

A LOOK AT THE BOOK PHILEMON

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Author and Date

Philemon claims to have been written by Paul.

Significant proof for rejecting Paul's authorship has never been presented, except as it is identified with Colossians.

Although tradition does not argue strongly in its favor, that is more due to the book's brevity and failure to attract attention, than to serious objections.

It is best to accept it at face value.

The date assigned to Philemon is parallel to that of the other prison epistles: about A.D. 60.

Historical Background

Philemon was a convert of Paul's in Colosse.

He was a leader in the church which met in his home.

Onesimus was a slave who had run away, taking some of Philemon's possessions.

He ran to Rome which provided a natural place to disappear.

In Rome, Onesimus crossed paths with Paul, listened to the gospel, and trusted in Christ.

He became a useful helper to Paul.

Paul, however, felt that to keep him would not be fair to Philemon.

Therefore, when he had the opportunity to send a letter to the church, he sent Onesimus, along with the letter to Philemon, explaining what had happened.

Purpose and Theme

The letter was written to convince Philemon that he should forgive Onesimus and receive him back as a brother in Christ.

The message was a reminder of the change God had made in his own life and the debt which he owed Paul.

The purpose and message of the letter extend beyond the immediate context to demonstrate how all Christians should be willing to forgive one another when we are offended, because of what Christ has done for us.

WHAT LESSONS DOES PHILEMON TEACH US FOR OUR LIVES TODAY?

PHILEMON

True love generates genuine forgiveness and changes social relationships.

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