your prayers on my behalf.

Epaphras, who is also here in prison with me sends his greetings. So does Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, who are all working with me in the proclamation of God's good news to mankind.

My beloved friend, may the grace of our wonderful Lord be with your spirit.

(Paraphrased by Mick Mooney) Visit Mick's website:
www.searchingforgrace.com

*This paraphrase of Philemon is part of the paraphrase book titled: **"The Gospel Cannot Be Chained"** that includes all of Paul's four prison letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon) You can buy a paperback version at www.amazon.com.*

Biblical Reference Text

The NIV (New International Version) is the translation I personally read, and it was the translation I used as my primary reference text for this body of work. As I stated in my foreword, this book is my own understanding and expression of what Paul originally meant in his letters. It is more of a commentary of Paul's letters that may help you see and understand his message in a fresh and positive way. Whatever Bible translation you choose to read, I hope this book has encouraged you to read the Bible more in order to search and discover the incomparable riches of Christ. I trust, and I am excited to know, that our good Lord is committed to leading you into greater revelations of his love and truth.