

# Forgiveness - A Study in Philemon

FORGIVENESS A STUDY IN PHILEMON by PASTOR T. R. KELLEY

## LESSON 01: THE PARTS OF FORGIVENESS

READ: PROVERBS 19:11

IMPORTANT: Whether the offense is big or small, forgiveness is a process that only God can accomplish in us.

Forgiveness is beyond us it is the work of God in us.

Overlooking a transgression is to look beyond the transgression.

As we forgive, we bring glory to God, for we are never more like God than when we forgive.

### I. THE PRINCIPLE PART OF FORGIVENESS

Throughout the Scriptures we are taught three basic principles of forgiveness:

#### A. PRINCIPLE 1: FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US

READ: MATTHEW 6:12; 18:21

To forgive completely requires one of the most difficult of all adjustments, but Jesus describes it so simply. Just as we need forgiveness, so we must forgive others.

Forgiving others bears witness to the power of God over the worst that life can deal.

#### B. PRINCIPLE 2: FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN

READ: MATTHEW 6:14; LUKE 6:37

We need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven. Let us look into our hearts and see if we can forgive others.  
Thomas Watson

IMPORTANT: All people are on common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. If we don't forgive others, we are in fact denying and rejecting God's forgiveness of us (see Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

#### C. PRINCIPLE 3: DON'T FORGIVE AND YOU WON'T BE FORGIVEN

READ: MATTHEW 6:15; MARK 11:25

There are petitions for the believer to ask from God, but there are also conditions for the answers to be received.

PASTORAL NOTE: If a person becomes bitter and angry over a wrong done, prayer is impossible. God wants us to deal with our horizontal relationships in order to have a clear vertical relationship (see also Matthew 5:23-24).

IMPORTANT: For a person to pray while bearing a grudge is like a tree sprouting leaves and bearing no fruit (Mark 11:13). True faith changes the heart. Real prayer dismantles pride and vengeance, filling the holes with love. Real faith seeks peace. For our churches to have prayer power, there must be harmony and forgiveness evident in the body of believers. Let go of hurts, abandon grudges, and forgive others.

As principle-centered people, we are called upon again and again to forgive. The principles of forgiveness are given priority throughout the scriptures to be placed into practice.

### II. THE PARABLE PART OF FORGIVENESS

Jesus reminds us of the practice of forgiveness through parables. In two parables Jesus points us to forgive like God and not like man. Someone has said, We are never more like God than when we can forgive others.

### **A. FORGIVING LIKE GOD THE PRODIGAL SON**

READ: LUKE 15:18-20

Jesus shows us the heart of the one who is willing to forgive eager, not reluctant he doesnt even wait for the sinner to get home.

Jesus shows us the heart of the Father who forgives eagerly, totally forgive (not just tolerate), and forgive lavishly.

### **B. UNFORGIVING LIKE MAN THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT**

READ: MATTHEW 18:26-30

Man nurses grudges, and God eagerly forgives and restores.

Man keeps score, God totally and lavishly forgives and forgets.

### **III. THE PERSONAL PART OF FORGIVENESS**

Taking the principles and parables we come to the personal part of forgiveness. It is not enough to have some good rules and a nice story or two forgiveness is personal.

#### **A. PHILEMON IN PANORAMA (BRIEF)**

1. Philemon was saved through the ministry of Paul.
2. Philemon was a slave owner, a common practice in Pauls day.
3. Onesimus was a slave of Philemons and he stole from Philemon, running away to Rome (verse 17).
4. Onesimus encounters Paul and is led to salvation (verse 10).
5. Onesimus is sent back to Philemon with letter in hand (verse 12).

#### **B. PHILEMON IN PURPOSE**

Forgiveness seems to be the over-arching purpose for personal application in the book of Philemon, though other purposes can be viewed.

1. Purpose of the Nature of Christian Love Forgiveness is fleshed out by love.
2. Purpose of the Providential Care of God Forgiveness is one of the great acts of Gods care.
3. Purpose of the Principles for Christian Relations Forgiveness reconciles and restores relations.

#### **C. PHILEMON IN PERSONAL**

In the next three lessons, forgiveness is going to be personalized in the way of

1. Character of Forgiveness what is the character of one who forgives.
2. Action of Forgiveness what action is needed to forgive.
3. Motivation of Forgiveness what motivates a person to forgive.

As you can tell, forgiveness is going to be brought to the forefront of our lives with the hopes that we will become more like God and forgive.

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## BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 1-7

Philemon 1-7

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

### I. INTRODUCTION

We live obviously in a society that knows little about forgiveness. We live in a society that cares little about forgiveness. In fact, I would think that one of the major contributors, if not the major contributor to the destructions of relationships in our culture is the absence of forgiveness. John MacArthur

#### A. 3 PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS

1. Principle 1: Forgive those who sin against us.
2. Principle 2: Forgive and be forgiven.
3. Principle 3: Don't forgive and you won't be forgiven.

Last week we were introduced to the book and person of Philemon and the situation he found himself in.

