

INTRODUCTION

1. Charles, I want to thank you for inviting me to be a part of this conference this week on forgiveness.

2. This week our conference will be looking at:

01 The Kind of Person Who Forgives

Dr. Steve Hereford | Forgiveness Conference
Changed By Grace

02 Forgiveness Through Reconciliation

Pastor David Spears | Forgiveness Conference
Changed By Grace

03 Forgiven of All Trespasses

Pastor Charles Swann | Forgiveness Conference
Changed By Grace

04 Why Forgive?

Bud Moss | Forgiveness Conference
Changed By Grace

05 How to Forgive Those Who Wrong You

Dr. Steve Hereford | Forgiveness Conference
Changed By Grace

3. Read Philemon 1:1-25.

4. From our reading of this letter, you learn that it's about a runaway slave named Onesimus who stole from his master Philemon and ran some 1000 miles to Rome.
5. By the way that would have taken him roughly 210 hours or almost a month to reach Rome.
6. But it was there where in God's providence he met the apostle Paul.
7. During his time with Paul he became a follower of Jesus Christ.
8. But Paul knowing the situation felt it was necessary to send him back to Philemon to make things right.
9. So Paul writes this letter.
10. The theme of this letter is forgiveness.
11. What is Forgiveness?
12. The dictionary gives this definition: "to give up resentment of or claim to requital for."¹

¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc. [Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary](#). 2003 : n. pag. Print.

13. It is ceasing to feel resentment for wrongs and offenses; [it is] pardon, involving restoration of broken relationships.²
14. In the OT forgiveness is used by the words ‘send away,’ ‘cover,’ ‘remove,’ and ‘wipe away.’
15. In the NT we also hear the words ‘send away’ used most often [or the words] to ‘loose’ (Luke 6:37), ‘be gracious to’ (Luke 7:43; 2 Cor. 2:7), and ‘pass over’ (Rom. 3:25).³ and the word “release” (*aphesis*, ἄφεσις, 859)⁴
16. Lord Balfour said, “The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.”⁵
17. This is seen very well in the following account during the revolutionary war that’s recorded in the Bible School Journal.

² Houston, James M. “[Forgiveness.](#)” *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* 1988 : 810. Print.

³ Achtemeier, Paul J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. [Harper’s Bible dictionary](#) 1985 : 319. Print.

⁴ Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. [Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) 1996 : 251. Print.

⁵ Tan, Paul Lee. *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996. Print.

18. During the Revolutionary War there lived in Pennsylvania a pastor by the name of Peter Miller.
19. Although Miller was greatly loved by everyone in the community, there was one man who lived near the church who hated him and had earned an unenviable reputation for his abuse of the minister.
20. This man was not only a hater of the church, but it also turned out that he was a traitor to his country, and was convicted of treason and sentenced to death.
21. The trial was conducted in Philadelphia, and no sooner did Miller hear of it than he set out on foot to visit General Washington and interceded for the man's life.
22. But Washington told him, "I'm sorry that I cannot grant your request for your friend."
23. "Friend!" Miller cried. "Why, that man is the worst enemy I have in the world!"
24. "What?" the general exclaimed in surprise.
25. "Have you walked sixty miles to save the life of an enemy? That, in my judgment, puts the matter in a

different light. I will grant him a pardon for your sake.”

26. The pardon was made out and signed by General Washington, and Miller proceeded at once on foot to a place fifteen miles distant where the execution was scheduled to take place that afternoon.
27. He arrived just as the man was being carried to the scaffold, and when he saw Miller hurrying toward the place, remarked, “There is old Peter Miller.
28. He has walked all the way from Ephrata to have his revenge gratified today by seeing me hung.”
29. But scarcely had he spoken the words when Miller pushed his way through to the condemned man and handed him the pardon that saved his life.⁶
30. This describes what Jesus did for us on the cross.
31. He forgave us.
32. He pardoned our sins.
33. God forgives.

⁶ Ibid., Tan.

34. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have received His forgiveness.
35. God says in Exodus 34:7 (NASB) that He “forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...”
36. Aren't you thankful that he's forgiven you of all your sin?
37. The Bible tells us that Jesus had authority on earth to forgive sin.
38. Listen to Luke 7:40-50.
39. We are called to forgive one another.
40. It doesn't matter what the offense is, we are to forgive.
41. We are to forgive because we have been forgiven.
42. We are to forgive because Jesus tells us to forgive.
43. In Matthew 18:21-22 (NASB) Then Peter came and said to Him [Jesus], “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”
22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven

times, but up to seventy times seven.

44. Did you hear what Jesus said?
45. “Seventy times seven” - that’s 490 times!
46. That’s just another way of saying he is to forgive without number.
47. Our forgiveness is to be unlimited.
48. How many times has the Lord forgiven you? (without number)
49. Paul said in Colossians 3:12-14 (NASB) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
50. So there is no excuse to not forgive.
51. But you don’t know what they’ve done to me?

52. No we don't but you are to forgive anyway.
53. We are to forgive regardless of how difficult it is.
54. Jesus said, "Seventy times seven!"
55. Paul said, "As the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
56. And if Jesus can say from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk.23:34), so can you!
57. But if you refuse to forgive, you need to understand that God will not forgive you.
58. Matthew 18:35 (NASB) My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."
59. Jesus is not speaking here of the forgiveness that brings salvation, saying that God only saves those who are forgiving.
60. That would be works righteousness.

61. He is speaking of people forgiving each other after they have experienced His free grace.⁷
62. To help us with forgiving others, Jesus has told the church something specific she is to do in Matthew 18:15-17.
63. There are four steps:
 - a. Go in private
 - b. Go with witnesses
 - c. Tell the church
 - d. Put them out
64. Paul told the church at Rome the same thing in Romans 16:17-18 (NASB) Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.
65. He demonstrated this:

⁷ MacArthur, John F., Jr. [Matthew](#). Vol. 3. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

- a. With the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12
 - b. Paul confronted false teachers publicly: Elymas the magician (Acts 13:8-11)
66. Peter personally confronted Ananias and Sapphira separately (Acts 5:1-10).
67. Even on one occasion Jesus personally confronted Peter and told him to “Get behind me Satan!” (Mat.16:23)
68. So part of forgiving one another is also applying the first step of Matthew 18:15.
69. When you have been wronged, when you have been sinned against, you are to go to that person alone and talk about that but you have to make sure you don’t go with the attitude of one who has been offended.
70. Matthew 7:1-6 (judging others)
71. Even Paul says what kind of attitude you’re to have in Galatians 6:1 (NASB) when helping one who is caught in a trespass. He says, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking

to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

72. We are to be gentle and humble when we share our offense.
73. This is exactly what we see in Paul’s letter to Philemon.
74. As we look at the kind of person who forgives, I want you to write down 4 words: help, grace, peace, good.
75. The first word “help” is found in verses 1-2, “grace and peace” in verse 3, and “good” in verses 4-9.
76. In verses 1 and 2 we learn that...

LESSON

I. Sometimes We Need Help Forgiving (vv.1-2)

This is...

A. The Purpose of Paul’s Letter to Philemon (v.1)

1. He wants Philemon to do the right thing and forgive Onesimus

Notice how he says this in vv.8,14, 17-18, 20-21

He also...

2. He wants Philemon to remember his hardships by the use of the word “Prisoner” in verse 1 and also his reference to his imprisonment in vv.9,10,13

Luke records in Acts 28:16-31 Paul’s two year imprisonment at Rome in “his own rented house.” It was here where he was allowed to receive “all who came to him” (v.30) “no one forbidding him” (v.31). It was also from here where he spent his time “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” (v.31).

The word that Paul uses for “prisoner” is *desmos*. It means “a captive in bonds.” It comes from the root word *deo* which means “to bind.”

Desmos is closely related to the word *doulos* which means a “slave.”

Paul’s use of the word *desmos* shows how he perceived himself. He was a “captive in bonds”

for Jesus Christ.

