

Philemon

Philemon is a personal appeal from an imprisoned Paul asking Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother within the household of faith.



Interpretive reconstruction. The illustration is a literary reconstruction. It depicts only the imprisoned sender as detained and does not claim a shared dispatch with Colossians, a completed return, an earlier route, or Onesimus's legal status.

Date · Confidence: Inferred

c. AD 60–62

Brown's Roman range is AD 61–63; Ephesus and Caesarea have also been proposed, and the letter does not name the prison city.

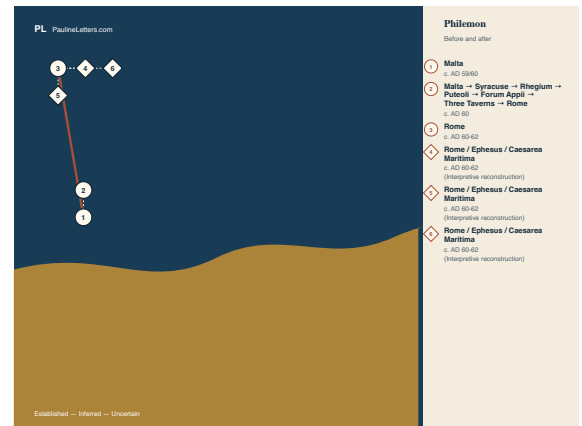
Place · Confidence: Inferred

Rome around AD 60–62 is the traditional prison chronology shown here, often linked with Colossians through their overlapping names and closing network.

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Before and after

- 1 **c. AD 59/60** The storm and shipwreck; all 276 survive; the snakebite; healings on Malta.
Malta · Established
- 2 **c. AD 60** From Malta to Italy and up the Appian Way to Rome; the brothers meet him.
Malta → Syracuse → Rhegium → Puteoli → Forum Appii → Three Taverns → Rome · Established
- 3 **c. AD 60–62** Acts ends with Paul in Rome under house arrest. The prison-letter placements traditionally associated with this period are reconstructions, not claims made by Acts.
Rome · Established
- 4 **c. AD 60–62** Philemon says that Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon. Overlapping names with Colossians suggest a connection but do not establish a shared delivery, completed route, or prison city.
· Inferred
- 5 **c. AD 60–62** Ephesians presents union with Christ and Jew–Gentile unity. Direct Pauline authorship, destination, and prison setting are debated.
· Inferred
- 6 **c. AD 60–62** Philippians presents imprisonment as advancing the gospel and includes the Christ hymn. The prison city is debated.
· Inferred



What the text establishes

Established

Philemon is a personal appeal from an imprisoned Paul asking Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother within the household of faith.

The letter addresses Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church in their house, making its appeal both personal and communal.

Leading reconstruction

Rome around AD 60–62 is the traditional prison chronology shown here, often linked with Colossians through their overlapping names and closing network.

Brown's Roman range is AD 61–63; Ephesus and Caesarea have also been proposed, and the letter does not name the prison city.

Other credible readings

Some scholars propose Ephesus or Caesarea rather than Rome for the imprisonment behind Philemon and its related correspondence.

A ten-minute teaching plan

1. Philemon is a personal appeal from an imprisoned Paul asking Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother within the household of faith.
2. The traditional chronology groups Philemon with Colossians during imprisonment after arrival in Rome and before post-Acts pastoral reconstructions.
3. Rome around AD 60–62 is the traditional prison chronology shown here, often linked with Colossians through their overlapping names and closing network.
4. Some scholars propose Ephesus or Caesarea rather than Rome for the imprisonment behind Philemon and its related correspondence.

Primary texts

Romans through Philemon, World English Bible (public domain).

Acts 7–28, World English Bible (public domain).

Sources

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 21, “Letter to Philemon,” “General Analysis of the Message”
Brown surveys the letter's argument and pastoral occasion.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

Scripture references only; no protected Scripture body is included.

<https://paulineletters.com/explore/philemon>

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