His slave, Onesimus had stolen from him (vs.18) and ran away to the city of Rome.

While there Onesimus came across the apostle Paul was led to salvation in Christ Jesus.

Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter asking him to forgive and receive Onesimus back.

Forgiveness is not a matter of overlooking the wrong that has been done, but rather dealing with it so both parties can move on.

How would you handle this?

Would you forgive or withhold forgiveness based upon the facts and the hurt done to you?

Paul, in house arrest, writes this letter of forgiveness to Philemon.

Paul had already written much about forgiveness in his prison letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

In Christ we have the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

Forgive one another just as God in Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:32).

Made alive in Christ through the forgiveness of trespasses (Colossians 2:13).

Bear with one another and forgive one another (Colossians 3:13).

Take note of the pattern Paul uses.

He reminds us our forgiveness in Christ Jesus and then asks that we forgive.

To understand we have been forgiven and then to seek to forgive speaks of the character of forgiveness.

How you forgive has something to say about your character.

Character is a distinguishing feature or attribute of an individual or group.

Character is best found in the stormy billows of the world. Goethe

Forgiveness and the godly ability to forgive are forged out of the adversity of being insulted and injured from the injustices of this life (see Romans 5:3-5).

Romans 5:3-5 (NKJV) And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

## **II. THE CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS LABORS (1-3)**

Reconciliation may not be easy. Often it requires the help of a mature Christian worker. It always requires love and God's grace. In this short book, you should look for ways to help you solve disputes and break down barriers.

READ: PHILEMON 1-3

Philemon 1-3 (NKJV) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in an ego-centered, selfish society that knows and cares little about forgiveness.

We have become so decadent and non-Christian as to see forgiving people as weak and unforgiving ones as strong.

Our culture celebrates and exalts those TV and movie heroes who take vengeance on others.

Pop psychologists write books extolling the virtues of blame-shifting, unforgiveness, and making those who offend us pay.

The result is a society filled with bitterness, vengeance, anger, hate and hostility.

Retaliatory crimes and lawsuits are rampantly commonplace as people seek vengeance either outside or inside the bounds of the law.

Further, lack of forgiveness is perhaps the leading cause of the breakups in family relationships. For a Christian, unwillingness to forgive is unthinkable.

It is a rebellious, blatant, open act of disobedience to God.

We are to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

Failure to do so will bring at least four unpleasant results

### **A. FOUR RESULTS OF FAILING TO FORGIVE**

1. First, failure to forgive will imprison believers in their past.

- Unforgiveness keeps the pain alive.
- Unforgiveness keeps the sore open; it never allows the wound to heal.
- Dwelling on the wrong done feeds anger and resentment and robs one of the joy of living.
- Forgiveness, on the other hand, opens the prison doors and sets the believer free from the past.

2. Second, unforgiveness produces bitterness.

The longer believers dwell on offenses committed against them, the more bitter they become.

Bitterness is not just a sin; it is an infection.

The writer of Hebrews warns, See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes

trouble, and by it many be defiled (Hebrews 12:15).  
A bitter person's speech is cutting, sarcastic, even slanderous.

Bitterness distorts a person's whole outlook on life, producing violent emotions, intolerance, and thoughts of revenge.

It is especially devastating to the marriage relationship.

Bitterness shuts off the affection and kindness that should exist between the partners.

The root of bitterness and unforgiveness all too often produces the weed of divorce.

Forgiveness, on the other hand, replaces bitterness with love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22-23).

3. Third, unforgiveness gives Satan an open door.

Paul warns believers in Ephesians 4:26-27, Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.

To the Corinthians he wrote, Whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes (II Corinthians 2:10-11).

It is no exaggeration to say that most of the ground Satan gains in our lives is due to unforgiveness.

If love fulfills the law toward others [Romans 13:8], lack of love violates it.

Unforgiveness is lack of love.

Forgiveness bars that avenue of demonic attack.

4. Fourth, unforgiveness hinders fellowship with God.

Our Lord solemnly warned, If you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions (Matthew 6:14-15).

As noted in the introduction, that passage speaks not of the completed, past forgiveness of salvation, but of ongoing relational forgiveness between believers and the Father.

It is a serious matter nonetheless to know that one cannot be right with God if he is unforgiving of others.

Forgiveness restores the believer to the place of maximum blessing from God.

It restores the purity and joy of fellowship with God.

The importance of forgiveness is a constant theme of Scripture.

There are no less than seventy-five different word pictures about forgiveness in the Bible.

They help us grasp the importance, the nature, and the effects of forgiveness.

To forgive is to turn the key, open the cell door, and let the prisoner walk free.

To forgive is to write in large letters across a debt, Nothing owed.

To forgive is to pound the gavel in a courtroom and declare, Not guilty!

To forgive is to shoot an arrow so high and so far that it can never be found again.

To forgive is to bundle up all the garbage and trash and dispose of it, leaving the house clean and fresh.

To forgive is to loose the moorings of a ship and release it to the open sea.

To forgive is to grant a full pardon to a condemned criminal.

To forgive is to relax a stranglehold on a wrestling opponent.

