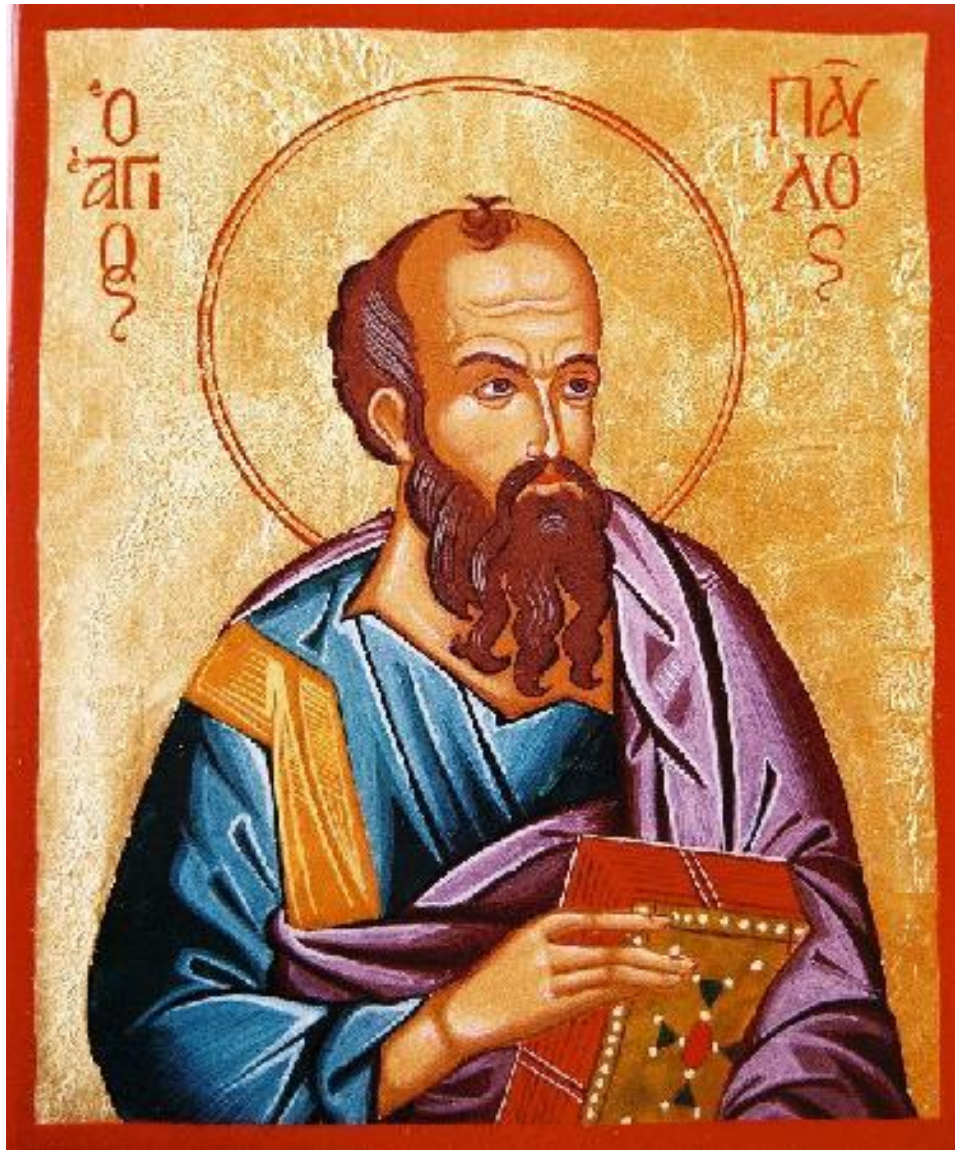


LIVING GODS WILL

The Disciple

PHILEMON



Saint Philemon

The Disciple **PHILEMON**

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Born: Unknown

Died: 68 AD, Colossae, Phrygia

Death: Was stoned to death during Nero's persecution

He was converted to Christianity by the **Apostle Paul**

He had a **church in his home**

His wife was **Apphia**

His son was **Archippus**

Onesimus was his runaway slave

Philemon and his wife, **Apphia**, lived in the city of Colossae in Phrygia.

Upon receiving Baptism from the holy **Apostle Paul**, they converted their house into a place of prayer, where all those who believed in Christ gathered and attended services.

They devoted themselves to the service of the sick and downcast.

