

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

Author & Audience:

the Apostle Paul, writing to Philemon

Date:

60-62 C.E.

Purpose:

Classified among the Prison Epistles, Paul's letter to Philemon concerns how he encountered the runaway slave Onesimus, who has subsequently come to salvation. Paul was required to see Onesimus return to his owner Philemon, but urges that he be approached as a new brother in the Lord, something to doubtlessly alter their master-slave relationship.

Salutation

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Messiah Yeshua, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker,

² and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the assembly in your house:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴ I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers,

⁵ hearing of your love, and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Yeshua, and toward all the holy ones;

⁶ and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Messiah.

⁷ For I had much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the holy ones have been refreshed through you, brother.

Paul Pleads for Onesimus

⁸ Therefore, though I have much confidence in Messiah to order you to do that which is proper,

⁹ yet for love's sake I rather appeal—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Messiah Yeshua—

¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my chains, Onesimus,

¹¹ who once was useless to you, but now is useful to you and to me,^a

¹² whom I have sent back to you in person, that is, my very heart,

¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the good news;

¹⁴ but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, of compulsion, but of free will.

¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason parted from you for a season, that you would have him forever,

¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me,

^a The Greek of v. 11 reads with a discernible wordplay: *Ton pote soi achrēston nuni de [kai] soi kai emoi euchrēston*. The ASV rendered this as, "who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me." Here, the renderings "useless" and "useful," follow more contemporary translations of *achrēstos* and *euchrēstos*, respectively, seen in versions such as the RSV, NASU, NIV, NRSV, and ESV.

This is directly connected to the meaning of the proper name *Onēsimo*, "useful, profitable, beneficial" (LS, 559).

but how much rather to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ If then you count me a partner, receive him as *you would* me.

¹⁸ But if he has wronged you at all, or owes *you* anything, charge that to my account;

¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand, I will repay it (not that I say to you that you even owe to me your own self also).

²⁰ Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Messiah.

²¹ Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even beyond what I say.

²² And at the same time also prepare a lodging for me; for I hope that through your prayers I will be granted to you.

Final Greetings

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Messiah Yeshua, greets you,

²⁴ *and so do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with your spirit. Amen.