

Philemon

1. What is the setting?
2. Are associated events described elsewhere?
3. Other than Paul and Timothy, are any of the characters (Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, or Onesimus) mentioned elsewhere?
4. What was the major point of the letter to the original recipient?
5. What can the modern Christian reader learn from this letter?

Philemon

- 1. What is the setting?** The setting is Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (AD 62). (This is mentioned in Acts 28:16 -- looks like Paul had limited freedom in this imprisonment -- house arrest). Somehow Onesimus, who had been a slave of Philemon, was connected with Paul. It appears that Onesimus was a runaway slave of sorts -- vs 12-16. Paul had taught Philemon in the past -- vs. 19, and had now taught Onesimus and converted him to Christianity -- vs 10. (You cannot stop the spread of the word). Paul sent this letter to Philemon to accompany the return of Onesimus.
- 2. Are associated events described elsewhere?** The particulars of Philemon and Onesimus aren't spoken of anywhere else in the Scriptures. There is an interesting tie-in found in Deuteronomy 23:15-16.
- 3. Other than Paul and Timothy, are any of the characters (Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, or Onesimus) mentioned elsewhere?** There is no other mention of either Apphia or Philemon in the New Testament. Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17 -- he is encouraged to fulfill his ministry. Epaphras -- Colossians 1:7, 4:12 -- originally a member of the congregation of Colossae. Mark -- spoken of in Acts 12 (praying for Peter at the house of John Mark's mother), was Barnabas' cousin (Col 4:10), accompanied Paul and Barnabas on first missionary journey, but deserted them along the way -- Acts 13:13, 15:37-40. Mark is also called Peter's son in 1 Peter 5:13. He wrote the gospel of Mark, and there is speculation that he is the young man with a sheet in Mark 14:51-52. Mark is called a fellow worker here in Philemon, and Paul asks Timothy to bring him because he is useful for service according to 2 Timothy 4:11. Aristarchus was a Christian from Thessalonica who was a traveling companion of Paul on his third missionary journey -- Acts 20:4, 27:2. Aristarchus received some heat in Ephesus for Paul's work there getting people to repent of their magic and idolatry -- Acts 19:29. In Colossians 4, Aristarchus is called Paul's fellow prisoner (possibly from events at Ephesus). Demas is mentioned in Colossians 4 also, but looks like he later quit -- 2 Timothy 4:9-10. Luke wrote the gospel of Luke, the book of Acts, and was a traveling companion of Paul in the later part of Acts. Luke is called the beloved physician in Colossians 4:14. Colossians 4:7-9 speaks of Onesimus as a faithful and beloved brother, who obviously was helping Paul at that point in time.
- 4. What was the major point of the letter to the original recipient?** The major point is about forgiveness and recognizing the value of a soul, particularly that of a brother in Christ. No matter what wrongs have been done at a personal level, it pales in comparison to what the Lord has done for us in saving our souls after our sins against Him. It reminds me of the parable Jesus spoke concerning the debtor found in Matthew 18:21-35.

5. What can the modern Christian reader learn from this letter? The Christian of today can learn from the apostle Paul to be willing to stretch out his neck to save a soul -- **vs 10**. We also see that Paul found it more loving to appeal than to order -- **vs 9**. From Onesimus, we find that no matter what you have done in the past, there is redemption and forgiveness in Jesus Christ our Lord -- **vs 10-11**. We can learn from Philemon that to whatever degree we have been wronged, it is nothing compared to the wrongs we committed against God -- **vs. 19**. We should also learn to be appreciative to those who helped bring us to Christ -- we can refresh the hearts of our teachers by our growth in Christ -- **vs 20**. We can learn from the situation that there is no greater joy than to have fellowship restored with God and with our brethren -- **vs 11, 16**.

6. The saints in Billings -- what jumped out?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)
- g)
- h)

7. Luke's top five list -- what jumped out?

- a) Forgiveness -- vs. 15-16
- b) Teamwork -- vs. 1-2, 23-24
- c) Real relationships -- vs. 17, 19, 21
- d) Bear one another's burdens -- vs. 18
- e) Positive impact on others -- vs. 7, 20