Philemon was made **Bishop of Gaza** and preached the Word of God throughout all Phrygia.

The holy **Apostle Paul** continued to be his guide, and addressed to him his Epistle filled with love, and in which he sends blessings "**to Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house**" (**Phil 1:1-3**).

Philemon and **Apphia**, as well as **Archippus** (who also lived at Colossae), all received the crown of martyrdom during the persecution of **Nero (54-68 AD)**.

During a pagan festival, an enraged crowd rushed into the Church during services. All fled in terror, but only **Philemon**, **Archippus** and **Apphia** remained. They were seized and led off to the city prefect.

The crowd beat and stabbed **Archippus** with knives, and he died on the way to the court. **Philemon and Apphia were stoned to death by order of the prefect.**

Philemon was the recipient of a private letter from **Paul** of Tarsus. This letter is known as **Epistle to Philemon** in the New Testament. He is known as a saint by several Christian churches along with his wife **Apphia**.

Philemon was a wealthy Christian and a minister of the house church that met in his home.

In the list of the Seventy Apostles, attributed to **Dorotheus** of Tyre, **Philemon** is described as **bishop of Gaza**.

According to the majority interpretation, **Paul** wrote this letter on behalf of **Onesimus**, a runaway slave who had wronged his owner **Philemon**.

The details of the offence are unstated, although it is often assumed that **Onesimus** had fled after stealing money, as **Paul** states in **verse 18** that if **Onesimus** owes anything, **Philemon** should charge this to **Paul's** account.

Sometime after leaving, **Onesimus** came into contact with **Paul**, although again the details are unclear. He may have been arrested and imprisoned alongside **Paul**.

Alternatively, he may have previously heard **Paul's** name (as his owner was a Christian) and so travelled to him for help. After meeting **Paul**, **Onesimus** became a Christian believer.

An affection grew between them, and **Paul** would have been glad to keep **Onesimus** with him. However, he considered it better to send him back to **Philemon** with an accompanying letter, which aimed to effect reconciliation between them as Christian brothers. The preservation of the letter suggests that **Paul's** request was granted.

The only extant information about **Onesimus** apart from this letter is found in **Paul's** epistle to the **Colossians 4:7–9**, where **Onesimus** is called "**a faithful and beloved brother**"

The letter is addressed to **Philemon**, **Apphia** and **Archippus**, and the church in **Philemon's** house. **Philemon** is described as a "**fellow worker**" of **Paul**.

It is generally assumed that he lived in Colossae; in the letter to the Colossians, **Onesimus** (the slave who fled from **Philemon**) and **Archippus** (whom **Paul** greets in the letter to **Philemon**) are described as members of the church there.

Philemon may have converted to Christianity through **Paul's** ministry, possibly in Ephesus.

Apphia in the salutation is **Philemon's** wife. **Archippus**, described by **Paul** as a "**fellow soldier**", is the son of **Philemon** and **Apphia**.

The three main people in the letter:

Paul:

In **60 AD Paul** is in Rome under house arrest. It appears that he can have visitors.

Rome had reached the extremes of moral corruption and spiritual tranny. It had over 1 million people and no less than 420 temples dedicated to their superstitious idolatry.

Nero was the emperor at this time. **Nero** led one of the most barbaric pogroms of history. He was a sinister man who was given credit for the beheading of **Paul**.

Onesimus:

A slave. Only the citizen class was considered human. Slaves were merely property, taken for granted. They were not allowed personhood or a legal personality.

Over one third of the population in Rome were slaves. Usually punished harshly but not put to death as they were bought and paid for, valuable. Some were even branded with hot irons if they tried to run away.

Anyone harboring a runaway slave would have faced horrible penalties. Death.

Onesimus was converted by **Paul**.

Philemon:

A close friend of **Paul's**. The letter he received was written by **Paul** himself, an unusual thing for him to do, as he had friends who would write down his words for him.

It was written with grace, tact and affection. Straight forward, informal and personal, it suggests a close friendship between the two men.

It's a wonderful example of Christian love as **Paul** pleads **Onesimus'** case, as if **Paul** has done wrong.

In the Christian community there was a growing sentiment to common humanity. Cruelty was condemned. Slavery was becoming meaningless. **Paul** did not pressure owners to free their slaves as slavery was already becoming a thing of the past.

