

Philemon 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Analysis

Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee—διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην (dia tēn agapēn, because of love) μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ (mallon parakalō, rather I appeal/exhort). παρακαλέω (parakaleō, appeal/beseech/encourage) contrasts with ἐπιτάσσω (epitassō, command, v. 8). Paul could command but appeals—not manipulative false humility but profound theology. Gospel creates relationships where authority serves love, not vice versa. Love-based appeals honor the addressee's dignity, inviting willing cooperation rather than demanding grudging compliance.

Being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—τοιοῦτος ὡν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης (toioutos ôn hōs Paulos presbyterēs, being such as Paul an old man) καὶ νυνὶ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (kai nyni kai desmios Christou Iēsou, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus). πρεσβύτης (presbyterēs, old man/elder, possibly 60+ years) and δέσμιος (desmios, prisoner)—Paul's age and suffering lend moral weight. He doesn't command as superior but appeals as vulnerable elder-prisoner, exemplifying downward mobility of gospel.

Historical Context

Ancient Mediterranean honored age; elderly commanded respect. Paul's imprisonment (chains, v. 10, 13) provided powerful rhetoric: from prison, he pleads for a runaway slave. The reversal is stunning—the prisoner intercedes for the criminal, the aged apostle for the young thief. This demonstrates gospel's upside-down values where weakness becomes persuasive power (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Do you appeal to others "for love's sake" or manipulate through guilt, shame, or power-plays?
2. How does Paul's willingness to be vulnerable (aged, prisoner) model Christian persuasion versus worldly coercion?
3. When should you exercise authority, and when should you appeal as Paul does —how do you discern?

Interlinear Text

διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ τοιοῦτος ὅν
Yet for love's rather beseech such an one thee being
G1223 G26 G3123 G3870 G5108 G5607

ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Ἰησοῦ·
as Paul the aged now and also a prisoner of Jesus
G5613 G3972 G4246 G3570 G1161 G2532 G1198 G2424

Χριστοῦ

Christ
G5547

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:1 (Parallel theme): I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Romans 12:1 (Parallel theme): I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (References Christ): Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Ephesians 3:1 (References Jesus): For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

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