

1:1-2

Paul, a ^aprisoner Verse 10 gives us both the realism of his current sentence but also the greater reality that since he is in prison for **Christ**, he is therefore the **prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother**, Verse 19 gives the entirety of the words to **Paul** while some of the thoughts were his probably from **Timothy**.

To Philemon our beloved friend This is, then, a personal letter between Paul and this man **Philemon** about a prisoner who ran away, found Paul, and became a believer (verse 10). **and fellow laborer, 2 to ¹the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier**, perhaps this man, considering the table, was the pastor of this **church**.

and to the church in your house: It could be that the Colossian church met in the **house** of Philemon. The table at the end of this short commentary you will see plenty of reason why we see the books delivered at the same time (as well as Ephesians; see under 1:1-2).

1:8-11

10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, Paul apparently led this man to Jesus while he was in prison.

1:12-13

13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. Apparently, Philemon owned this man who found Paul in prison.

1:17-20

If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. “If you are going to do the right thing here, you need to treat this runaway of yours as you would treat me.” Apparently, this would have been difficult for Philemon or else Paul wouldn’t be sending a letter back with this now converted, runaway slave.

Paul could not handle the “slavery issue” as the issue for a prisoner in Rome is not fixing social injustice. Paul is himself a victim of social injustice (religious discrimination), and therefore prioritizes “justice” in the kingdom of God where believer and believer with apparently less-than-ideal statuses affixed by the world (master and slave) are now faced with deciding whether the Gospel (forgiveness, reconciliation, grace and the other tenants found in the death and resurrection of Jesus) affects the way they deal with one another. In other words, Paul was not out to change the Roman world, but was far more impressed with how kingdom people treated one another rather than how well we could change the social ills in an unregenerate world.

Deuteronomy 23:15 seems to forbid Paul from constraining Onesimus to return to his master under Jewish custom and Moses’ law, yet we must remember that this is a Greco-Roman economy in which Paul is a prisoner and therefore cannot be subject to the Theocratic, promised-land-centered ideology depicted in this Deuteronomy passage.

^aEph. 3:1

¹NU *our sister Apphia*

1:18-20
But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. Paul says “just punish me.” This is much like Calvary: In verse 17, the Father sees us as He sees the Son while in verse 18 the Father sees the Son as He sees us (and punishes Him suitably).

	Colossians	Philemon
Archippus	Recipient (4:17)	Recipient (1:2)
Epaphras	With Paul (4:12)	With Paul (1:23)
Mark	With Paul (4:10)	With Paul (1:24)
Aristarchus	With Paul (4:10)	With Paul (1:24)
Demas	With Paul (4:14)	With Paul (1:24)
Luke	With Paul (4:14)	With Paul (1:24)
Timothy	With Paul (1:1)	With Paul (1:1)
Onesimus	With Paul (carrier) (4:9)	With Paul (1:10)
Written while in bonds	4:18	1:13
Expectation of release		1:22