

## Philemon Part 3: A Call to Forgive

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,  
2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

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

4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 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—10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, 11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

15 For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Today is our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final study in the book of Philemon.

A) Shortest of Paul's prison epistles – Small but Mighty

B) Beautiful Picture of the Doctrine of Imputation

C) A Runaway slave – Conversion – Paul sends back

1) If he has wronged you or owes you – CHARGE that to my account. –

D) Put that on my tab!

It is also a book that paints an incredible picture of what true conversion looks like.

A) Saw that last week – Onesimus – Confession of Sin

Repentance – 180 degree opposite direction –

B) Change in his life – Genuine concern for others rather than only being concerned for himself

Today we want to look at this story from **one more angle** and see what it teaches us about **Forgiveness**.

A) Philemon had been wronged – he had been burned

B) Now he was called to FORGIVE – RESTORE

C) Even more – treat Onesimus like a brother

1) Put yourself in his shoes!

Have you ever been burned? Ever been stabbed in the back? Ever been Maligned?

Have you ever had your trust Broken?

A) What did you do? How did you respond? How did that impact your life? Where did it take you?

B) Did it Make you: Bitter or Better ?

1) Did it become a Stumbling block that kept you from fellowship / ministry from growing

C) Was it a Stumbling block in your life or a **stepping stone** to deeper growth – more ministry / richer fellowship

D) Take you down a road – Hatred? Bitterness? Isolation? **Or Love and forgiveness**

According to the Mayo Clinic and John Hopkins medical – **unforgiveness can have huge physical and mental effects on a person.**

A) I have literally witnessed people have mental and emotional breakdowns fueled by bitterness/unforgiveness

B) Seemingly normal people who just lose it and lash out – start acting bizarrely

1) Deep seated bitterness

C) Bible warns of a root of bitterness where many become defiled

1) Good description – roots go deep and spread

**Interesting that the Mayo Clinic/ John Hopkins have also chronicled the Physical benefits of forgiveness**

Forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, [blood pressure](#), and levels of anxiety, depression and stress.

**Philemon got burned – under Roman law – He could have had Onesimus severely beaten – Crucified**

A) Or even branded with a F = Fugitive

B) Paul was asking him to live under another set of laws - HIGHER LAW –

1) THE LAW OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST!

C) 12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,

**RECEIVE= to take to one's self –**

A) Speaks of intimacy and brotherhood.

B) Philemon was called to FORGIVE

C) OUTLINE TODAY: Consider 4 things

#1 The premise of Forgiveness

#2 The difference between Forgiveness and Reconciliation

#3 The Ramifications of Un-forgiveness

#4 The Result of Forgiveness and Restoration

**D) Start with the Premise of Forgiveness**

1) NOTE 2 THINGS

**THE PREMISE OF FORGIVENESS.**

1<sup>ST</sup> The debt has already been paid for!

<sup>17</sup> If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would me*. <sup>18</sup> But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

**Paul says – I will pay the debt –  
Jesus says I DID PAY THE DEBT!**

A) CHARGE IT TO MY ACCOUNT !!!

B) **Exodus 15 The pool of Marah!**

1) Throw in the tree – bitter waters sweet!

C) I want justice to be served!!!! { **Forgiveness is an**

1) It was AT CALVARY!!! - **ACTION**

D) Jesus paid my debt – your debt – the debt of the sin that was DONE against us!

1) THROW IN THE TREE

E) **Note: Sometimes a daily practice: Forgiveness is not a feeling it is an action**

1) Wake up frustrated all over again – THROW IN THE TREE!

**2<sup>nd</sup> Philemon himself owed a debt v. 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.**

A) Philemon owed Paul a debt – his salvation

B) We owe a debt – we have been forgiven so much

C) **There is enough against all of us to throw the book at us – Right?**

1) But Jesus has been gracious to us and we need to be gracious to others.

Ephesians 4:32 **“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”**

**Jesus told a Parable of a man who owed a king a large sum of money: He begged for mercy**

1) The King granted it – forgave his debt –

C) But that same man went out and found a man who owed him a debt that was far less

1) The man who owed the debt – begged for mercy

**D) Now the man who had been forgiven by the king refused to forgive this lesser debt –**

1) Thru the man in prison –

E) King found out – Couldn't believe it – Threw that man in Prison -

**The Point Jesus is making – How can you even think about not forgiving when I have forgiven you of so much**

A) That is the question that Jesus would ask us

B) Unforgiveness is an indication that we have no concept of ourselves as sinners

1) We have been forgiven of a great debt – so great deserved to die

C) This is what Paul is referring to here -

1) Onesimus owes Philemon a material debt;  
Philemon owes Paul a spiritual debt.

**D) Onesimus owes Philemon a temporal debt;  
Philemon owes Paul an eternal one.**

1) His eternity

**E) So based on those premises – Forgiveness is not an option – it is required**

1) It is necessary for our own wellbeing – but having said that

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we need to consider is there is a difference between Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

**A) Forgiveness takes ONE – ME – my hearts willing to throw in the towel**

**B) Reconciliation takes two: Usually involves repentance – coming clean –**

**C) Reconciliation involves trust – When trust is broken it can only be built up over time**

**1) Through consistent behavior**

**Story of Paul & Barnabas and John Mark**

**A) 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey – John Mark came along – But at some point he bailed**

**B) We are not sure why he bailed – Maybe he didn't like the shift in leadership from Barnabas to Paul –**

1) Uncle Barnabas was encouraging – Paul was intense – I am out of here

**C) Whatever the situation it seems it caused Paul a lot of grief...**

1) Paul needed guys he could trust in the ministry especially since they were in battle on the front lines as missionaries...

