

# Philemon 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

## Analysis

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**But without thy mind would I do nothing**—χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἡθέλησα ποιῆσαι (chōris de tēs sēs gnōmēs ouden ēthelēsa poiēsai, but without your opinion/consent nothing I wished to do)—γνώμη (gnōmē, opinion/judgment/consent). Paul refuses to keep Onesimus without Philemon's permission, despite apostolic authority and personal desire. This respects Philemon's property rights (however much gospel will transform them) and moral agency.

**That thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly** (ἴνα μὴ ως κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ἢ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον, hina mē hōs kata anankēn to agathon sou ē alla kata hekousion)—ἀνάγκη (anankē, necessity/compulsion) versus ἐκούσιος (hekousion, voluntary/willing). τὸ ἀγαθόν (to agathon, your good deed/benefit) must flow from free choice. Paul could have commanded (v. 8) or simply kept Onesimus (v. 13), but coerced goodness isn't true virtue. Gospel produces willing obedience from transformed hearts, not grudging compliance.

## Historical Context

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Ancient ethics debated voluntary versus compelled virtue. Stoics prized rational choice; Paul agrees but roots freedom in grace. The patron-client system operated through obligation and reciprocity; Paul both uses (leveraging friendship) and transcends (seeking heartfelt response) this system. Forced forgiveness would embitter Philemon and demean Onesimus; willing reconciliation demonstrates gospel power.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. Do you respect others' agency and decision-making even when you could manipulate or coerce desired outcomes?
2. How do you cultivate willing obedience to God versus mere external conformity or duty-driven compliance?
3. What good deeds do you perform "of necessity" (social pressure, guilt) rather than voluntary joy?

## Interlinear Text

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χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἡθέλησα ποιῆσαι ἵνα  
without But G3588 thy mind nothing would I do G2443  
G5565 G1161 G4674 G1106 G3762 G2309 G4160

μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ἢ ἀλλὰ  
G3361 as it were of necessity G3588 benefit thy be but G235  
G5613 G2596 G318 G18 G4675 G5600

κατὰ ἐκούσιον  
it were of willingly  
G2596 G1595

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Corinthians 9:7** (Parallel theme): Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

**1 Chronicles 29:17** (Parallel theme): I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

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