

Philemon 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

Analysis

If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself—εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν (ei oun me echeis koinōnon, if therefore you have me as partner) προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ (proslabou auton hōs eme, receive him as me). κοινωνός (koinōnos, partner/sharer/fellow) describes gospel partnership—shared mission, mutual support, spiritual union. εἰ (ei, if) introduces first-class condition assuming reality: "since you consider me partner." προσλαμβάνω (proslambanō, receive/welcome/accept) ὡς ἐμέ (hōs eme, as myself)—radical identification.

Paul applies Jesus's principle: receiving the sent one is receiving the sender (Matthew 10:40, John 13:20). The apostolic representative shares apostolic honor. To reject Onesimus is rejecting Paul; to welcome Onesimus is welcoming Paul. This lever—friendship, partnership, honor—puts maximum moral pressure on Philemon without direct command. Ancient friendship (φιλία, philia) and patronage obligated reciprocity; Paul leverages these cultural values for gospel purposes.

Historical Context

κοινωνία (koinōnia, partnership) appears in business contexts (Luke 5:10) and spiritual fellowship (Acts 2:42, Philippians 1:5). Paul uses secular term for sacred reality—gospel partnership transcending commercial relationships. The "as myself" formula echoes Jewish legal principle (שְׁלִיחָה, shaliach, sent one): "a man's agent is as himself." Paul authorizes Onesimus as apostolic delegate, sharing Paul's status.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Who do you consider gospel partners, and how does that partnership affect your practical decisions and relationships?
2. When has someone's advocacy (like Paul for Onesimus) changed your perception of another person?
3. How do you leverage your relational capital and influence to restore broken relationships and advocate for the marginalized?

Interlinear Text

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|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Eἰ | οὖν | ἐμέ | ἔχεις | κοινωνόν, | προσλαβοῦ | αὐτὸν | ὡς |
| If | therefore | me | thou count | a partner | receive | him | as |
| G1487 | G3767 | G1691 | G2192 | G2844 | G4355 | G846 | G5613 |

ἐμέ

me

G1691

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 8:23 (Parallel theme): Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

Matthew 10:40 (Parallel theme): He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Philemon 1:12 (Parallel theme): Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