While **Paul** was in Rome, **Philemon** and **Onesimus** were in Turkey. **Onesimus**, who was just a boy/teenager, apparently steals from **Philemon** and is on the run, ending up in Rome.

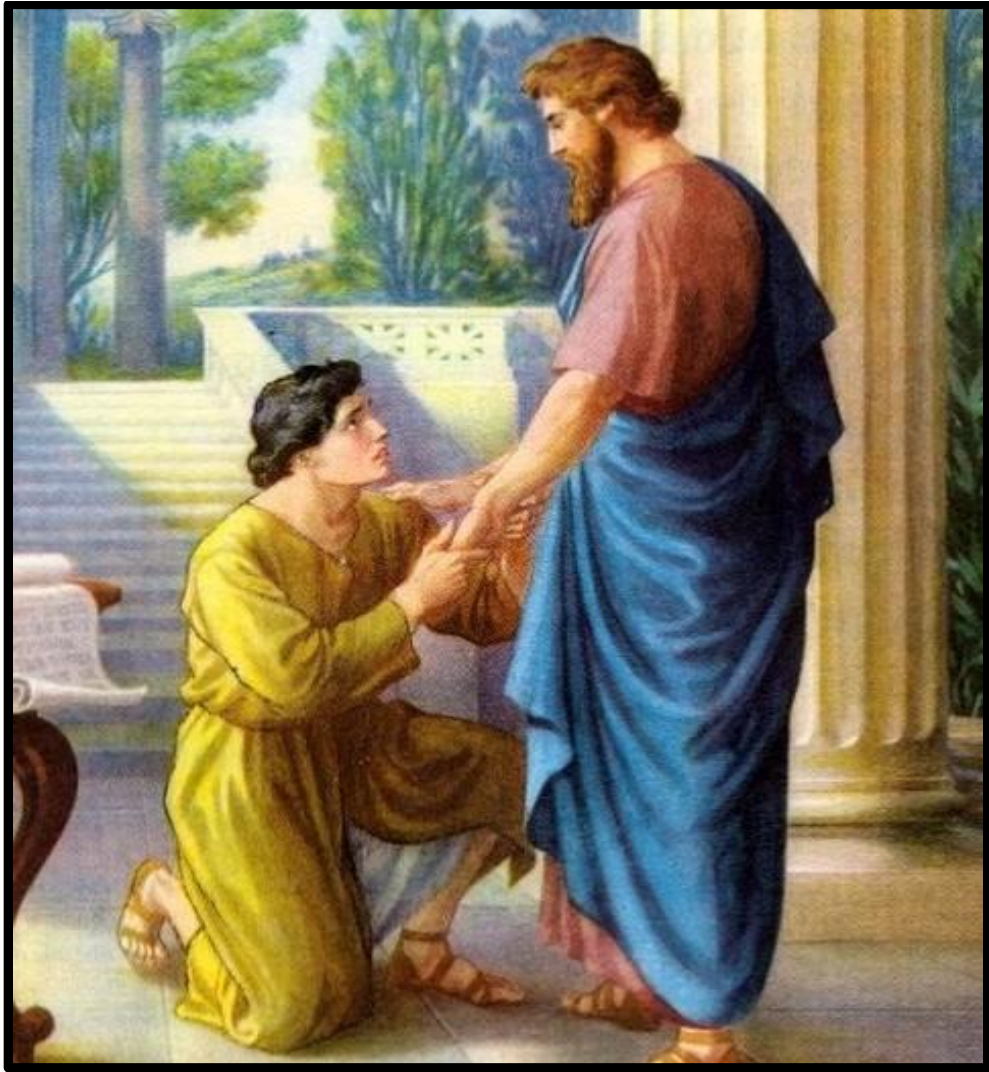
As a slave he had nothing, no donkey to ride, no food or money. Most likely he was on foot; he may have stowed away on a boat to get across the Mediterranean Sea.

Alone, broke and a runaway, he probably would have changed his name. **Onesimus** was a common slave name.

When he reached Rome, he sought out **Paul** looking for help, a runaway slave in the home of a Roman prisoner, under constant guard. Both men could have been executed right then. **God's** hand was evident.

Philemon was presumably a fair man. He was very well to do, a nobleman. He was a convert of **Paul's**.

His home became a church for other Christians. He traveled to other areas starting new home churches. The bible gives no hint that **Philemon** forgave **Onesimus** or sent **Onesimus** back to **Paul**.



PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS