

# Philemon 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

## Analysis

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**For perhaps he therefore departed for a season**—τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν (tacha gar dia touto echōristhē pros hōran, for perhaps because of this he was separated for an hour/season)—τάχα (tacha, perhaps/probably) expresses tentative divine providence reading. ἐχωρίσθη (echōristhē, was separated) is divine passive: God separated them. πρὸς ὥραν (pros hōran, for an hour/short time) contrasts with αἰώνιον (aiōnion, eternal, v. 15b)—temporary separation yields permanent reunion.

**That thou shouldest receive him for ever** (ἴνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς, hina aiōnion auton apechēs, that you might have him eternally)—αἰώνιος (aiōnios, eternal/forever). The theology: God orchestrated Onesimus's sinful flight to accomplish his salvation and eternal relationship with Philemon. Romans 8:28 applied: God works through evil for good. Joseph's words to brothers: "You meant evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). Onesimus's temporary absence as slave produces eternal relationship as brother.

## Historical Context

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Providence (πρόνοια, pronoia) was philosophical concept: divine oversight of human affairs. Paul Christianizes it: God superintends history redemptively. The "for ever" suggests both earthly reconciliation and eternal heavenly fellowship. Slavery was temporal institution; brotherhood in Christ eternal reality. This verse

seeds slavery's eventual abolition—if brotherhood is eternal and slavery temporary, Christianity undermines slavery's foundations.

## Related Passages

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

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. Can you discern God's providential purposes in painful separations, betrayals, and losses you've experienced?
2. How does viewing present suffering as "for a season" versus eternal blessing help you endure and forgive?
3. What relationships might God be transforming from temporary, superficial connections to eternal, deep brotherhood?

## Interlinear Text

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τάχα	γὰρ	διὰ	τοῦτο	ἐχωρίσθη	πρὸς	ῷραν	ἵνα
perhaps	For	G1223	therefore	departed	for	a season	that
G5029	G1063		G5124	G5563	G4314	G5610	G2443

αἰώνιον	αὐτὸν	ἀπέχῃς
for ever	him	thou shouldest receive
G166	G846	G568

## Additional Cross-References

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**Genesis 50:20** (Parallel theme): But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.