

FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE

Epistle to Philemon

An Exposition by

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OUTLINE OF PHILEMON

- I. INTRODUCTORY SALUTATION (1-3)
 - Identity of the Writers (1a)
 - Identity of the Recipients (1b-2)
 - Pronouncement of Blessing (3)
- II. THE COMMENDATION OF PHILEMON (4)
- III. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER (8-20)
 - The Appeal of Paul for Onesimos (8-16)
 - Paul acts as Onesimos' advocate (8-11)
 - Paul seeks Philemon's understanding (12-16)
 - The Pledge of Paul to Philemon (17-20)
- IV. THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL (21-22)
 - Paul's confidence in Philemon's Loyalty (21)
 - Paul's Confidence of an Early Release (22)
- V. FINAL REMARKS (23-25)
 - Salutations from Paul's fellow workers (23-24)
 - Benediction of Paul (25)

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

The Epistle to the Philemon reveals the dynamics of the heart of an apostle par excellence. Lightfoot says, "As an expression of simple dignity, or refined courtesy, of large sympathy, and of warm personal affection, the Epistle to Philemon stands unrivalled."¹ Luther, the great Reformer, remarked,

This Epistle gives us a masterly and tender illustration of Christian love; for here we see how St. Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and advocates his cause with the master all that he can, and acts no differently than if he were himself Onesimus, who had done wrong. And yet he does this, not with force or compulsion, as was his right, but he lays aside his rights and thus compels Philemon, also, to waive his rights. What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does for Onesimus with Philemon. . . . For we are all his Onesimi, if we believe.²

Alexander Maclaren, similarly impressed, wrote,

That must have been a great intellect, and closely conversant with the Fountain of all light and beauty, which could shape the profound and far-reaching teachings of the Epistle to the Colossians, and pass from them to the graceful simplicity and sweet kindness of this exquisite letter.³

It would be great injustice if in the study of this great epistle, one approaches it only exegetically but not devotionally.

Authenticity

The genuineness of the Epistle to Philemon is generally accepted (cf Phlm 10-12, and Col 4:7-9). There were only 2 periods in ecclesiastical history when the authenticity of Philemon was doubted: (1) in the fourth century when it was contended that the Letter was not Pauline because it contained no doctrinal teaching. The charge was successfully reprovved by Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopseustia.⁴ And (2) in the nineteenth century which saw a few radical critics like F.C. Baur and the Tubingen School challenging the reliability of the letter because an acknowledgement of the Pauline authorship of Philemon would give strong support to the authenticity of Colossians.⁵ Zahn's criticism of the destructive presuppositions of these critics is noteworthy: "The fact that this letter has been declared spurious notwithstanding its wealth of original material, and in spite of the lack of all support from tradition and the impossibility of discovering any sufficient motive for its forgery, deserves only to be mentioned."⁶ Peake (who is not a conservative) himself admits, "It is now amply recognized on all hands."⁷

Occasion

Paul wrote this personal letter to Philemon because of Onesimus who was a runaway slave belonging to the latter. It is quite clear that Onesimus was not a Christian when he fled From his master. He probably ran away because it was found out that he had robbed Philemon of his money (v.18). The best place for

a fugitive to escape detection in the Roman Empire is the capital itself, Rome. While in Rome, he was providentially led to Paul who was at that time in prison. Onesimus may have committed some petty crime while in Rome which resulted in him being imprisoned. Somehow, he met Paul (the point of contact could have been Paul's personal acquaintance with Philemon, Onesimus' master) who preached to him the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul must have realized that it was in the predetermined will of God that Onesimus should be saved. It is therefore not by chance that Onesimus was converted.

The right course of action in Paul's eyes was for Onesimus, upon his release from prison, to return to his master, Philemon. Onesimus must have been fearful of that prospect. Paul, as a loving spiritual father, made intercession for Onesimus. A personal letter from the Apostle Paul was, no doubt, a powerful means of securing Philemon's forgiveness of Onesimus.

Date

Paul wrote this letter at the time when he was in incarcerated. There are, however, 3 views concerning the time and place of his imprisonment: (1) Ephesus (A.D. 54-55), (2) Caesarea (A.D. 57-59), and (3) Rome (A.D. 60-62).

