

Philemon 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

Analysis

If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought—εἰ δέ τι ἤδικησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει (ei de ti ēdikēsen se ē opheilei, but if anything he wronged you or owes)—ἀδικέω (adikeō, wrong/injure) and ὀφείλω (opheilō, owe/be indebted). Paul delicately acknowledges possible theft or damages without explicit accusation. The conditional εἰ (ei, if) allows for uncertainty while preparing solution. Onesimus may have stolen travel money or damaged property; Roman law required restitution.

Put that on mine account (τοῦτο ἔμοὶ ἔλλογα, touto emoi elloga, charge this to me)—ἔλλογέω (ellogeo, charge/reckon/put to account) is commercial accounting term. Paul assumes Onesimus's debt, offering substitutionary payment. This models Christ's atonement: He assumed our sin-debt, paying what we owe (2 Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 2:14). The verb form is imperative—Paul commands this accounting procedure, making the gospel's substitutionary principle concrete.

Historical Context

Roman commercial culture used detailed accounting—debts recorded, transferred, paid. Papyrus documents show personal guarantees for others' debts. Paul's offer wasn't theoretical but legally binding written promise (v. 19 emphasizes his personal signature). This puts Paul's resources and reputation behind Onesimus. Ancient honor culture made such guarantees serious obligations—failure to pay brought deep shame.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's substitutionary atonement (assuming your debt) shape your willingness to assume others' debts and wrongs?
2. When has someone's willingness to "put it on my account" for your sake affected you deeply?
3. What debts or wrongs might God be calling you to assume for another's sake, modeling gospel substitution?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δέ	τι	ἡδίκησέν	σε	ἢ	όφείλει	τοῦτο	ἔμοι
G1487	If	thee ought	he hath wronged	thee	or	oweth	put that	G1698
G1161		G5100		G4571	G2228	G3784		

ἐλλόγει·

mine account

G1677

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