

## The Epistle to Philemon

Intro: perhaps the only authentic personal letter of Paul  
335 words

Philemon was a wealthy leader of the Church in Collosae, perhaps a bishop

Dates from 57-62 AD, probably sent from Ephesus

Situ: 0. a slave has escaped his master, met with Paul, converts. But Paul knows Philemon

Recalls Paul's job: founding churches and ordaining priests, he had been in Colossus

Issues: the Romans and human Slavery

# Issue 1: Christians and slavery: brothers or owners?

Neither, compassion and mercy are the order of the day

#Issue # Roman slavery

Every nation has and has today its slaves (USA has two mil. In forced Prison labor.) Globally 50 million, a quarter of the children

In US 17,500 foreign nationals, 400,000 US citizens (80% female or child)

globally largest slaver states are Russia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Egypt, Myanmar, Iran, Turkey, and Sudan

Issue # 2: Roman Slavery: 10-20 % of pop were enslaved

Servus, (doulos) reserved vs chattel. Not based on race

Role of professional slavers

Legal status: who, rights, manumission, freedmen

Teachers, laborers, sexual partners, hard labor (eg salt mines)

Issue# 3: Christians and slavery: Philemon is the first to assert obligations of compassion. Only with conversion of Empire is it banned, along with gladiators and crucifixion. Gregory of Nyssa called for complete emancipation. The rich could have 4-500, more commonly two or three.

Issue #3 House churches and Roman Society

vv. 1-6 A not atypical opening of a Pauline letter

Second word "prisoner" is the central theme

Slave and free men is the central theme

Roman Greeting, using from/to

v. 2 Archippus: some argued that he is 0. actual master and Phil should entreat him for 0

Paul almost always names a fellow worker who is with him

Timothy: we note the Pastoral Epistles

"The church in your house" where else could a large group meet?

v.3 Grace to you: Standard Roman Formulary "Salve"

vv 4-6 Thanksgiving: some good old buttering up

I am praying for you

I hear of the faith and love

Partnership become effective

v.7 "parakelon" to call, to urge as in "the paraclete"

"encouragement" splankna, gut wrenching

7: "refreshed" lit: anointed (Christus)

v. 8 "full right" presumably apostolic authority; lit "parresa" or right to speak frankly (as in Athens)

"prisoner" lit in bonds"

v. 9 "an old man" presbyter: can mean "ambassador" elder as in senior, or perhaps a priest

v. 10 "urge: parakelon,

"whose father I have become" lit became my child (teknon)

v. 11 "Useful" the name Onesimus" leans useful

v. 12 "my own heart" lit: bowels

v. 13 "serve me" lit daikon, as in "deacon"

v. 14: I am not forcing: I am not treating you like a servant or a slave

v. 19; you owe me yourself: Paul converted him and put him in charge

v. 21 the bottom line; fix this and I am checking up on it

v. 20 may I profit from you: this is what slavery is for

relationship to Colossians

same group: 4:9 Onesimus

4: 15 Laodiceans

Textually: Manuscripts of Paul always tied to Colossians

Onesimus: name of a later bishop of Ephesus, martyred in Rome

Regarded as a Christian saint

Is he the editor of the NT?