The Ephesus view⁸ seems to find support from 1 Cor 15:32 and 2 Cor 1:8. It is possible to infer from 1 Cor 15:32 that he could have been imprisoned since he fought with the wild beasts. This is, however, better understood as a proverb since a Roman citizen would never be thrown to lions. Also in verse 31, he says that he dies daily. The whole Pauline argument should thus be taken metaphorically. Although 2 Cor 1:8-10 states that Paul was sentenced to die in Asia, there is no record of it in Luke. It is best to see Paul's statement as not referring to a legal death sentence but an intense spiritual struggle or pressure he was experiencing.

The Caesarean view⁹ has difficulties as well. Paul did spend time in prison at Caesarea for 2 years under Felix and Festus. It is very unlikely that Paul wrote his 4 prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) in Caesarea because (1) there is no mention in both internal and external sources that Tychichus was ever in Caesarea at that time. (2) Paul instructed Philemon to anticipate his coming by preparing a guest-room for him (Philm 22). It seems clear from the Acts account that Paul was not expecting an early release since Felix would not release him unless he was bribed (Acts 24:26), and the fact that he (Paul) had appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-11). Furthermore, it is unlikely that Onesimus would have sought refuge in Caesarea. Rome was the best place for a runaway slave to hide since he could easily be 'Lost in the crowd.

The Roman view is the traditional view. We know that both Luke and Aristarchus was in Rome with Paul (Acts 27:2). Both men are mentioned in Philemon. If the Roman view is accepted, then Paul wrote the Epistle in about A.D. 60-62.

Background on Slavery

Generally speaking, Paul lived in 2 worlds: the Jewish world and the Roman world. Each culture had its own peculiar system of slavery. Slavery was permitted under the Mosaic Law. Although God allowed slavery he ensured

that the institution would not be abused. The following are the divine rules of equity: (1) A Jewish slave could not be remanded for more than 6 years (Exod 21:2). (2) If a person is unable to pay his debts he can sell himself into slavery but he is to be released after 50 years of service (Lev 25:39-42). (3) Perpetual slavery is not allowed except it is voluntarily taken upon by the slave himself (Exod 21:5-6, Deut 25:39-42). (4) Slaves who have been physically injured by their masters were to be set free (Exod 21:26-27). (5) The master who murders his slave can expect to receive capital Punishment. (6) If a Jew was married before he became a slave, his family would be released with him when his term expires. However, if a wife was given to him by his master, he could go free, but his wife and children remained the property of the owner (Exod 21:4). (7) The slave was considered to be part of the master's household and shares with the religious life including the Sabbath rest (Exod 20:10, 23:12). (8) Hebrew slaves had the right to accumulate possessions (Lev 25:47-55). (9) The master is to provide a slave with goods when he is released in the Sabbath year (Deut 15:13-15).¹⁰

The Roman system of slavery was harsh. There were different kinds of slaves in the Roman empire; manual labourers, household servants, architects, sculptors, painters, poets, musicians, librarians, and even doctors. The following characterized the portion of slaves under the Roman system: (1) A slave in the eye of the Roman law was no worse than a piece of furniture, hence, no better than an animal. (2) His person and life was absolutely in the power of his master. (3) The slave had no right to marry. He was allowed concubinage only if the master so pleased. (4) There was no limit to the kind of punishment the master could inflict on his slave. He might be crucified or thrown to the wild beasts as food. (5) A slave can normally expect to be set free only after 10-20 years of faithful service.¹¹

AN EXEGESIS OF PHILEMON

INTRODUCTORY SALUTATION (1-3)

Identity of the Writer (1a)

Paul, departs from his usual title of "an apostle of Jesus Christ," (1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1), or "a slave of Christ" (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:1) and identifies himself here as "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." The title conveys 2 possible ideas: (1) That he was being imprisoned on account of the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,¹² and (2) metaphorically speaking, he was a prisoner belonging to Christ (i.e., Christ has taken him captive; see Eph. 3:1, 4:1).¹³ The reason why he chooses to call himself a "prisoner" rather than an "apostle" is probably because he desires to entreat rather than command.¹⁴

Paul mentions Timothy not because he is co-writer¹⁵ of the letter but as a matter of courtesy since it is likely that Timothy had met the acquaintance of Philemon during the course of his three years' stay in Ephesus (Acts 19:22). Paul calls him a "brother." This is a term of Christian endearment. It is indicative of a familial relationship binding to all believers on the basis of a spiritual oneness in Christ. Since Timothy was not an apostle, the word "brother" was most suitable.

