

The Need for “Philemons” in the Local Church Philemon 1-7

Introduction:

1. This is, without a doubt, the most intimate, personal book that the apostle Paul wrote. He wrote this letter to a friend in the church at Colosse named Philemon. Paul was in prison in Rome at the time he wrote to Philemon.
2. In verse 1, Paul calls Philemon his *"dearly beloved and fellowlabourer."*
3. Paul had actually led Philemon to Christ (vs. 19). They were more than just passing acquaintances. They were buddies, friends; they had served God together side by side. They had a very personal and loving relationship, and this comes through in the letter.
4. Paul is going to get to the core issue of the letter beginning in verse 8.
 - Paul is writing to Philemon about a runaway servant of Philemon's named Onesimus. Paul had led Onesimus to Christ while in Rome and so Paul plays the role of a mediator between the two men.
5. But before Paul gets to this issue, he spends the first seven verses talking about Philemon and his Christian walk.
6. There is no evidence from this book (or the book of Colossians) that Philemon was the pastor of this local assembly. In fact, it doesn't appear that he was in full-time Christian service, but rather was a businessman of some sort. He must have also been a man of means who owned servants and a home big enough for the local assembly to meet there.
7. But what a blessing Philemon was to the cause of Christ! Oh, how we need more Philemons in the local church. Are you a Philemon? If you are in Christ, you can be. What is it that makes a believer a Philemon? Let's examine what Paul says about this saint and draw some principles for our own lives.

First, Philemon's service for the Lord was a family affair. vs. 1-2

1. Paul mentions Philemon's wife, Apphia, and most people believe that Archippus was Philemon's son. After mentioning all three, Paul says, *"...and to the church in thy house."*
2. Philemon had his entire family involved in the work of the ministry. His son is called a fellowsoldier and it appears that his son had a high level of leadership in the local church there at Colosse. Colossians 4:17
3. This is so refreshing to see. So many times, men will begin to grow in the Lord, but they leave their family in their spiritual dust so to speak. The man is growing in the Lord and experiencing the thrill of serving the Lord while his family sits at home.
4. A man's family should desire to serve the Lord with him for two reasons:
 - First, he **includes** them in his service for the Lord.
 - Second, he helps his family to grow so that they **want** to serve the Lord with him.

5. Of course, the greatest hindrance to this is when a man is one person at church and another person at home. This kind of hypocrisy will destroy his family's desire to serve the Lord with him.
6. Philemon was obviously a sincere believer who had made his service for the Lord a family affair. His family was growing with him in the Lord and serving the Lord.

Second, Philemon practiced gracious hospitality. vs. 2, 5

1. The local assembly met in Philemon's house. This was very common in the early church.
 - The opportunity that we have to buy, build, and rent buildings would not have been as easy for believers living in the Roman Empire.
2. Philemon just opened up his home and said, "We can meet at our house." This man was filled with the gracious, giving spirit of Christ.
3. Did you know that hospitality should not be an option for a believer (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9)? In fact, Paul listed it as one of the qualifications of a spiritual leader in the local assembly. 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
4. What is the attitude of a Spirit-filled person? His attitude is this: "Whatever I possess, I want to use it for the work of God and for the edification and blessing of others."
5. Believers who are Philemons live for others, not themselves (vs. 5). This is what Philemon was known for. Paul said, "*Hearing of thy love...*" Word gets around! People were talking about Philemon all the way in Rome where Paul was.
6. Notice that Philemon's love and hospitality was first toward Jesus Christ, and then it naturally spilled over into his relationships with others. But notice that his love for others included **all** the saints. What a testimony! What a challenge.
7. When you are a Philemon, you don't pick and choose who you will love and be hospitable to. You love all the saints.

Third, Philemon was a source of refreshment to others. vs. 7

1. What does Paul mean when he talks about the saints being refreshed by Philemon?
 - Have you ever heard the expression, "He is always stirring the pot," or "She is constantly getting people all stirred up?" This is the exact opposite of this word "refreshed."
2. A cross-reference will help you gain an understanding of this word biblically. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" The word translated "refreshed" is the same word for "rest."
 - Also look at Mark 6:31. Are you getting the picture? A person who is a refreshment to others is like a wellspring of water in a dry, desert land.
3. When Paul talks about the "*bowels of the saints*," bowels speak of the innermost part of something, such as the "bowels of the earth."

