

The Epistle to Philemon from the Apostle Paul

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Theme:

“...receive him for ever...”

Philemon,
the master



Onesimus,
his servant

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction:

- Paul is thought to have written to Philemon in ~AD62.
- Paul may have been imprisoned in Rome twice where the letter to Philemon would have been written during the (first?) imprisonment.

Philemon 1:22 But withal prepare me (*Paul*) also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul's two imprisonments (?)
 - “it has been pointed out that the leaving of Trophimus sick at Miletus (2Timothy 4:20) could not have been an occurrence of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, for then Trophimus was not left...

Acts 20:4 And there accompanied him (Paul) into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul's two imprisonments (?)
 - “it has been pointed out that the leaving of Trophimus sick at Milestus (2Timothy 4:20) could not have been an occurrence of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, for then Trophimus was not left...

Acts 21:27, 29 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, ... (For they had seen before with him in the city *(Jerusalem)* Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul's two imprisonments (?)
 - “it has been pointed out that the leaving of Trophimus sick at Miletus (2Timothy 4:20) could not have been an occurrence of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, for then Trophimus was not left...
...nor of the journey to Rome to appear before Ceasar, for then he did not touch at Miletus”.
per W.J. Erdman/C.I. Scofield Bible pg. 1188

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul's two imprisonments (?)
 - Acts 28:16 Paul arrives in Rome ~A.D. 61
 - Acts 28:17-24 Paul meets with the Jews in Rome.
 - Acts 28:30 Paul "in his own hired house" in Rome for two whole years. ~A.D. 61-62
 - Paul writes: the Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians.
- Paul liberated; takes another journey ~A.D. 63

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul liberated (~A.D. 63)
 - Visits Crete, and leaves Titus there (Titus 1:5)
 - Paul bids Timothy to remain at Ephesus (1Timothy 1:3)
 - Paul goes to Macedonia ~A.D. 64 (1Timothy 1:3)
 - 1Timothy and Titus written.
 - No sense of Paul's work ending.
 - Paul winters at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12)
 - Paul visits Miletus, and leaves Trophimus there sick (2Timothy 4:20)
 - Paul arrested, and sent to Rome ~A.D. 66

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Paul writes his final epistle: 2Timothy ~A.D. 66
 - Paul states the he is “now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”
(2Timothy 4:6-7)
- Paul put to death ~A.D. 67

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Philemon lived with wife and family and servant Onesimus (Colossians 4:9) in Colosse
 - Philemon's home was of sufficient size to accommodate a church gathering. Philemon 1:2
- Philemon is identified as a "fellowlabourer", Philemon 1:2 (not necessarily a Hebrew ???)

Philemon,
the master



Onesimus,
his servant

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):

- Onesimus, a servant of Philemon. Philemon 1:16



- Onesimus = “profitable” (Gk) Colossians 4:9
- Onesiphorus = “bringing profit” 2Timothy 1:16
- Onesimus may have stolen from Philemon and ran. (Philemon 1:18 “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought...”)
 - Paul taught servants must be obedient to their own master...not purloining, but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Titus 2:9-10

Paul's epistle to Philemon:



Introduction (cont.):

- Onesimus, however, was not a believer at the time he stole and ran, evidently, with his family in tow. 2Timothy 4:19 “...the household of Onesiphorus.”
- Onesimus/Onesiphorus came to meet the imprisoned Paul (1st imprisonment) in Rome. 2Timothy 1:16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain
- Having believed the Gospel Paul preached, Paul considered Onesimus “my son”. Philemon 1:10

Paul's epistle to Philemon:



Introduction (cont.):

- Onesimus, saved through hearing Paul, was well regarded by Paul.

Colossians 4:9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you.

- The actions of a runaway servant merited death.
- The change in belief of Onesimus would not have been known by Philemon without Paul informing him of such.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:



Introduction (cont.):

- Onesimus accompanied Tychicus in delivery of Paul's letter to Philemon. Colossians 4:7-9

Colossians 4:7-9 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant* in the Lord:

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

Introduction (cont.):



- Onesimus (the servant) would likely have known of Paul's intent to visit Philemon (the master) in follow-up to the letter.



- Paul's intentions to see Philemon would likely have been an encouragement to (a very likely fretful) Onesimus.

Philemon

One Chapter

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:1-3 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer



Philemon,
the master

Note: This during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer

Note: Philemon was a “fellowlabourer” which indicates the specific category of “fellow”. Philemon may have assisted Paul in some material way being a wealthy man.

Being such would not have necessitated knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures.

There were other categories to “fellow” with Paul: fellowhelpers, fellowprisoners, fellowservants, fellowworkers.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer

Note: If Philemon, a “fellowlabourer”, was a “fellow” of Paul’s in a category that did not require knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, he is then the one named Gentile of the nations in Paul’s epistles.

The placement of the Pauline epistle to Philemon in the order of the Cannon is consistent with the order of salvation.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:1-2 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house

Note: Archippus was a “fellowsoldier”, just like Timothy: fellowsoldiers were those that knew the Scriptures.

Note: Apphia: perhaps wife to Philemon. (??)
Archippus: perhaps their son. (??)

