

In this construction is seen a true parallel with antithetical terms. "He departed for a season that he might be held forever."

-c..c A clause of result in the potential subjunctive indicates that Onesimus being with Philemon forever is an impending result after/and of/ his defection. This should be noted as true circumstance of the direct working of the providence of God which elects and chooses according to His will.

Resultant Reading:

...for if at his first opportunity on this account he departed for a season, that forever you might hold him....

Added datum:

The initial adverb is not discussed under word study but a note should be made on its meaning. The simple meaning is early or hastily and in this case, knowing something of the nature of those who ran away from service, it may be interpreted freely but with good justification, "at his first opportunity." This is another way of saying: "As quickly as he could."