

PHILEMON

Introduction

Author. Paul wrote this letter at the same time as the letter to Colossae and sent it with the same messengers, Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:9). Both letters were most likely written from Rome as Paul anticipated deliverance from his sentence (vs. 22).

Date. A date of between 60 and 62 A. D. while Paul was imprisoned in Rome the first time is likely. This letter and the one addressed to Colossae were probably written early in the imprisonment while Paul still had faith in the Roman system of jurisprudence and expected his vindication.

Occasion. Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon was led to the Lord by Paul. After his salvation, Paul felt it necessary to reestablish the relationship between slave and master, this time upon a stronger foundation. Paul appeals then to Onesimus to forgive and accept his former slave back into his service.

Message Statement. *A basis of Christian forgiveness is love.*

Argument

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| 1A | GREETINGS | 1-3 |
| | Paul identifies himself with Timothy at the opening of the letter although later, because of the personal nature of the letter he uses the first person personal pronoun, I. Apphia is most likely the wife of Philemon. | |
| 1B | THE BASIS OF THE PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS | 4-7 |
| | In this section Paul begins to lay the foundation for his appeal to Philemon. He twice mentions the love of Philemon which in the past has been expressed toward all the saints and also to Paul. Paul also prays for Philemon that he will be active in sharing his faith because of the full understanding of the faith which this activity will bring. | |
| 1C | THE PLEA FOR ONESIMUS' FORGIVENESS | 8-22 |
| | After laying the foundation for Onesimus' forgiveness by Philemon, Paul plainly states that the basis upon which he is asking for Onesimus' pardon is love, "yet I appeal to you on the basis of love" (vs. 9a). Paul goes on to further explain the situation and to petition Philemon also upon the basis of his debt to Paul himself. This logic, however seems to be subsidiary to his first basis of appeal. | |
| 1D | FINAL REQUEST FOR PAUL AND BENEDICTION | 23-25 |
| | Confident of his release, Paul requests that Philemon prepare a guest room for him. Paul's list of fellow workers here matches that found in Colossians 4. | |

