

Paul's Letter to Philemon

The letter to Philemon is nearly 2000 years old and is special because it so beautifully portrays mature Christian attitudes and relationships. It also exemplifies the peace and reconciliation between people that the gospel of Christ brings about.

There are three special ideas that the letter to Philemon exemplifies.

1 Voluntary goodness

Paul could order Philemon to welcome back Onesimus unreservedly, and release him back into Paul's service. Nevertheless Paul leaves it to Philemon's own free will.

2 Accepting providence

Paul saw God working things out for Onesimus and through prayers even for himself. The spirit of self-advancement is common among people of the world. However, it is not the spirit of the mature Christian to advance oneself without considering others. The mature Christian looks for God's providence, and accepts whatever answers God grants.

3 Helping the helpless

Today people fight for their rights, while all around them people are downtrodden and helpless. Paul owed nothing to Onesimus, but he was willing to write a promissory note for an unspecified amount, taking upon himself the debt that Onesimus could not pay.

