

Paul wrote to encourage Titus in his ministry on Crete (1:5) and to give him further instructions for carrying out that ministry (1:6-9; 2:1-10).

Philemon, the shortest of Paul's canonical epistles, was first quoted by Origen (c. AD 225). It was also listed in both the Marcionite and Muratorian canons as Pauline (c. AD 140 and 170 respectively). Its authenticity has never been seriously questioned although some have used its relationship with Colossians and (apparent) relationship through Colossians with Ephesians to deny Paul's authorship. This argument carries little or no weight with scholars.

Philemon is usually connected with Colossians because the same persons send greetings in both letters and Onesimus and Tychicus were the bearers of Colossians (4:9). Paul was in prison (Philemon 1:9f, 13, 23); the usual conclusion is that this was his Roman imprisonment, although some scholars have suggested two reasons for an otherwise unknown Ephesians imprisonment as more likely. Ephesus was much closer to Colossae than Rome--it is more reasonable to suppose, they argue, that Onesimus would have fled to Colossae than all the way to Rome. Paul would also have been much more likely to have visited Colossae from Ephesus than from Rome. On the other hand, Rome would have been a much safer hiding place for a runaway slave and Paul did travel widely in his ministry.

It has been suggested that Philemon was written to Archippus asking that his runaway slave, Onesimus, be freed to help Paul in his ministry. According to this theory, Philemon was the main addressee because Paul did not know Archippus personally. Paul, however, always addressed the main recipient first. Was Paul asking that Onesimus be returned to him? Paul seems to have known the recipient well and to have been instrumental in his conversion. For these and other reasons this theory should be abandoned.

Philemon was probably written by Paul while he was in prison in Rome and sent with Colossians to Philemon, Onesimus's owner. Paul wrote to request that Onesimus be treated as a Christian brother and fellow-worker in the gospel.

Outlines:

- Titus: I. Greeting 1:1-4
- II. The work on Crete 1:5-16
 - A. Establishment of Elders 1:5-9
 - B. Encountering false teachers 1:10-16
- III. Christian behaviour 2:1--3:7
- IV. Exhortations to good works 3:8-11
- V. Conclusion 3:12-15