The genitive, which is the specifying case (Davis), is used also in the phrase “of Christ” to show “Christ is the owner of the prisoner and the cause of his imprisonment.”⁸

How do you see yourself?

If you see yourself more than a slave or a prisoner of Jesus Christ, you’re not the kind of person who forgives!

You need to change the way you see yourself!

Paul could rightly have said he was an apostle and demanded from Philemon that he forgive Onesimus but he wanted to appeal for love’s sake (v.9).

Notice also...

B. The People Who Are to Help Philemon (vv.1b-2)

First, his...

⁸ Word Biblical Commentary Vol.44, Col., Phile.

1. Co-Worker Timothy (not co-author but partner in ministry) (v.1b)

He is mentioned in 6 of Paul's NT letters (2 Cor.1:1; Phil.1:1; Col.1:1; 1 Thess.1:1; 2 Thess.1:1; Phile.1:1)

Paul refers to him as "my fellow worker" in Romans 16:21.

He joined Paul at Lystra according to Acts 16:1-3.

He became Paul's son in the faith (1 Tim.1:2) and later pastored the church at Ephesus (1 Tim.1:1-4;3:15)

A co-worker in ministry is good accountability but so is...

2. Family

- a) Apphia (Philemon's wife) (v.2)

"To the beloved Apphia" (NKJV KJV)

"To Apphia our sister" (NASBU)

"Our sister" (NASB) is the best rendering

“It is commonly assumed that Apphia was the wife of Philemon” (Hiebert; cf., R.C. Lucas, H.A. Ironside, Wycliffe Bible Comm., Liberty Bible Comm., The Bible Knowledge Comm., The MacArthur Study Bible).

One writer suggests that the reason why Paul addresses her in this letter is because “she is as much a part of the decision of her husband because according to the custom of the time, she had day-to-day responsibilities for the slaves.”⁹

b) Archippus (Philemon’s son) (v.2)

He is only mentioned here and in Colossians 4:17

Some believe he was Philemon’s son but “it is uncertain whether he is...or not” (A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the NT, 465).

D. Edmond Hiebert says, “The mention of his name here implies that he was connected with the household of Philemon. Just what

⁹ A. Rupprecht, The Bible Knowledge Comm., 770

that relation was cannot be positively established.”¹⁰

A.T. Robertson says, “Apparently he is prominent in the church in Colossee, possibly even pastor.”¹¹

A third mention of accountability is...

3. The Church in Your House (met in homes before 3rd century)

The oldest known church was found at Dura Europos, on the bank of the Euphrates River in the Syrian desert. It dates from the first half of the third century, and had been made by joining two rooms of a house and building a platform.¹²

- a) Romans 16:3-5 (56 AD) records a church meeting in Priscilla and Aquilas’ house
- b) 1 Corinthians 16:19 (55 AD) also mentions a church in their house

¹⁰ D. Edmond Hiebert, *First and Second Thesslonians*, 92.

¹¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*, 465.

¹² E. M. Blaiklock, "Dura Europos," in *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. E. M. Blaiklock and R. K. Harrison [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], p. 165.

II. God's **Grace** and **Peace** Are Available in Helping Us to Forgive (v.3)

- A. We Are Under Grace - Romans 6:14 (NASB) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
- B. We Have Received Grace - John 1:16 (NASB) For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
- C. We are to Abound in Grace - 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NASB) (context is giving) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.
- D. Grace is Available in Our Weakness (2 Cor.12)
- E. Grace is Available in Our Sin (Romans 5:20-6:1)
- F. Grace is Available When We Humble Ourselves (James 4:6-7)
- G. We Are to Be Strong in Grace - 2 Timothy 2:1 (NASB) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is

in Christ Jesus.

- H. We Are to Speak with Grace - Ephesians 4:29
(NASB) Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
- I. We are to Grow in Grace - 2 Peter 3:18 (NASB) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
- J. Peace is the result of grace - Romans 5:1 (NASB)
Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
- K. Both Grace and Peace Comes From a Dual Source
(God and Jesus)

The fourth word is Good and here we see what resided in Philemon and what resides in all believers.
The good is forgiveness.