To forgive is to sandblast a wall of graffiti, leaving it looking like new.

To forgive is to smash a clay pot into a thousand pieces so it can never be pieced together again.

Forgiveness is so important that the Lord devoted an entire book of the Bible to it.

In the brief book of Philemon, the spiritual duty to forgive is emphasized, but not in principle, parable, or word picture.

Through a real life situation involving two people dear to him, Paul teaches the importance of forgiving others.

Following the introduction in verses 1-3, Paul describes the spiritual character of one who forgives in verses 4-7.

Such a person has a concern for the Lord, a concern for people, a concern for fellowship, a concern for knowledge, a concern for glory, and a concern to be a blessing.

Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

Paul was not living life on his own he had a Master, Christ Jesus.

His life was not his own, but Christ's.

The first character of forgiveness is it labors to do the work of God.

He reminds Philemon of the laboring character that was visible in him.

Philemon was a co-laborer who was working the same work as Paul.

Their lives were to be entwined with the business of the Father.

Jesus at a young age announced, I must be about my Father's business (Luke 2:49).

Jesus on the cross announced, Father forgive them (Luke 23:34).

A man in conversation with John Wesley once made the comment, I never forgive. Wesley wisely replied, Then, sir, I hope that you never sin.

PASTORAL NOTE: Those who learn to forgive are those who have experienced God's grace and peace. God's grace toward us forgives us and His peace allows us to know we are forgiven.

We who have the character of God born in us need to be laboring in the Father's business of forgiveness.

### III. THE CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS LOVES (4-5)

READ: PHILEMON 4-5

Philemon 4-5 (NKJV) Philemon's Love and Faith I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,

Paul begins the main body of his letter by praising Philemon.

It was not Paul's intent to flatter him.

Rather, the apostle knew that legitimate praise feeds virtue and provides an antidote for sin.

The virtuous character of Philemon becomes the foundation upon which Paul bases his appeal for him to forgive Onesimus.

Paul states his thanks to God for the good and positive things he is hearing about Philemon.

A testimony is not just something we say, but what others have to say about us.

Paul was always able to give thanks to God when he prayed for Philemon; he knew nothing negative about him. The book of Philemon bears that out.

Paul does not correct Philemon, and there is no suggestion that anything was amiss in his life.

Everything Paul heard about Philemon was good.

There is no threatening language that might assume Paul felt forgiving Onesimus would be difficult for Philemon, but rather a spirit that expected he would.

So here, Paul identifies the second character of forgiveness as love.

Philemon was a man who loved God and others by faith.

IMPORTANT: We forgive in the degree we love.

Paul heard testimony of Philemon's faith toward the Lord Philemon had become a living testimony of love and faith.

LOVE (verse 5) (Greek *agape*) Selfless, self-sacrificing love, such as God's love toward us. Love is the characteristic word of Christianity.

Love can be known only from the actions it prompts.

God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9-10.

1 John 4:9-10 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellence in its objects, according to Romans 5:8.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause except that which lies in the nature of God Himself, (Cf. Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (NKJV) The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered.

Love seeks the welfare of all, (Romans 15:2), and works no ill to any, (Romans 13:8-10);

Love seeks opportunity to do good to all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith, Galatians 6:10.

Philemon's love was bi-directional toward God and toward man.

Philemon had a real concern about people; when you do it is easier to forgive.

#### IV. THE CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS SHARES (6)

Philemon 6 (NKJV) That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Literal translation from the Greek text: So that the sharing of your faith may become effective in the acknowledgement of all the good in us for Christ.

(NRSV): I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.

(TEV): My prayer is that our fellowship with you as believers will bring about a deeper understanding of every blessing which we have in our life in union with Christ.

(The Message): And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it.

The Greek word Koinonia is rendered in these verses as sharing or fellowship.

To us, sharing usually means evangelism, and fellowship can mean potluck suppers or small-group meetings.

Neither of these was in Paul's thoughts as he prayed for Philemon.

Koinonia is a difficult word to translate, but it incorporates the true outworking of Christian love in the body of Christ—fellowship that causes individual believers to belong to one another, willingly rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Romans 12:15).

The word focused on Philemon's relationship with other Christians.

Paul prayed that Philemon's faith would show itself in koinonia among the believers, especially those that would meet in his home (v. 1:2).

The faith that Philemon was called to share was both the content of what he believed (doctrine) and the practical demonstration of his devotion to Christ.

The word fellowship also anticipated Paul's coming request on behalf of a new believer who would become part of that group.

Paul prayed that Philemon would be active in this koinonia, this fellowship and sharing.

Paul would later ask Philemon to welcome Onesimus as if he were Paul, and that Philemon should charge any of Onesimus' debts to Paul (vv. 1:17-19).

This is true koinonia, Christians giving to one another and caring for one another because they belong to one another.

**PASTORAL NOTE:** Real faith and love will inevitably result in a concern for fellowship. There is no place in the Body of Christ for an individualism that does not care about others.

That concern for fellowship was also motivation for Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

Failing to do so would lead to a rift in the fellowship since Onesimus was now also a believer.

