

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO  
PHILEMON

WRITER. The Apostle Paul (1:1).

*Date.* Probably A.D. 64. It is one of the Prison Epistles. See Introductions to Ephesians and Colossians.

*Theme.* Onesimus (“profitable”), a slave of Philemon, a Christian of Colosse, had robbed his master and fled to Rome. There he became a convert through Paul, who sent him back to Philemon with this letter. It is of priceless value as a teaching (1) in practical righteousness; (2) in Christian brotherhood; (3) in Christian courtesy; (4) in the law of love.

The divisions are four: I. Greeting, 1–3. II. The character of Philemon, 4–7. III. Intercession for Onesimus, 8–21. IV. Salutations and conclusion, 22–25.

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother, to Philemon the beloved and our fellow-workman, <sup>2</sup> and to the sister Apphia and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the assembly which *is* in thine house. <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God, always making mention of thee at my prayers, <sup>5</sup> hearing of thy love and the faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all the saints, <sup>6</sup> in such sort that thy participation in the faith should become operative in the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in us towards Christ *Jesus*. <sup>7</sup> For we have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

<sup>8</sup> Wherefore having much boldness in Christ to enjoin thee what is fitting, <sup>9</sup> for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also prisoner of Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> I exhort thee for my child, whom I have begotten in *my* bonds, Onesimus, <sup>11</sup> once unserviceable to thee, but now serviceable to thee and to me: <sup>12</sup> whom I have sent back to thee: *but do thou receive* him, that is, my bowels: <sup>13</sup> whom I was desirous of keeping with myself, that for thee he might minister to me in the bonds of the glad tidings; <sup>14</sup> but I have wished to do nothing without thy mind, that thy good might not be as of necessity but of willingness: <sup>15</sup> for perhaps for this reason he has been separated *from thee* for a time, that thou mightest possess him fully for ever; <sup>16</sup> not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother, specially to me, and how much rather to thee, both in *the* flesh and in *the* Lord? <sup>17</sup> If therefore thou holdest me to be a partner *with thee*, receive him as me; <sup>18</sup> but if he have wronged thee anything or owe anything *to thee*, put this to my account. <sup>19</sup> I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand; I will repay *it*: that I say not to thee that thou owest even thine own self also to me. <sup>20</sup> Yea, brother, I would have profit of thee in *the* Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Being confident of thine obedience, I have written to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup> But withal prepare me also a lodging; for I hope that I shall be granted to you through your prayers. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras salutes thee, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; <sup>24</sup> Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workmen. <sup>25</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.

**1:18** Verses 17, 18 perfectly illustrate imputation: "Receive him as myself"—reckon to him my merit; "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account"—reckon to me his demerit. See "Imputation," Lev. 25:50; Jas. 2:23. *note*.