4. Philemon had not just superficially refreshed people. He had helped to provide rest and peace to the saints in their innermost being and emotions, at the gut level.
5. Are you a Philemon? Do you provide rest, peace, comfort, and refreshment to others?
 - Or do you thrive on negative news? Do you love to pass on gossip? Do you find yourself always in inner turmoil and stirred up about something?
 - You cannot be a Philemon this way. By the grace of God, you must change.
6. Paul had been encouraged, comforted, and refreshed in prison by Philemon's testimony. Paul's imprisonment was actually made lighter, and he was emotionally strengthened by Philemon. Your life impacts others more than you know.

In Conclusion:

1. The key to Philemon's gracious, Christ-filled life is in verse 6. It is the key for every believer who desires to be a Philemon.
2. The word "communication" simply means "to share." Philemon had shared his faith in Christ graciously with others. His faith had flowed forth into his daily living.
3. When Paul had heard about Philemon's testimony, Paul thanked God and prayed for Philemon constantly (vs. 4). What was Paul's prayer? That the sharing of Philemon's faith would become even more abundant and energized.
 - The word "effectual" is the Greek word "energace." This is the word from which we get our English word "energy."
4. Paul said, "I am praying that the sharing of your faith becomes more active, operative, and energized than ever before."
5. How does this happen? Look at the end of verse 6. It would happen as Philemon recognized all that he had been graciously given in Christ. As he became more aware of who God had made him in Christ, he would be able to demonstrate that grace to others.
6. Christian, you have been made complete in Christ and been given all spiritual blessings in Christ.
7. You must get into God's Word and discover all that God has made you in Christ.

As your faith begins to rest in the truth of who you are in Christ, you begin to allow Him to live through you and put Christ on display in your dealings with others. You become a modern day Philemon!

How to Treat our Fellow Laborers Philemon 8-14

Introduction:

1. Paul wrote this letter to a friend named Philemon in the church at Colosse. Paul was in prison in Rome at the time he wrote to Philemon.
2. In verse 1, Paul calls Philemon his “*dearly beloved and fellowlabourer.*”
 - The word “*fellowlabourer*” carries the idea of somebody who is involved in a work with you, side by side.
 - The Greek word for “*fellowlabourer*” is translated in other places as “*my helpers in Christ,*” “*my workfellow,*” “*my partner and fellowhelper,*” “*my fellowworkers,*” and “*my brother and companion in labour.*”
3. Paul had actually led Philemon to Christ (vs. 19) and they had served God together side by side. They knew each other very well as they served God together.
 - The apostle Paul had many people that were his fellow laborers. vs. 23-24
4. Likewise, if you are in Christ and part of a local assembly of believers, you are going to have fellow laborers. There are people with whom you will serve God, side by side.
 - This is God's plan, by the way. You were never meant to be on a spiritual island, just you and God. 1 Corinthians 3:9
5. This can be both a blessing and a challenge, because where there are **people**, there are **problems**. The same was true in Paul's day. Paul had a situation on his hands and had to deal with it.
 - Philemon had a runaway servant named Onesimus whom Paul had led to Christ in Rome. Onesimus had been changed by the power of the gospel and was now ministering to Paul while Paul was in prison. Yet, he belonged to Philemon, Paul's fellow laborer.
 - Once Paul discovered this, what was Paul to do? How would he handle this with his fellow laborer?
6. This little letter is a textbook on how one believer should treat his fellow laborer in Christ. We get to see firsthand how Paul deals with a very sensitive situation with his fellow laborer. What are the principles we learn from this little letter?

First, express appreciation for their ministries. vs. 5, 7

1. We studied the first seven verses last week and we saw how Paul genuinely appreciated the ministry of Philemon.
2. Paul was not just buttering up Philemon to get what he wanted. Paul really was thankful for Philemon's ministry, and told him so.
3. Sometimes we can get tunnel vision, and we only see the value of **our** ministries. Do you realize that it takes all the members of the body ministering in their unique ways for the body to function efficiently? 1 Corinthians 12:17-21
4. When was the last time you said a kind word to others regarding **their** ministries?