By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would maintain the harmony, peace, and unity of the Colossian church. The word effective, (effectual in the KJV), in verse 6 translates *energés*, which literally means powerful.

Such an act of forgiveness would send a powerful message to the church about the importance of fellowship, even among slaves and masters (cf. Galatians 3:28).

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Forgiving a fellow believer, no matter what their offense, makes a strong statement of concern for fellowship. So, the third character of forgiveness is its willingness to share.

Philemon had a real faith in the Lord, and he desired fellowship with others.

The Church met in Philemons home.

It would not be uncommon for strangers to come to their services, to which they were received with an open heart and hand.

Paul identified Philemons sincere desire to share and fellowship with others, therefore the message of the Gospel needed to be real at all points toward Onesimus.

It is faith that allows one to share with others the message of the Gospel.

How can we share the message of Christ the forgiveness of sins if we cant forgive?

Philemons willingness to forgive would be based on his knowledge of his own forgiveness.

## V. THE CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS REFRESHES (7)

READ: PHILEMON 7

Philemon 7 (NKJV) For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

The fourth character of forgiveness is refreshment.

Philemon had a reputation for love, a fact that brought Paul much joy and comfort.

Through Philemon, the hearts of the saints had been refreshed.

The word translated, hearts, literally means bowels; and it refers to the seat of the feelings.

People struggling, suffering, and hurting emotionally, had been refreshed by Philemon.

Refreshed is a military term that speaks of an army resting from a march.

Philemon brought troubled people rest and renewal; he was a peacemaker.

Philemon, as far as we know, was not an elder, deacon, or teacher in the church.

Most likely, he was a businessman.

But he was a man of instinctive kindness, a source of blessing to everyone.

That kind of person, Paul knew, could be counted on to forgive

Like iced tea on a hot day or cold water on a long hike, this Christian brother, Philemon, knew how to be refreshing. He was able to revive and restore his brothers and sisters in the faith. His love and generosity had replenished and stimulated them. Philemon also encouraged Paul by his love and loyalty.

Are you a refreshing influence on others, or does your attitude and temperament add to the burden they carry?

Instead of draining others energy and motivation with complaints and problems, replenish their spirits by encouragement, love, and a helpful attitude.

Paul rejoiced in the fact that others, as well as Onesimus, would find rest through Philemon.

Listen to Pastor:

It is much easier to fix blame than to fix problems.

Paul was asking Philemon to offer refreshment rest and ease to Onesimus.  
Forgiveness truly refreshes the body, mind and soul.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Might there be an Onesimus in your life?

One who needs you to exert the character of forgiveness toward them

### A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

1. Character of Laboring in Gods work to forgive and be forgiven.
2. Character of Loving looking beyond the transgression.
3. Character of Sharing offering effective active forgiveness.
4. Character of Refreshing to offer others rest and peace that you have in Christ.

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R.Chandrasekaran

2009/4/25 21:53Profile

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Re:

BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 1-7

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2009/4/25 21:56Profile

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Re:

SERIES: FORGIVENESS A STUDY IN PHILEMON

LESSON 03: THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS

PASTOR T. R. KELLEY

BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 8-18

Philemon 8-18

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:  
14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.  
15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;  
16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?  
17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.  
18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. 3 PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS

In this study of forgiveness we have seen, with scriptural support, the 3 principles of forgiveness ...

1. Forgive those who sin against you.
2. Forgive and be forgiven.
3. If you don't forgive you won't be forgiven.

At first glance these rules can seem cold and hard, because scriptures show that forgiveness is mandated (Philemon 8)

Philemon 1:8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,

The word therefore carries on the thought from verse 7 the love Philemon had shown to the saints ought to be extended to include Onesimus.

Such a request would be bold indeed; in the Roman Empire, a master had the right to kill a disobedient slave.

In any other situation, Onesimus action of running away would have signed his death warrant.

But Onesimus had met Paul, and Paul knew Philemon, so Paul mediated because of their common brotherhood in Christ. But, rather than by commandment, it is by the appeal of love to which the principles are to be applied, (Philemon 9).

Philemon 1:9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you; being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ;

Although Paul certainly had the authority to tell Philemon what to do, he preferred not to use his authority in this particular situation.

He wanted Philemon to make the final decision.

Cold indifference that mechanically works the principle is not what God has in mind when we are called upon to forgive.

Forgiveness is sacred ground for it is Gods most astonishing response to human sin.

In His love for us He sent His son to die for us in order that He might forgive us.

Paul takes the higher ground of love rather than compulsion as he speaks to the Spirit life of love.

Forgiveness cannot be forced it must come by way of love.

Paul reminded Philemon of his status a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Not a prisoner of Rome, who would be most unforgiving, but a prisoner a Jesus Christ the One who had forgiven him.

The reception, restoration, and restitution of forgiveness were made possible through the life action of Jesus Christ.

## II. THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS: RECEPTION

READ: PHILEMON 10-14

Philemon 10-14

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Onesimus name in Greek means useful.

The name was a common name for slaves and is found in many ancient inscriptions.

A nameless slave might receive this name in the hopes that he would live up to it in serving his master.

Paul used a play on words, saying that Onesimus had formerly been useless (achreston) to Philemon but had become very useful (euchreston) both to Paul and, potentially, to Philemon.

Under Philemon's service, Onesimus had failed to live up to his name.

Phrygian slaves were referred to stereotypically as useless and undependable.

Paul was confident, however, that this new man with his new life in Christ would live up to his name if Philemon would take him back.

In Colossians 4:9, Paul called Onesimus a faithful and dear brother (NIV).

Onesimus had become known for his faithfulness.

To receive (verse 12) means to take to oneself open your life take the person back in.

In this instance receive takes on the terms of fellowship.

Paul was asking Philemon to do more than just put up with Onesimus.

Forgiveness is not merely a feeling. It is a disposition of the whole person, a habit of the heart, intentional choices of action in relationship.

- Marjorie Thompson

Paul was asking Philemon to close the gap, heal the wound through forgiveness. Reconciliation was needed.

READ: II CORINTHIANS 5:18-19

II Corinthians 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Forgiveness is a door to peace and happiness. It is a small narrow door, and cannot be entered without stooping.

- Johann C. Arnold

### A. WHY RECEIVE ONESIMUS BACK?

1. He was REPENTANT he was there seeking forgiveness from his master.

2. He was TRANSFORMED he was saved and, therefore, now a brother in Christ.

3. He was USEFUL The name, Onesimus, means useful.

Consider Paul & John Mark Acts 15:37-39, Paul knew the indifference that can separate He and Barnabas went their separate

ways over a young man named John Mark (Acts 15:37-38).

- It was later that Paul was reconciled to John Mark and found him useful in friendship and ministry (II Timothy 4:11).

II Timothy 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

The ability to distinguish between the person and the act is crucial to the integrity of forgiveness. - Marjorie Thompson

I understand that not all who sin against you will be repentant and you cannot force anyone to repent or receive your forgiveness.

In these instances we can either stop forgiving or proceed with the course of forgiveness.

Let us be reminded that Christ went on without us while we were still sinners Christ died for us! (Romans 5:8)

Let us receive those who have sinned against us in the form of forgiveness.

### III. THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS: RESTORATION

READ: PHILEMON 15-17

Philemon 15-17

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

From reconciliation we go onto restoration. To restore means to put back into service. It calls for trust.

Forgiveness is not about putting someone on probation.

Paul is verifying the truth that Onesimus can be trusted that's why Paul says to receive him as you would me.

Paul acknowledged that God was at work behind the scenes in this separation of Onesimus and Philemon.

God carried out his hidden purpose even in the apparent turmoil of human events.

When we face painful separations or difficult times in relationships with loved ones, we must trust in God's loving care and in his wisdom and power over all events.

God may be using the difficulty to bring people to himself, to develop character, and to help us grow.

Can you trust God enough to leave the situation in his hands?

Paul suggests that in all that has transpired, God is at work behind the scene of it all.

Do you believe that?

By that I am not suggesting that God caused Onesimus to steal and run away

But think about the events that take place

After running away to Rome, Onesimus runs into Paul and is led to salvation in Jesus Christ.

In other words, God uses the bad decisions we make and the bad actions we take to bring us to a place where we can be reconciled to Him.

We see the truth of God's providential hand at work.

READ: ROMANS 8:28-29

Romans 8:28-29

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.  
29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Take note that verse 29 of Romans chapter 8 says we are being conformed to the image of Christ.

One of the many images of Christ that is to be in us is the image of forgiveness

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."  
Divine grace is exceedingly precious, offered to us at the price of Gods own incarnate life.

The story of David and Absalom fits so well at this point.

After Absalom had killed his half brother Amnon (for raping his sister), he fled in fear of his father.

Joab, the Commander in Chief of Davids army, was striving for reconciliation between the two and convinced David to receive the young man back.

David did, but there was no restoration.

II Samuel 14:24 And the king said, Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the kings face.

II Samuel 14:28 And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the kings face.

David for two years refused to see his own son!

David was merely tolerating the presence and person of Absalom.

David was widening the gap rather than closing it by not forgiving him and restoring Absalom.

READ: JAMES 2:13

James 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

IMPORTANT: How are we doing in our broken relationships whether they are at home, work or play? Are we forgiving and healing or unforgiving and only tolerating?

READ: GALATIANS 6:1

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Why forgive?

Because God first loved us, (1 John 4:19); and we forgive because God first forgave us.

PASTORAL NOTE: For Philemon to accept Onesimus back, he would have to do so with the understanding that Onesimus had a new status he was a person (that is, not merely a possession), and he was also a brother in the Lord.

Forgiveness calls for reception and restoration.

#### IV. THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS: RESTITUTION

READ: PHILEMON 18

Philemon 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

The third action of forgiveness is restitution. Restitution is the act of making good or compensating for loss.

A loss had been dealt to Philemon and the wrong needed to be made right.