III. **Good** - Forgiveness is in All Believers (vv.4-9)

A. The Good is Forgiveness (Read vv.4-6)

1. Paul was thankful for what he kept hearing (vv.4-5)

Verse 5 tells us what he kept hearing...

2. He kept hearing about Philemon's love and faith (v.5)

“Hear” Gr.akou (pres.act.part.). The present tense is used indicating a regular flow of news¹³ which came through Epaphras (Col. 1:7, 8; 4:12), [and] Onesimus.¹⁴

He kept hearing about Philemon's love and faith.

“Love” is agape, which is the “love of will and choice, of self-sacrifice and humility.”

It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) and a manifestation of genuine saving faith.

¹³ O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* 277, citing C. Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament* [St. Louis: Herder, 1963–66] Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996. Print. New International Greek Testament Commentary.

¹⁴ Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933. Print.

John said in 1 John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.”

This kind of love is not taught because it is in them by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.”

And that’s because “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom.5:5).

So Paul kept hearing about Philemon’s sacrificial love “toward the saints” and his “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. And now he wanted it to become so powerful to the church by him forgiving Onesimus (v.6)

According to Ephesians 1:3, all Christians have been blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, they have a new nature within them.

How was Philemon to discover every good thing which was in him?

“through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake.”

It’s through the “knowledge” (epignōsis) This refers to deep, rich, full, experiential knowledge.

It is the knowledge that comes through personal acquaintance with the truth.

Philemon could read of forgiveness, or hear a sermon about it. But until he forgave, he could have no experiential knowledge of it.

By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would experience that good thing in him known as forgiveness.

By walking in obedience to God’s will, believers experience the good things God has placed within them.¹⁵

¹⁵ MacArthur, John F., Jr. Philemon. Chicago: Moody Press, 1992. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB) For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

In verses 7-9...

B. Paul Also Heard How Philemon Refreshed the Hearts of the Saints (vv.7-9)

“For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.”

1. Philemon refreshed the hearts of the saints (v.7)

a) This refreshing was due to the kind of person Philemon was

(1) He was friendly (meaning of name)

(2) He was kind and loving

(3) He was generous and sacrificial (church met in his house) (Have you ever had a church meet in your house? I have twice!)

b) He lifted the “bowels” or emotions of the saints

This is another peculiarly Pauline expression (see 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15).

John Calvin says, “*To refresh the bowels* is to be taken as meaning a lightening of troubles, so that they may rest with minds free from all sorrow and annoyance.”

It is “to give relief from distresses.”

The tense of the verb (ἀναπέπταται, perfect) indicates some past ministry of Philemon

which had had enduring results.

Scott suggests “it might have been help following the earthquake of 60 thus removing anxieties and giving them peace of mind.”¹⁶

Whatever it was it brought rest and refreshment to the saints and joy to Paul.

2. Paul uses this to set up his appeal for Onesimus (vv.8-9)

“**8** Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, **9** yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

- a) He wanted Philemon to act out of his love for the saints
- b) He again reminds Philemon of his imprisonment (hardship) as a “prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

¹⁶ Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996. Print. New International Greek Testament Commentary.

CONCLUSION

1. What kind of person are you?
2. Are you friendly, kind, loving, humble, sacrificial and forgiving?
3. Forgiveness is possible because you have it in you.
4. But you must be controlled the Holy Spirit for it to happen.
5. What does it mean to be controlled by the Holy Spirit?
(Eph.5:18; Col.3:16)
6. To put it in the words of Galatians 5:16 (NASB) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
7. Sometimes we need help (from other believers, from family, from friends, from the church)
8. We always need grace.
9. Paul needed it when dealing with the thorn in his flesh.
10. We need it too in forgiving others.

11. We have the principle of forgiveness in us enabling us to forgive, so forgive “seventy times seven” as “the Lord has forgiven you.”
12. Remember help, grace, peace, and good as you keep in mind the kind of person who forgives.
13. Let’s pray.