Identity of the Recipients (1b-2)

The letter was addressed to 3 particular individuals: (1) Philemon, (2) Apphia, and (3) Archippus. Philemon is called "the beloved one" and "our fellow worker." That Philemon was beloved by Paul may reveal some kind of special friendship that has developed between the two. The candidness of the letter seems to indicate this. This special bond could be the result of pastoral assistance Philemon rendered to Paul during his ministry at Ephesus.¹⁶

Apphia is regarded as a "sister" (same implication as "brother" discussed above), and Archippus is called a "fellow soldier." This term is used only one other time of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25. It may be that he in some way or at some point in time had endured persecution together with Paul for the sake the Gospel.¹⁷

Although purely conjectural, it is reasonable to assume that Paul was addressing the household of Philemon. Apphia was his wife and Archippus was his son. They played host to the congregation which met in their house,¹⁸ to which Paul sends greetings as well.

Pronouncement of Blessing (3)

This is the standard Pauline greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:3, 2 Cor 1:2, Gal 1:3, Phil 1:2). The blessing is pronounced upon all the above addressees. The word "grace" refers to the divinely initiated, unconditional, and unmerited favour of God. "Peace" is the result of bestowed grace, which is, reconciliation to God through the blood of cross.

THE COMMENDATION OF PHILEMON (4-7)

Paul's commendation is not a mere epistolary formality. He says that whenever he remembers Philemon, he always gives thanks to God.¹⁹ These are not empty words. Paul had reasons to be thankful for Philemon. He was thankful for "the love and faith which he has to the Lord Jesus and for all the saints" (v.5).²⁰ He must have heard of the good work of Philemon from Epaphras (Col 1:7-8, 4:12).

Since the word *koinonia* is a verbal noun, it can be used in 2 ways: (1) a subjective genitive: "a sharing produced by faith," or (2) an objective genitive: "a sharing received by faith." The first use fits the context better. Paul has uppermost in his mind the forgiveness of Onesimus by Philemon. On account of Onesimus' conversion and repentance, he should exercise his faith by extending the right hand of fellowship to him.

The purpose of Paul's Prayer²¹ for Philemon in verse 6 can be seen in 2 ways:²²

- 1) Paul prays that Philemon's participation in the faith will be made effective because of his full understanding of God's goodness to both of them.
- 2) Paul prays that Philemon will be active in the faith so that he will develop a full understanding of God's goodness to both of them.

The former is preferred since Pauline theology teaches that knowledge precedes good works (Col 1:9-10). The word "knowledge" here has the added idea of experience. Thus, what Paul was trying to convey is that the experiential knowledge of God's goodness should move them to gratitude. In other words, Paul was trying to say that, "since God has so wonderfully dealt with us, should not this be our course of action toward Onesimus?"

The apostolic eulogy is concluded by a personal response on behalf of all who have been ministered by the unselfish hospitality and generosity of Philemon (v.7).

THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER (8-20)

The Appeal of Paul for Onesimus (8-16)

Epistolary formalities aside, Paul now gets to the heart of the matter -- interceding for Onesimus. The body of the letter is found in this section.

a. Paul acts as Onesimus' advocate (8-11)

Paul here intimates that as an apostle of Christ, he has the authority to command that Philemon forgive and restore Onesimus (v.8). However, knowing the character of Philemon, he would rather resort to persuasion. He now takes off his apostolic robe of authority and puts on the humble cloak of an old man²³, and a prisoner of Christ (V.9). In such a delicate matter as this, Paul desires that Philemon act upon his request out of compassion rather than compulsion.

Paul now introduces the subject of his petition, namely, Onesimus, whom he describes as "my own child whom I have begotten in my bonds." (v.10). Paul elucidates the preciousness of Onesimus to him because he was saved through his prison-ministry. He has become Onesimus' spiritual father. What father would not appeal for his son when he is in dire straits? The reason why Paul used persuasion instead of commandment is probably because he wanted Onesimus to experience Christian love not only from him but also from his Christian master. Paul wanted Onesimus to experience the sweetness and sincerity of Christian fellowship. An apostolic injunction would have defeated this purpose. An uneasy relationship between master and slave might have ensued on account of the fact that Philemon had no choice but to give up whatever designs he may have on his renegade slave and Onesimus himself would not be sure of the genuineness of his master's reprieve.