Onesimus had taken what was not his.

Onesimus had forced Philemon to replace his labor.

Philemon had the right to expect repayment that would be justice.

Restitution is essential to forgiveness taking place.

READ: MATTHEW 3:8

Matthew 3:8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

Fruits are a means of repayment or restitution.

Restitution is seen in the life of Jesus.

Jesus giving of His life made Him our restitution our payment against sin.

Jesus is our restitution our being made right with God our righteousness.

Now the story from this point becomes interesting.

Paul understands that Onesimus needs to make restitution for the wrong he has done Philemon that's one reason why Paul sends him back.

Now consider the scene...

Philemon is reading the letter Paul has penned given to him by Tychicus and there stands Onesimus.

The one Paul is seeking forgiveness for.

Paul says if Onesimus owes Philemon anything and he knows he does put it on my bill.

Paul knew Onesimus owed Philemon, and that he also had no way to repay.

Paul is saying, I will be Onesimus restitution

I will pay the price on him.

No doubt, you know where this is headed.

In the wrongs done to us, we have the right to expect repayment, that is justice and God is just. But God is also merciful and gracious toward us, and He proved the price of restitution through Christ.

Paul is suggesting to Philemon, Why don't you graciously and totally forgive Onesimus and wipe the debt clean heal the wound, bridge the gap.

REMEMBER We are never more like God than when we forgive.

John MacArthur has said it like this: We are never more like Christ than when we carry the debt so forgiveness can take place.

There are times repayment is fine; but there are those times we are to pay the price of restitution ourselves and forgive.

Sheer and total forgiveness is an act of God in you.

## V. CONCLUSION

Forgiveness in action will make reception, restoration and restitution. It takes all three for forgiveness to work otherwise it is a putting up with, or tolerating the one who hurt you.

But before we close this message of forgiveness we need to be aware just as there are actions for forgiveness to take place there are actions that take place when we fail to forgive.

### A. CONSEQUENCES OF OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE

To not forgive IMPRISONS us to the PAST it keeps the pain alive, the sore open, and stirs up anger.

To not forgive PRODUCES BITTERNESS it occupies our thinking, shapes personality, and defiles many.

To not forgive OPENS THE DOOR for Satan who comes to steal, kill and destroy you.

To not forgive HINDERS FELLOWSHIP with God which also hinders fellowship with man.

As Paul advised Philemon we don't want to go there!

READ: LUKE 6:37

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

FORGIVENESS IS A SACRED GROUND!

---

R.Chandrasekaran

2009/4/25 21:57Profile

loveyouall

Member

Joined: 2008/1/14

Posts: 204

India

Re:

SERIES: FORGIVENESS A STUDY IN PHILEMON  
LESSON 03: THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS - Handout  
PASTOR T. R. KELLEY

BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 8-18

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. 3 PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS

In this study of forgiveness we have seen, with scriptural support, the 3 principles of forgiveness...

1. Forgive those who sin against you.

2. Forgive and be forgiven.
3. If you don't forgive you won't be forgiven.

At first glance these rules can seem cold and hard, because scriptures show that forgiveness is mandated (Philemon 8).

But, rather than by commandment, it is by the appeal of love to which the principles are to be applied, (Philemon 9).

The reception, restoration, and restitution of forgiveness were made possible through the life action of Jesus Christ.

## II. THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS: RECEPTION

READ: PHILEMON 10-14

Forgiveness is not merely a feeling. It is a disposition of the whole person, a habit of the heart, intentional choices of action in relationship. - Marjorie Thompson

Paul was asking Philemon to close the gap, heal the wound through forgiveness. Reconciliation was needed.

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LESSON 04: THE MOTIVATION OF FORGIVENESS  
PASTOR T. R. KELLEY

## BIBLE READING: PHILEMON 19-25

### Philemon 19-25

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is the work of God in us.

Tonight we look at the fourth and final message from Philemon ...

The Motivation of Forgiveness.

Motivation: To provide with an incentive; move to action

## A. TWO STORIES

1. Story 1: Heaviness of Hatred (Restitution).

Each week Kevin Tunell is required to mail a dollar to a family he'd rather forget.

They sued him for \$1.5 million but settled for \$936.00, to be paid a dollar at a time.

The family expects the payment each Friday so Tunell won't forget what happened on the first Friday of 1982.

That's the day their daughter was killed.

Tunell was convicted of manslaughter and drunken driving.

He was seventeen. She was eighteen.

Tunell served a court sentence.

He also spent seven years campaigning against drunk driving, six years more than his sentence required.

But he keeps forgetting to send the dollar.

The weekly restitution was to last until the year 2000 - eighteen (18) years.

Tunell makes the check out to the victim, mails it to her family, and the money is deposited in a scholarship fund.

The family has taken him to court four times for failure to comply.

After the most recent appearance, Tunell spent thirty days in jail.

He insists that he's not defying the order but rather is haunted by the girl's death and tormented by the reminders.

He offered the family two boxes of checks covering the payments until the year 2001, one year more than required.

They refused.

