

Philemon 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it:
albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine
own self besides.

Analysis

I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it—ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ (egō Paulos egrapsa tē emē cheiri, I Paul wrote with my own hand) ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω (egō apotisō, I will repay)—double ἐγὼ (egō, I) emphasizes personal guarantee. Most ancient letters used secretaries (amanuenses); Paul typically dictated, adding personal signature (1 Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11, Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17). Here the entire financial guarantee is Paul's handwriting, making it legally binding IOU.

ἀποτίνω (apotinō, repay/compensate) is legal term for damages. **Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides** (ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις, hina mē legō soi hoti kai seauton moi prosopheileis)—brilliant rhetoric! Paul says "I won't mention..." while mentioning it. προσοφείλω (prosopheilō, owe in addition/owe besides) σεαυτὸν (seauton, yourself)—Philemon owes Paul his very self, probably through Paul's evangelism (converting Philemon). The ultimate leverage: whatever Onesimus owes Philemon pales beside what Philemon owes Paul.

Historical Context

Paul likely evangelized Philemon during Ephesian ministry (Acts 19:10—"all who dwelt in Asia heard"). If Paul led Philemon to Christ, the spiritual debt was infinite—salvation itself. Ancient patronage culture understood such debts created

lifelong obligation. Paul's reminder cancels Onesimus's material debt by appealing to Philemon's unpayable spiritual debt. The commercial metaphor (accounting, debts, repayment) serves theological reality: all owe unpayable debt to God, received only by grace.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Do you remember the unpayable spiritual debt you owe to God and those who brought you the gospel?
2. How should awareness of your infinite debt to God (paid by Christ) shape your forgiveness of others' finite debts to you?
3. When has recognizing a deeper obligation changed your perspective on smaller grievances?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ	Παῦλος	ἔγραψα	τῇ	ἐμῇ	χειρί,	ἐγὼ		
I	Paul	have written	G3588	it with mine own	hand	I		
G1473	G3972	G1125		G1699	G5495	G1473		
ἀποτίσω·	ἵνα	μὴ	λέγω	σοι	ὅτι	καὶ	σεαυτόν	μοι
will repay	G2443	G3361	I do	to thee	how	even	thine own self	unto me
G661			G3004	G4671	G3754	G2532	G4572	G3427
προσφεῖλεις								
besides								
G4359								

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:11 (Parallel theme): Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Galatians 5:2 (References Paul): Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

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