The regeneration that has occurred in the life of Onesimus has transformed him for the good. Onesimus who was previously useless to Philemon, is now useful to both Philemon and Paul (v.11).²⁴ He was useless because he was probably a poor worker and a pilferer but now is useful because he has repented of his ways.

Paul seeks Philemon's understanding (12-16)

Paul spared no effort to ensure Philemon's benevolence on Onesimus. He did not send Onesimus back defenseless, neither did he leave Philemon uninformed. He sends Onesimus back with the following supports: (1) Tychicus who will bear testimony of the events that happened between Paul

and Onesimus (Col 4:7-9), (2) a letter from Paul addressed to the entire Colossian Church wherein love and forgiveness are stressed, and (3) a personal letter to Philemon himself in which Paul bares his heart.²⁵ How could Philemon possibly reject the apostle's concerted effort to win his sympathy, and his heartfelt appeal that he forgive his slave?

Onesimus has proven himself so useful that Paul personally desires his services (v.13).²⁶ He expresses his wish that, (1) Onesimus could minister to his needs while in prison on his master's behalf, (2) Philemon would so permit Onesimus' ministry to him for the time being (v.14), and (3) Philemon would receive commendation for his magnanimity if after having his slave restored to him, he should willingly let him return to Paul.²⁷ It must be noted that though Paul expresses his desire for Onesimus, return, it does not necessary mean that he expects Philemon's immediate response to send Onesimus back. Paul anticipates visiting Philemon in the near future (v.22). The expressed desire of Paul was his way of showing how valuable Onesimus was to him.

Paul might have anticipated some nagging questions in Philemon's mind as to the reasons why Onesimus had run away, Paul answers by saying that all the evil that had happened was in the predetermined will of God. Calvin observed, "If we are angry on account of offences committed by men, our minds ought to be soothed, when we perceive that those things which were done through malice have been turned to a different end by the purpose of God."²⁸ Likewise, Rupprecht argues, "The contrast between "for a time" and "forever" shows Paul's conviction that the hand of God was at work in the whole situation."²⁹

Not only has Onesimus been restored to him as a more responsible and useful slave but qualitatively better than a slave, a beloved brother. He is a dear brother especially to Paul, but more so to Philemon since his relationship to Philemon would now entail not only a physical but also a spiritual dimension (v.16).³⁰

The Pledge of Paul to Philemon (17-20)

On the basis of all the reasons presented above, Paul now urges Philemon to take favourable action. Paul exhorts Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would him (v.17). Paul humbles himself even further here. Rightly belonging to the status of a manager or governor, he now lowers himself to the level of "Partner," or "sharer."³¹ And as a partner, Paul was willing to make good any financial loss Philemon has incurred on account of Onesimus (V.18).³² Paul assures by means of a personal handwritten certification that he will pay every cent owed to Philemon by Onesimus.³³ However, Paul reminds how Philemon himself is indebted to him. Calvin remarks, "By this expression he intended to describe how confidently he believes that he will obtain it; as if he had said, 'There is nothing that thou couldst refuse to give me, even though I should demand thyself.'"³⁴

How then could Philemon repay Paul? The reader may infer from the text (v.20) that Paul may have had in mind the securing of Philemon's consent to release Onesimus so that he may wait on him while he concentrates on his prison-ministry (cf v.13).³⁵ If Philemon would do this, it will surely encourage Paul's heart.

THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL (21-22)

Paul's confidence in Philemon's Loyalty (21)

Paul is sure that Philemon will heed the contents of his letter. Paul intimates that Philemon is a man after his own heart. Thus, not only will Philemon respond positively to the letter but will do more than is required of him.

Paul's Confidence of an Early Release

Paul believed in the effectiveness of the prayers of the saints. If it was the Lord's will, he expects to be released soon. Hence, he expresses his eagerness to visit him in the near future. Advocates of an Ephesian, or Caesarean imprisonment have used this as proof of their position since Paul had intended to go to Spain from Rome. However, it is quite possible that he could have put on hold his initial plans owing to unforeseen circumstances. He would have found it necessary to make a brief personal visit to strengthen some of the young churches he founded in Asia before he sets out for Spain. In his letter to the Philippians he did express his desire to visit the Church there soon (Phil 2:24).