It's not the money they seek, but penance.

Quoting the mother, We want to receive the check every week on time. He must understand we are going to pursue this until August of the year 2000. We will go back to court every month if we have to. (Max Lucado, In the Grip of Grace)

## 2. Story 2: The Dynamic in Forgiveness (Restoration)

Bishop Donald Tippet was in his office one day when two young men dropped in, hoping to establish an alibi for their planned robbery.

When the bishop took a phone call in another room, the young men feared he had sized them up and was about to report them.

They attacked him with brass knuckles, doing permanent damage to his left eye.

When the two men came to trial, Tippet pleaded for a reduced sentence.

He visited them regularly in prison.

After the young men were released, the bishop helped one of them financially to further his education and eventually saw him become (of all things!) an ophthalmologist.

Tippet expressed his forgiveness of these men by persevering in returning good for evil.

Which story would best represent you? What is your motive for forgiveness merely restitution for the loss or restoration of the person?

Paul writes with a motive of forgiveness and nothing more.

There are not ulterior motives involved just the forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration of the one who needs forgiving.

## II. THE MOTIVATION OF DEBT

READ: PHILEMON 19

Philemon 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay; not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.

Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England under Henry VIII, spoke the following words to the judges who had unjustly condemned him to death:

As the blessed apostle St. Paul . . . consented to the death of St. Stephen, and kept their clothes that stoned him to death, and yet be they now both twain holy saints in Heaven, and shall continue there friends for ever, so I verily trust, and shall therefore right heartily pray, that though your Lordships have now here in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in Heaven merrily all meet together, to our everlasting salvation (cited in R. W. Chambers, Thomas More [London: Bedford Historical Series, 1938], p. 342).

Mores statement exhibits the beauty of forgiveness.

So also do the words of Stephen, Lord, do not hold this sin against them! (Acts 7:60);

And of our Lord, Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).

As he closes his letter to Philemon, Paul gives insight into the motives for forgiveness.

His gracious but pregnant words are meant to be the final push to move the heart of Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

Each of his remarks contains the embryo of a truth that should motivate us to forgive as well.

In this passage, we can discern six motives for forgiving others:

The recognition of an unpayable debt,

The possibility of being a blessing,

The necessity of obedience,

The acknowledgment of accountability,

The importance of maintaining fellowship, and

The requirement of grace.

(from The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, (c) Moody Press and John MacArthur, Jr., 1983-2002)

Paul mentioning his own hand writing is doing so for emphasis.

Most of the time Paul used a scribe, but in this instance, the need of urgency was so great he did the writing himself.

Paul was taking a very personal interest in Philemon and Onesimus.

A debt was owed on both accounts.

Onesimus owed a physical debt Philemon a spiritual debt.

Onesimus owed a temporal debt Philemon an eternal debt.

The point is: forgive because you have been forgiven much.

Forgiveness is taking responsibility from my side to release the offender from the alienating effect of the offense on our relationship. -

(Majorie J. Thompson, The Way of Forgiveness)

Who are we indebted to?

The Lord?

Wife?

Husband?

Children?

Church?

Friends?

Enemies?

The point is, as we look about, we understand we have all had to at one point or another forgive and be forgiven.

In light of our debt owed to God, we ought to forgive one another and forgive others.

### III. THE MOTIVATION OF BLESSING

READ: PHILEMON 20

Philemon 1:20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

Someone has wisely said:

Finding the freedom to forgive brings great benefit. Forgiveness releases us from carrying the weight of judgment in our hearts. It frees us from the corrosive effect of anger and bitterness on our bodies and souls. Yet as persons of faith, our motives for forgiving offenders go beyond self-healing.

Philemon has been a blessing to many people (cf. v. 7). Paul, in verse 20, now asks to receive that blessing.

By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would benefit Paul in the Lord by bringing him joy because of his example of obedience and love to the church.

By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would maintain the unity in the Colossian fellowship, and that would bring great joy to Paul.

In the matters of ledgers and debts, once Onesimus' debt was repaid, Paul would still have a credit, for who can ever repay someone for bringing him or her to eternal life?

Thus Paul asked that the balance be paid in kindness to Onesimus.

The word my (verse 20) is emphatic in the Greek. It is as if Paul were saying, It is my turn to be refreshed by you.

Paul had already told Philemon of the refreshment he had been to others (verse 7).

Philemon 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

Paul wanted to receive a blessing of joy, which would be derived from Philemon forgiving Onesimus.

Have you thought about being a blessing to others, by forgiving those who have offended you?

Remember, others are watching us!

Our willingness to forgive is a great witness within this community.

Are we a blessing to others in our forgiveness, or are we a hindrance in our unforgiveness?

The invested interest is reconciliation and unity.

When we a part of Gods church forgive, it pronounces a blessing in that we are doing what we should be doing.

#### IV. THE MOTIVATION OF OBEDIENCE

READ: PHILEMON 21

Philemon 1:21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Forgiveness is one of the eminent signs of the vitality of the Holy Spirit in our midst. (The Way of Forgiveness)

Paul is saying he has confidence in Philemon obeying and forgiving.

