

Philemon

6. *“and I pray.”* A new subject has started, which is much clearer in Greek than English, so the italics helps the reader realize that a new subject has started, (cp. v. 4 where the subject starts.)

“fellowship of your faith.” Much has been written on this. It refers either to the “fellowship that is associated with your faith” or the “sharing” or “communicating” of your faith. Given the fact that Paul is exhorting Philemon to take Onesimus back into his good graces (his “fellowship”), “fellowship” seems to be the preferred meaning here. The epistle is not about outreach, and placing an unattached sentence about that here seems out of place, when nothing relates to it before or after.

“be energized.” Not “become” anything. Paul is not saying that Philemon has not had something and now it must “become.” Just “be” in this situation. In fact, in light of Philemon’s love that is mentioned in 5, 7 etc., “continue to be” would be more accurate than “become.” “Energized” or active. “Effective” adds too much. Paul is writing that Philemon’s fellowship would be energized and that as a result he would take Onesimus back (Lenski has “energetic” or “active”).

“by the acknowledging” as per the KJV. “In the full knowledge” is perhaps more proper, but the “in” seems instrumental, and Philemon’s fellowship would be energized by his acknowledging what we have in Christ.

“us.” The Greek texts have a variant, some reading “you” and some reading “us.” The NA 27 goes with “us” since, given the surrounding pronouns, it is the more difficult one. Especially given the context, it would be easier for a copyist to change “us” to “you” than “you” to “us.” I feel that this is correct. Paul is trying to establish a bond with Philemon, and using “us” does that well.

“pertaining to Christ.” The Greek word *eis* here is “to” or more understandably, “pertaining to.” Although some translators have take this as “for Christ” (or “for Christ’s sake), this does not seem to be as strong in the context. As we fully realize what we have pertaining to Christ, we are more likely to have “fellowship” with any other person. The text does not read “in Christ” as some versions have.

The verse is saying that Paul is praying that Philemon’s fellowship (his personal fellowship with others), which is in relation to the faith, would be energized as he acknowledged all the good things in us that pertain to Christ.

15. “forever.” From the adjective *aionios* (#166 αἰώνιος), which most versions render “eternal.” For this word see commentary on John 3:16. *Aionios* can mean “age” as in the messianic age, or it can have a strictly temporal meaning of “eternal.” Here the word is used in it specifically temporal aspect. Paul contrasts Onesimus’ absence “for a little while” with having him “forever.”

18. “charge that to me.” (Lenski).

20. “bowels.” A seat of a person’s emotional life.