**Now I am sure that Paul forgave John Mark for whatever it was that caused him to bail on the first journey...**

A) But Paul didn't trust John Mark. To go on the 2<sup>nd</sup> trip

**B) Because Trust is established**

1) Over time; 2) Under a variety of circumstances; 3) With consistent actions.

**C) John Mark did establish the trust again with Paul...send John Mark ...useful to me....**

**D) Trust was re-established but it was**

1) OVER TIME

2) UNDER A VARIETY OF CIRCUMSTANCES

3) WITH CONSISTENT ACTIONS

**That is what we also see in this Story!**

A) Philemon was called to restore Onesimus – actually more than restore **to receive him** – no longer as a slave but as a brother

**B) But it was based on the change that Paul had witnessed in his life there in Jail – NOW USEFUL!**

**C) PAUL Witnessed THE CHANGE - by consistent actions – in variety of circumstances -**

1) **In Jail** He grew in the Lord – **In Service** – Became profitable

2) **In returning** – He could have kept running but he returned to face the Music - this showed a true heart of repentance

**D) Restoration is based on those things**

**Some feel that they can break trust (marriage, or a ministry, etc) and should be immediately trusted again after repentance... That's not reality...**

**A) This story and the Story of John Mark reject that premise –**

**B) Both men were forgiven / and both men were restored**

**C) But their restoration was established**

1) over time,

2) under a variety of circumstances

3) with consistent actions

**D) That is the way that it works**

**So Forgiveness is a Non Negotiable thing in the body of Christ - The Lord calls us to forgive**

**B) We have been forgiven and the Lord wants us to be forgivers**

**1) FAILURE to forgive will have damaging effects**

### 3rd Consider The Ramifications of Un-forgiveness

#### 4 THINGS

1<sup>st</sup> Failure to forgive will imprisons believers to the past.

A) Unforgiveness keeps the pain alive. – **Been wounded by someone – that wound needs to heal**

B) Unforgiveness keeps the sore open; it never allows the wound to heal.

#2 Failure to forgive produces bitterness.

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

B) Bitterness is not just a sin; it is an infection. **{It spreads}**

C) Why The writer of Hebrews warns, about the **root of bitterness** that causes you and those around you to be defiled (Heb. 12:15).

D) **Leaves a Scar** – that ends up Defining that person

1) Philemon was known for being loving gracious

E) If He decided not to forgive – This could have defined him - **BITTER**

F) A bitter person's speech is cutting, sarcastic, even slanderous.- ALWAYS NEGATIVE

#3 Failure to forgive gives Satan an open door.

A) 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.**

Texan Don Nut says he and his wife have been married fifty years. He says that the secret is that they never went to bed without settling any differences between them. **But Don concedes there have been times when he went ten days without sleep.**

B) Not the point of that verse: Sometimes stepping away -going to sleep can be helpful

1) Gives you a more clear headed approach – easier to talk the next day

C) That is the point – you are agreeing to not ignore or sweep under the carpet

1) No we are going to deal with this

D) Things get swept under the carpet – not dealt with it gives Satan an open door into your heart

1) And relationship – { constantly tripping over

#4 Failure to forgive usurps God's authority

A) By refusing to forgive others and seeking our own revenge, we usurp the authority of God.

B) Paul urged believers to "bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.

1) Never take your own revenge - but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, **'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord**" Romans 12:19

There was a widow who had **"Rest In Peace"** put on her husband's tombstone. When she found out that he left her out of his will, she had added, "TILL I COME."... **I will see you again**

C) God says: let me deal with them. – Let ME be your defense

D) Listen God is far more able to deal with offenses against us than we are.

1) He has a complete understanding of the situation, while our understanding is limited

E) So Freeing – I am going to forgive and I am going to trust the Lord to deal with that person

1) I am going to accept how he chooses to deal with them – **He is right and Just** –

4th The result of Such Forgiveness and Restoration –

A) **#1 Others are refreshed** – v.20 Paul's heart would be blessed by this

*Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.*

B) **#2 Philemon's faith would have an opportunity to shine in an even greater way v.6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.**

C)What a story: People in town would be talking – can you believe what Philemon did ?

1) **Took back that slave – no longer a slave**

D)The Acknowledgement of the good in Philemon (because of the **WORK of Christ in his heart**) – would be demonstrated thru this scenario

E)**Never are we more like God than when we forgive.**

1)Never are we more like Christ than when we pay someone else's debt so that reconciliation can take place.

F)Jesus is seen: Elizabeth Elliot – with the Indians

**Mary Johnson – her son was shot and killed by a gang banger in a drive by.**

A)Visited him jail – Reconciled

B)He bought a house next to hers -

**#3 The ministry of the gospel would have the chance to spread further thru Onesimus' life.**

A)I believe Paul knew that God wanted to do more with this man's life

B) History tells us He did – Pastor at Ephesus

**Beautiful insights into forgiveness**

A)We forgive because we have been forgiven of so much

B)We forgive by daily applying the cross

C)When we forgive – we and others are refreshed