

Is the Trinity in the book of Philemon?

“For love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you-I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus”—Philemon 1:9 ESV



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In this very short New Testament book of only 25 verses, Jesus Christ is specifically mentioned eight times, God two times, and the holy Spirit is not mentioned at all. In such a brief letter, only so much can be discussed, of course, so the holy Spirit’s omission is not surprising. This is especially so when we consider that the letter’s subject matter is not primarily doctrinal, but, instead, focuses on the relationship of the wealthy Christian Philemon with his runaway slave Onesimus, whom the apostle Paul in Rome has recently converted to Christianity, and is sending him back to Philemon in Colossae with this letter, appealing to Philemon to do the right thing (**Philemon 1:20-21**).

Jesus Christ is specifically mentioned in **Philemon 1:1,3,5,6,9,20,21,23**, and God is mentioned in **Philemon 1:3,4**. Notice how they are described in the only place they are mentioned together:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philemon 1:3 NIV)

“Grace and peace” are sent from God the Father and Jesus Christ, but not the holy Spirit, since it isn’t a person. First of all, it is very clear from the language used that they are **“two people,”** with Jesus being **“one”**, and his **“Father”** being the **“other”** (**John 8:17,18 NLT**). A close look also reveals that **“God”** is the **“Father”** only, and is not **“the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The Trinity’s omission from the letter is not at all surprising, since it is never mentioned in any of the other 31,000 verses in the Bible. In contrast, the holy Spirit is mentioned many times throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament, from **Genesis 1:2** to **Revelation 22:17**. The difference, however, is that the holy Spirit is real, whereas the Trinity is not.