FINAL REMARKS (23-25)

Salutations from Paul's Fellow-workers (23-24)

The five people who were with Paul at the time of writing are also mentioned in Colossians 4:10-14. It is clear from Colossians that it was a mixed company: Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus (not mentioned here) were Jewish while Epaphras, Luke and Demas were gentiles. It is evident that these specific ones mentioned are personally known to Philemon. Paul gives Epaphras the prominent mention here because he is the founder and leader of the Phrygian churches (Col 4:10-14).

Benediction of Paul (25)

The customary Pauline benediction (Phil 4:23 cf Gal 6:18, 1 Cor 16:23, 1 Thes 5:28, 2 Thes 3:18, and 2 Tim 4:22) here is pronounced upon Philemon's household and the Church which meets in his home (v.1-2).

SUMMARY

The epistle is generally divided into 5 paragraphs: (1) The Introductory Salutation (1-3), (2) The Commendation of Philemon (4-7), (3) The Purpose of the Letter (8-16), (4) The Confidence of Paul (21-22), and (5) The Final Remarks (23-25).

In the salutation of the letter, the writer identifies himself as Paul. Departing from the usual title of "apostle," he calls himself a "prisoner," not only because he was in fact a prisoner at that time in Rome but also because he wanted the tone of the letter to be one of entreaty rather than command. Paul writes to a family well-known to him, namely, Philemon's who was the head of the house and to the church which meets at his home.

Paul praises Philemon for his loving and faithful ministry to the Lord and for all the saints. Paul meant every word he said and hoped that this manifestation of Christian grace on the part of Philemon would extend to Onesimus.

The purpose of the epistle forms the bulk of the content. Paul intercedes for Onesimus and carefully persuades Philemon to forgive willingly his runaway slave. For Onesimus has received salvation and repented of his sins. He would be an asset in Philemon's household.

Paul expresses his confidence in the positive response the letter would have on Philemon at the final part of the letter. The apostle anticipates an early release and hopes to see Philemon soon.

¹ Joseph B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), 317.

² Cited by D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament; The Pauline Epistles, Vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 246.

³ Alexander Maclaren, The Epistles of St. Paul to the Colossians and Philemon, 3d ed., The Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 246.

⁴ Lightfoot, Philemon, 314-5.

⁵ ISBE, s.v. "Philemon, Epistle to," by C. J. Hemer, 3:831.

⁶ Theodor Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament, 3 volumes, (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, reprint 1977), 455.

⁷ Arthur S. Peake, A Critical Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 47.

⁸ See George S. Duncan, St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1929).

⁹ See Bo Reicke, "Caesarea, Rome and the Captivity Epistles," Apostolic History and the Gospel, ed. W. Ward Gasque, and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 277-86.

¹⁰ For an intensive treatment, see ISBE, s.v. "Slavery," by S. S. Bratchy, 4:539-46; ZPEB, s.v. "Slave, Slavery," by A. Rupprecht, 5:453-60.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion, see Marvin R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 162-8; S. Scott Bratchey, "First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21," Society of Biblical Literature, dissertation series, number 11 (Missoula: University of Montana, 1973, 37-126; G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, "Early Attitudes to Property and Slaver," Studies in Church History: Church Society and Politics, ed. Derek Barker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 12:1-38.

¹² C.F.D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1906), 140.

¹³ F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 205.

¹⁴ Lightfoot, Philemon, 333. F. Forrester Church suggested that Paul employed basic methods of persuasion contemporary to his day, in "Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon." Harvard Theological Review 71 (1978): 17-33; see also William Hendriksen, "Scripture on Tactfulness," Exposition of Colossians and Philemon, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 231-2.

¹⁵ Note the singular pronoun from verses 4 through 24 (except v.15).

¹⁶ John Calvin says, "It is probable that this 'Philemon' belonged to the order of pastors; for the title with which he adorns him, when he calls him 'fellow labourer,' is a title which he is not accustomed to bestow on a private individual." Commentaries on The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, n.d.), 348.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 349.

¹⁸ Before the third century, there is no convincing evidence that Christians gathered in special buildings for worship (cf Acts 12:12, 1 Cor 16:19, Rom 16:5, Col 4:15), A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 4 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1931), 465.

¹⁹ *Pantote* should be taken with *eucharisto* rather than *mneian*, see Lightfoot, Philemon, 334.

²⁰ The clauses are inverted, thereby forming a chiasmic structure ("faith" is linked to "Lord" and "love is connected to "saints"). See Lightfoot, Philemon, 334-5. This point, however, should not be pressed too far. Bruce points out that both virtues are expressed to both recipients. The word "faith" can be rendered "loyalty" or "faithfulness." Hence, the external manifestation of love and faithfulness to the saints reveals the internal evidence of Christian graces. See Bruce, Philemon, 208.