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:1-2 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house

Note: Philemon's house was of such size that it could accommodate a "church" gathering. Philemon was also of sufficient wealth and property that he had servants.



Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:1-3 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: Paul's greetings state only "grace" and "peace", and do not include a greeting of "mercy".

Reason: *Philemon, likely a Gentile of the nations, would not have been under Law, therefore not in need of "mercy".*

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:1-3 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: Timothy and Titus were in need of “mercy” being of Hebrew lineage.

Paul's greeting to them was:

“grace, mercy and peace”

Paul's epistle to Philemon:



Philemon,
the master

¶Philemon 1:4-7 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers



Philemon,
the master

Note: Example of prayer: “making mention of thee”
Simple!

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:4-5 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints

Note: Paul recounts the “love” and “faith” Philemon has “toward all the saints”.

This would be an odd statement if Philemon were himself a “saint”.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4-6 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4-6 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4-6 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4-7 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Cheering, comforting

OED

The seat of tender and sympathetic emotions: the heart

OED

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:4-7 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Note: Philemon had love “toward all saints”, and in return “the saints” were refreshed by Philemon's “love” for them: a brother in the faith.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:8-9 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, 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.



Philemon,
the master ...

... likely a Gentile of the nations

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

To impose: obligation
To prescribe authoritatively
OED

Favourable to one's comfort
OED

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:8-9 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee*



To supplicate, entreat (a person)
Earnest request
OED

Note: Had Philemon been a Hebrew and Uncircumcised, Paul could have reasonably engaged the authority of his apostleship ...
... but his request is “for love’s sake”.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:8-9 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, 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.

Note: Paul makes request of Philemon, not by the authority of his apostleship, but in recognition of his age...

...and as “a prisoner of Christ”.

Paul had likely then reached his mid-60's and considered himself “aged”.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:



¶Philemon 1:10-14 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

→ Philemon

¶ Philemon 1:10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds

Note: Onesimus had come to faith while Paul was in prison: "in my bonds".



Onesimus

Onesimus was "begotten" (procreated OED), a son "born" in the faith to Paul like Timothy:

1Timothy 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith...

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:10-11 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me

Note: Paul's play on words:
Onesimus = profitable



Onesimus

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:10-11 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me

Philemon: Gentile
of the nations

Paul: an Hebrew of
the Hebrews

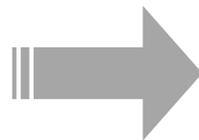
Note: In “time past” the Uncircumcised was “unprofitable”, “but now profitable” to the Gentiles of the nations and the Hebrews.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:10-12 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me

Note: Paul speaks of his heart's desire for Onesimus.

Onesimus,
the servant



Philemon,
the master

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:10-13 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel

Note: Paul informs Philemon that instead of him, Onesimus could have filled the role of ministering to Paul's needs.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:10-14 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Note: Paul would not retain Onesimus without Philemon's willing agreement.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:15-16 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever

Note: These words are an illustration of the Body over which Christ is head:
being received into the heavenly places:

for ever.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:15-16 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Note: This is a picture of our future in the heavenly places ... the Uncircumcised Called Saints will no longer be servants in the heavenly places ...

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:15-16 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Note: The Called Saints (Uncircumcised Hebrew servants) will be “beloved” by Paul and us (“thee” - partakers of the benefit) ...
... when we shall meet all in the heavenly places which laboured for our benefit.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:17-20 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account; 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.

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.



Onesimus,
the servant



Philemon,
the master

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:17-18 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:17-19 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand, I will repay *it*

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:17-19 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account; 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.

Note: Without further explanation, Paul reminds Philemon of his indebtedness unto him.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:17-20 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account; 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.

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.



Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:21-22 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Note: Paul expresses his “confidence” that Philemon will respond well to his request concerning Onesimus.



Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:21-22 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Note: Here the expectation of Paul that he will be released from his imprisonment and able to visit Philemon.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:21-22 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Note: Paul requests prayer for his release...this is more than a “spiritual” request.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:23-25 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.
Amen.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶ Philemon 1:23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus

Note: Epaphras/Epaphroditus was referred to by Paul:

- “my brother” Philippians 2:25
- “companion in labour” Philippians 2:25
- “fellowsoldier” Philippians 2:25
- “your messenger” Philippians 2:25
- “he that ministered to my wants” Philippians 2:25
- “dear fellowservant” Colossians 1:7
- “faithful minister of Christ” Colossians 1:7
- “a servant of Christ” Colossians 4:7

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:23-24 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

Note:

- Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas. Colossians 4:10
- Aristarchus: a fellowprisoner of Paul. Col 4:10
- Demas: at the time a "fellowlabourer" of Paul though shortly later had "forsaken (*Paul*), having loved this present world". 2Timothy 4:10
- Lucas: "fellowlabourer" of Paul

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:23-25 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.

Note: Addressing Philemon, no mention of “mercy” which is consistent with the thought that Philemon was indeed, a Gentile of the nations... ..and a fitting inclusion being Paul's final epistle in the order of the cannon:

1. The Uncircumcised Hebrews first, and
2. The Gentiles of the nations then last.

Paul's epistle to Philemon:

¶Philemon 1:23-25 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.

Amen.