

The Sweetness of Forgiveness – Part 1

Philemon 19-25

Introduction:

1. What a joy the study of this little book has been. This book is about a real-life story that happened to Paul.
2. In Rome, Paul had led a young man by the name of Onesimus to Christ. But, Paul found out that Onesimus had been a servant of his dear friend, Philemon. Onesimus had rebelled against Philemon and fled from him.
3. So, Paul was really caught in the middle. Philemon and Onesimus were at odds, and Paul had a close relationship with both men.
 - He loved them both dearly. Philemon had been his dear friend and fellow laborer for years, and Onesimus was Paul's convert who had been such a blessing and encouragement to him.
4. Paul's heart was to see their relationship mended and restored. In order for this to work, two things had to happen:
 - Onesimus had to be willing to go back to Philemon and seek to make things right.
 - Philemon had to be willing to receive back Onesimus, forgive him, and restore him. vs. 12, 17
 - The word “*receive*” is used three times (vs. 12, 15, 17). It means “to take someone by the hand and lead them into your home as a welcome guest and friend.”
5. So, Paul had sent Onesimus back to Colosse and, at the same time, sent back this letter to Philemon, and the letter to the Colossian church.
6. Notice Paul's words in Colossians 3:13-14. Paul desired for the situation between Philemon and Onesimus to be a living display of these verses to that local congregation.
7. Why should Philemon forgive Onesimus? Why should **we** forgive those who have wronged us? The conclusion of this letter provides the answer.

Forgiveness brings peace of mind. vs. 19

1. According to verse 19, Paul had shared with Philemon the marvelous gospel of God's grace. Philemon owed Paul his life, so to speak. Of course, Philemon's eternal life was in Christ, but it was Paul who had led him to this wellspring of life in Christ.
2. Can you imagine how hypocritical it would have been for Philemon to play hardball, and refuse to forgive Onesimus (a brother in Christ, and friend of Paul)?
 - Philemon had received complete and total forgiveness of all of his sins (because of Paul's witness), but now won't forgive Onesimus (whom Paul has asked him to forgive).
3. Did you know that when Christians harbor an unforgiving spirit, it robs us of our peace? The reason why is because there is something instinctive that tells us that this is wrong and hypocritical.

- When you accept a wealth of grace and then refuse to share it with others, you will lack peace. Ephesians 4:32
4. When you forgive, you don't have to feel like a hypocrite. You are the one set free!
 5. Forgiveness looses **you** and sets **you** free! Forgiveness is not an easy thing, but once you do it, peace floods your mind and heart. In your spirit, you know it is right, once you have put away fleshly attitudes and exercised forgiveness. Colossians 3:13-15

Forgiveness produces joy. vs. 20a

1. Paul knew that a by-product of Philemon's forgiveness would be joy.
 - It most likely will bring joy to the person you have forgiven.
 - It brings joy to others who are caught in the middle of your turmoil.
 - It also brings joy to you, the person who chooses to forgive.
2. Unforgiveness is a recipe for internal misery. Do you want to know what unforgiveness produces? Ephesians 4:31 will clearly reveal it. Is this what you want to characterize your heart and life? Why not trade that garbage for joy and peace?
3. Unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), which robs the believer of joy.
4. This is infectious and spreads to those around you who are ill-affected by your lack of forgiveness.
5. In the story of the prodigal son, what did the father's forgiveness produce internally for him and externally to others? (Luke 15:20-24) Joy!
6. What did the brother's unforgiveness produce? (Luke 15:28) Anger and isolation!
7. Paul said to Philemon, "Forgive, and let me have some joy in the Lord."

Unforgiveness equals misery, forgiveness equals joy. Philippians 4:2-4