Paul has not commanded forgiveness, but has requested forgiveness through the positive reinforcement of encouragement.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

IMPORTANT: Obligation may be the point of our obedience, but it ought to be love. We love God because through Christ he has forgiven us ... therefore let us love forgiveness and become obedient in it.

READ: COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

This passage of Scripture bears out

Whose we are The elect of God (forgiven of God).

What we wear We are to be outfitted with tender mercies, kindness, humility forgiveness.

What we do forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Our forgiving others is rooted in God's forgiveness of us. Paul says I am confident you will forgive out of your desire to obey.

## V. THE MOTIVATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

READ: PHILEMON 22

Philemon 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

Paul was holding Philemon accountable when he (Paul) came to Colosse, Philemon would have explained what he did concerning Onesimus forgive or not forgive.

Paul was exercising a bit of spiritual authority.

In this day and age, most do not like accountability we like the free will of doing what we want and when we want. But in the kingdom of God there is always accountability.

READ: HEBREWS 13:17; ROMANS 14:12

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Romans 14:12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Paul saw himself accountable for Philemon's life action, as well as that of Onesimus.

Only a free person can live with an uneven score. Lewis B. Smedes

If we all saw it this way, perhaps there would be more forgiveness.

Paul then mentions the means by which his release will be effected.

He writes to Philemon, I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you.

Prayers are the nerves that move the muscles of omnipotence.

Prayer is not an exercise in futility because Gods will shall be done in any case; prayer is the means by which Gods will is carried out.

The effective prayer of a righteous man, wrote James, can accomplish much (James 5:16).

Paul understood that the sovereignty of God works its purposes through prayer.

## VI. THE MOTIVATION OF FELLOWSHIP

READ: PHILEMON 23-24

Philemon 23-24 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

Paul reminds Philemon in a round about way that he, like Paul, is a part of a greater fellowship the Church.

The Christian life is not lived in a vacuum. Believers do not act alone, independent of the fellowship.

By sending greetings from five men known to him, Paul reminds Philemon of his accountability to all of them.

Failing to forgive Onesimus would disappoint their high expectations of him and bring him under their discipline.

These five knew of the situation at hand; and they expected what Paul expected forgiveness and the fellowship that would be produced from it.

These five men were well known to Philemon.

He had the opportunity to set a good example for them by forgiving Onesimus.

On the other hand, failing to forgive would fracture the bond of fellowship Philemon enjoyed with them.

#### A. 4 VALUABLE TRUTHS OF FELLOWSHIP

1. We are not alone we are a part of one another.
2. We cannot act independently of each other.
3. We are responsible to each other to help create the atmosphere of forgiveness.
4. Fellowship with God and His family moves us to forgive.

#### VII. CONCLUSION

READ: PHILEMON 25

Philemon 1:25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

While this is Paul's standard benediction, it certainly had special meaning to Philemon.

It would take God's grace working in Philemon to enable him to do something difficult, something unnatural forgiving, welcoming, and accepting into the fellowship as a brother a slave who had, at least at a previous time, proven himself to be unfaithful and untrustworthy.

It would be through God's grace alone that this reconciliation would be possible.

Yet the grace was available; Philemon only had to act upon it.

If the entire letter was meant to be read to the church that met in Philemon's home, then they too would, by God's grace, also need to welcome and accept Onesimus.

God's grace, working in the spirits of believers, makes true fellowship and reconciliation possible within any body of believers.

IMPORTANT: God's grace is how He forgives us. Grace is the fertile ground from which forgiveness grows out of. Grace motivates us to forgive. Grace is dispensed in forgiveness.

What resides in your spirit will either allow you to venture into the process of forgiveness or keep you imprisoned in the hurt and pain of being offended.

Paul urged Philemon to be reconciled to his slave, receiving him as a brother and fellow member of God's family.

Reconciliation means reestablishing relationship.

Christ has reconciled us to God and to others.

PASTORAL NOTE: Many barriers come between people race, social status, sex, personality differences but Christ can break down these barriers.

Jesus Christ changed Onesimus' relationship with Philemon from slave to brother. In the same manner, Christ can transform our most hopeless relationships into deep and loving friendships.

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R.Chandrasekaran

2009/4/25 21:58 Profile

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### A. 4 VALUABLE TRUTHS OF FELLOWSHIP

1. We are not alone we are a part of one another.
2. We cannot act independently of each other.
3. We are responsible to each other to help create the atmosphere of forgiveness.
4. Fellowship with God and His family moves us to forgive.

## VII. CONCLUSION

READ: PHILEMON 25

IMPORTANT: Gods grace is how He forgives us. Grace is the fertile ground from which forgiveness grows out of. Grace motivates us to forgive. Grace is dispensed in forgiveness.

PASTORAL NOTE: Many barriers come between people race, social status, sex, personality differences but Christ can break down these barriers.

Jesus Christ changed Onesimus relationship with Philemon from slave to brother. In the same manner, Christ can transform our most hopeless relationships into deep loving friendships.