

# *Edgemont Bible Church*

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## *Philemon 8-18*

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Intro: The Theme of Philemon word is "Forgiveness." The word is never used, neither are the doctrinal principles providing the theological foundation for forgiveness. Paul does not appeal to law of principle, but to love. Knowing to whom he was writing, Paul may have assumed that Philemon knew the biblical principles of forgiveness, but not all do. There are eight foundational elements of a biblical doctrine of forgiveness.

First, Jesus teaches that the sixth commandment doesn't just forbid murder, but also anger that is without cause and lack of forgiveness - Mt 5:21-22. Believers have the life of God in them which enables them to live as God has called them to. In Mt 22:39, we are to love as we desire to be loved. We all think we are deserving of forgiveness and another chance, so we must offer the same.

Second, whoever offends us has offended God in a greater way. David shows us that all sin is ultimately against God - Ps 51:4. Since God has provided a way of forgiveness for that which is greater, can we not forgive the lesser. Or will we be like the wicked slave in Mt 18 who after being forgiven a debt that he could not pay, demanded payment from a fellow slave for a days wage.

Third, those who will not forgive, will not be forgiven by God - Mt 6:14-15. Failing to forgive hinders fellowship with God and puts us in danger of chastisement.

Fourth, when we are out of fellowship with God, we cannot enjoy the fellowship, communion, and love of His people. In Mt 18:31, it was the other slaves that reported the wicked slave for his unforgiving attitude.

Fifth, when we fail to forgive and seek our own revenge, we usurp God's authority. God has promised that He will repay - Ro 12:14,19, we are to bless those who persecute us. We really have no idea how God will use those event in the life of the other person. We do know that we are to be lights in a dark world - Phil 2:15; and that the goodness of God leads one to repentance - Ro 2:4.

Sixth, an unforgiving spirit makes believers unfit for worship. In Mt 5:23-24, we read that we are to first be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer our gift. In Mt 5, the offender goes to make things right, but in Mt 18:15, the offended goes to make things right.

Seventh, the injuries and offenses that we suffer are some of the trials that we, as believers, go through. We are to recognize that God is testing our faith and proving its authenticity, causing us to grow in patience, perseverance and Christlikeness. In Mt 5:44-45, we are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us, "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Eighth, forgiveness should be in our hearts before it is even sought. Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those who put Him on the cross before they sought it. Though fellowship cannot be enjoyed until they seek forgiveness - Lu 17:3-4 if he repents, forgive him, for us to

hold a grudge until they do would only hurt us through bitterness.

**Therefore**, links the introduction with the main body of the letter. Paul starts in vs 8 by expressing what he could do - **though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting**. He then moves to **an appeal for love's sake** in vs 9. Love is the fulfillment of the Law - Ro 13:10 and love compels the believer to do **what is fitting**. What Paul was asking of Philemon was going to be humanly difficult. He may have struggled with his emotions when he first saw Onesimus. So Paul adds two motivations to help persuade him. The appeal was coming from **such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ**. Aged could be translated ambassador, but is inconsistent with Paul already not using his apostolic authority to command. Paul was close to 60 and with all that he had suffered serving Christ - 2 Co 11:23-30, was probably looking a great deal older. Paul also uses his imprisonment as a reminder of things that are more important in life. Starting in vs 10, Paul moves on to his request citing three actions of one who forgives.

#### IV. The Action of One Who Forgives - vs 8-18

##### A. Reception - vs 10-14

1. Entails opening one's life and taking back the person who offended

2. Three proofs of Onesimus' repentance

a. Onesimus was there before Philemon

i. Philemon could have punished him severely

ii. Paul appeals for him

- as his son - vs 10a

- whom I have begotten while in my chains - vs 10b

iii. His faith showed the genuineness of his repentance

b. Onesimus was transformed - vs 11

i. Onesimus' name meant useful

ii. Philemon was not getting the same man back as he had before

- who once was unprofitable to you,

- but now is profitable to you

- and to me.

c. Onesimus was proven faithful - vs 12

i. Onesimus had proved so useful to Paul that sending him back was like sending back his own heart

- **splagchnon** - an intestine (plural); pity or sympathy: bowels, inward affection, + tender mercy.

- Paul had great feelings for Onesimus

ii. Onesimus was so helpful to Paul that he wished to keep him with him that he might minister to him in his chains for the gospel. - vs 13

iii. b/c of Philemon's love

- Paul knew that he would have loved to be there to serve him

- so Onesimus could have ministered - on Philemon's behalf

iv. Paul did not want these two brother's left with unresolved conflict - vs 14

- Paul did not want to do anything without Philemon's consent

- Paul also wanted Philemon's service (good deed) to be voluntary, not by compulsion

## B. Restoration - 15-16

1. Paul not only asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus back, but to restore him to service

a. He was not removing guilt

b. suggests the providence of God at work

i. For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose,

- For perhaps - no one can really know the secret providence of God

- reasonable to assume that God had this in mind when Onesimus left

ii. that you might receive him forever, - as a fellow believer

- Paul suggests that God was using evil to produce good - Ro 8:28

- God uses the myriad contingencies of human actions and uses them to accomplish His own purposes

2. Paul is not calling for his emancipation

a. no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother,

i. just saying receive him back as more than just a slave,

ii. now he is a brother

b. As a brother

i. Paul enjoyed the relationship with Onesimus - especially to me

ii. Now Philemon could enjoy a twofold relationship with Onesimus

- Physical - Master/ Slave - in the flesh

- Spiritual - in the Lord.

## C. Restitution - vs 17-18

1. Philemon suffered loss when Onesimus left

a. Apparently, Onesimus took money or something of value when he left to pay for his trip to Rome

b. Not knowing if Onesimus would ever return, probably had to buy another slave to replace him

c. In both cases, Onesimus was to provide restitution for Philemon's loss - Nu 5:6-8

i. Onesimus has no way of paying

ii. Probably did find a job in Rome

ii. Colossians indicates he spent his time ministering to Paul - Col 4:9

2. Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus back

a. If then you count me as a partner

i. **koinonos** - a sharer, associate:--companion, partaker, partner.

ii. as you would me

b. Restitution is an essential component of forgiveness

- i. Philemon would have been right to ask for that
- ii. It would not be wrong to be gracious and loving and forgive the debt altogether
- iii. Once again, Paul desires that Philemon not be under compulsion but willing
  - removes pressure from Philemon, offers to make good Onesimus' debt
  - But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

### 3. Type of Christ

- a. Paul's willingness to pay Onesimus' debt
  - i. Philemon, like God had been wronged
  - ii. Onesimus like the sinner is in need of reconciliation
  - iii. Paul offered to pay the price to bring about that reconciliation
- b. How we play the parts
  - i. We are never more like God than when we forgive
  - ii. We are never more like Christ than when we pay someone else's debt so that reconciliation can take place