

The Epistle of Paul to Philemon

AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul with Timothy. (vs. 1).

DATE: About 62 AD (shortly after the final events described in Acts 28).

LOCATION: Rome (during Paul's imprisonment - vs. 1,9, 10 & 13).

OUTLINE

- I. Greeting And Introduction.** (vs. 1-3).
- II. Praise For Philemon's Love And Faith.** (vs. 4-7).
- III. The Plea For Onesimus.** (vs. 8-16).
- IV. Philemon's Obedience Encouraged.** (vs. 17-22).
- V. Farewell.** (vs. 23-25).



This, the shortest of Paul's preserved epistles is a very personal letter of appeal to a Christian by the name of Philemon. Philemon appears to have been converted by Paul (vs. 19) possibly during his stay in Ephesus, described in Acts chapter nineteen. Philemon was a prominent Christian in the church in Colosse in whose home the church appears to have met (vs. 1,2). The epistle is an appeal on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's former slave, (vs. 11,12 & 16) who had been converted by Paul during his imprisonment (vs. 10 & 16). In this letter Paul appeals to Philemon to receive him back and sends Onesimus back to Philemon to set things right (vs. 12-16).

Because of the reference to Onesimus in Colossians 4:7-9, some scholars believe that the epistle to Philemon was sent along with the epistle to the Colossians by Tychicus. If this is the case it is interesting to note the instructions offered in Colossians 3:22-25 & 4:1 concerning the proper conduct of servants and masters. The name Onesimus itself means "profitable". Paul seems to use this as a play on words in Philemon verse eleven referring to Onesimus being "unprofitable" and then "profitable" again. It has also been suggested by scholars that Apphia (referred to as a "sister" in the Greek text) and Archippus may have been Philemon's wife and son (vs. 2). Whatever the case may be Archippus had some special work among the Colossian brethren (see Colossians 4:17). Finally at the end of Paul's epistle to Philemon he mentions many of the same companions and fellow-prisoners he lists in the letter to the Colossians. Among them is Epaphras (vs. 23) a Colossian (Colossians 4:12), who had been active in teaching the brethren in Colosse (Colossians 1:7).