²¹ Most commentators agree that *hopos* goes with *mneian sou poioumenos* rather than *hen echein*. See Lightfoot, Philemon, 335; Hendriksen, Philemon, 214; Calvin, Philemon, 350; and Bruce, Philemon, 208-9.

²² Arthur A. Rupprecht, "Philemon," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 11:459.

²³ Lightfoot and C.F.D. Moule appealed to Ephesians 6:20 to argue that *presbutes* here means "ambassador." In light of the immediate context (i.e. Paul not wanting to assert his authority), it is better to construe the word to mean "an old man." Barclay significantly comments, "It is argued that Paul could not really be described as an old man. He certainly was not sixty years old; he was somewhere between that and fifty-five. But on this ground those who object to the translation 'aged' are wrong. The word which Paul uses of himself is *presbutes*, and Hippocrates, the great Greek medical writer, says that a man is *presbutes* from the age of forty-nine to the age of fifty-six. Between these years he is what we might call 'senior;' only after that does he become a *geron*, the Greek for an old man." He further adds, "There are two words which are very like each other; their spelling is only one letter different and their pronunciation exactly the same. They are *presbutes*, 'old,' and 'ambassador.' It is the verb of this word which Paul uses in Ephesians 6:20, when he says, 'I am an ambassador in chains.' But it is far more likely that we should retain the translation 'old,' for in this letter Paul is appealing all the time, not to any office he holds or to any authority he enjoys, but only to love." William Barclay, The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 279-80.

²⁴ This is apparently a paranomasia. Onesimus, whose name is derived from *oninemi*, meaning "the useful one" had been "useless" (*achreston*) but is now "useful" (*euchreston*). Although it is not strictly a pun, it is at least a play of words at the conceptual level.

²⁵ The word *splagchna* ('bowels: heart, liver, and lungs,' the important organs within the body) is used figuratively to refer to the seat of one's emotions. Paul is saying that he is sending a part of himself, his emotions, to Philemon.

²⁶ The word *eboulen* "is used for the sake of courtesy and not to express and an unfulfilled wish." R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 964. C.F.D. Moule calls this a "desiderative imperfect," An Idiom Book of the New Testament (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 9.

²⁷ Calvin, Philemon, 355.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 356. An Old Testament analogy would be the higher hand of God in the life of Joseph (Gen 45:5). The implied agent in the passive of *echoristhe* is God. See Bruce, Philemon, 216.

²⁹ Rupprecht, "Philemon," 461.

³⁰ For an excellent discussion of the weaning of the clause *malista ... poso*, see Hendriksen, Philemon, 220-1.

³¹ The word *koinonos* can sometimes be used to mean a business associate. Read Rupprecht, Philemon, 462.

³² Although the conditional clause presents a hypothetical situation, it is not unreasonable to assume that Onesimus did in fact commit the actual offense. Lenski argues that a simple condition lays stress on the second verb, *opheilei*, Philemon, 968.

³³ Rupprecht suggests that Paul was actually telling Philemon to charge it to (his) bank in heaven. This writer sees the sincere intent of Paul ("Philemon," 462). Paul was a straightforward man and meant every word he said especially when it was an oath like this. On the basis of Acts 24:26, 28:30, Hendriksen supposes that Paul must have had some kind of personal savings. If this was the case, he had the means to reimburse Philemon (Philemon, 17). It is natural to infer from the text that Paul at least penned verses 18-25 himself. Whether the whole letter was written personally by him is difficult to ascertain.

³⁴ Calvin, Philemon, 358. Bruce adds, "of Onesimus he has said *ei de ti ... oopheilei* ('if he owes anything'); to Philemon he says *kai seauton moi prosopheileis* ('you owe me in addition even yourself'). The prefix *pros-* in *prosopheileis* may imply: over and above the debt I have mentioned (owed by Onesimus there is another debt to which I could refer if I had a mind to (*hina me lego*, 'not to mention,' involves the mention of the very thing which needs no mention);" Philemon, 220. Thus, one may infer that Philemon owes Paul more than Onesimus owes Philemon.

³⁵ The deliberate hint by Paul is supported by his use of *Onaimen* which is the optative of *oninemi* A play off Onesimus' name?