5. Paul could have started this letter by tooting his own horn and talking about how important his apostolic ministry was. He could have had the attitude, “Because my ministry is so valuable and important, you must do what I need you to do.”
6. But this is not the approach Paul took at all with his fellow laborer. He took the approach, “I realize how valuable **your** ministry is and I appreciate it so much.”

Second, exhort them in a spirit of love. vs. 8-9

1. Verse 8 may not be readily clear when you first read it, but as we define the words it becomes abundantly clear. “*Wherefore, though I might be much bold* (frank; blunt) *to enjoin thee* (command you) *that which is convenient* (proper).”
2. Paul is saying, “I could take the approach of intimidating you and ordering you to do what is right. I could be bold and brazen in what I am asking you to do. I could use my apostolic authority, push my weight around, and command you to do what I am asking.”
3. But then in verse 9 he says, “*Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee...*” This is the motivation of grace.
4. Law says, “You better do it, or I'm going to whack you.” Law intimidates, coerces, guilt-trips, pressures, and uses force. This isn't the way to treat our fellow laborers.
5. Grace says, “I will do it out of love. I will do it because I love you.” This was the basis of Paul's appeal to Philemon, “*for love's sake.*” 2 Corinthians 5:14
6. We must have a love relationship with our fellow laborers in Christ. Paul says, “I could command you to do this, Philemon, but I want you to put on display for that local church the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. I want you to do what is right, out of love.”
7. Remember, the Colossian believers were also receiving their own letter from Paul at this same time. Notice Colossians 3:13-14. Notice that Paul assumes that there **will** be quarrels in the local church. Paul wanted Philemon to be a living display of those verses.
8. When you are dealing with your fellow laborers, remember this: People may walk a mile for you out of **law**, but they will follow you to the ends of the earth out of **love**.

Third, always value their opinions and thoughts. vs. 10-16

1. Paul makes it clear in verses 10-12 what he is asking Philemon to do. By law, Philemon had every right to execute judgment on Onesimus (jail him, fine him, punish him), but Paul said, “I want you to forgive him and receive him as a brother in Christ.”
2. Then, in verse 13, Paul said, “I would have loved to keep him right here with me. He has proven valuable to me here.” But verse 14 is a key in how to treat our co-laborers.
 - Paul said, “*Without thy mind would I do nothing...*”
 - The word “*mind*” means “opinion; counsel.”

- Notice that Paul does not presume upon Philemon. Paul doesn't have the attitude, "This is what is right and I'm doing it, so deal with it, Philemon."
3. Paul said, "I don't want your benefit (good works, good will) to be of necessity (by constraint), but willingly." vs. 14
 4. Whether Philemon was to forgive and take back Onesimus, or whether he was to send him back to Paul, Paul wanted it to be Philemon's decision. He valued Philemon's opinions and thoughts.
 5. This is very important as you work with others for the cause of Christ. Many times there are different ways of looking at a situation. This is where we must be good listeners and be ready to hear what others are thinking.
 6. We should never have the attitude, "This is the way it is, period." I love the way Paul say, "*For perhaps...*" Notice the tenderness, and notice how Paul acknowledges that Philemon may look at it differently.

Fourth, trust and believe in your fellow laborers. vs. 20-22

1. I love the way Paul believed the best about Philemon. He said, "Philemon, I not only have confidence that you will do what I have asked, I believe you will go above and beyond what I have asked."
 - Paul had every confidence that Philemon would do what was right in the situation.
2. Why is it that so many times we want to believe the worst about people?
3. We should always strive to believe the best about people, until they absolutely give us no choice but to believe otherwise.
4. Sometimes when we go to another believer about a problem, we can tend to go with a chip on our shoulders. It is as if we expect them to disagree with us or come against us.
 - This is no way to treat our fellow laborers. People can tell when we come to them with this kind of an attitude.
5. What incredible lessons we can learn here from Paul. The work of the ministry is a team effort, and it is crucial that you be able to relate to and get along with your fellow laborers in Christ.
6. How exciting to see Paul in a real-life situation, a real-life problem, and we get to see how Paul dealt with his fellow laborer. May we all take these wonderful principles and apply them in our relationships with each other.

Philemon: Teaching Us Deep Truth Through Real-life Drama Philemon 10-19

Introduction:

1. Philemon is a personal letter that Paul wrote to his dear friend, Philemon. Philemon was a dedicated believer who had opened up his home for the church at Colosse to meet there.
2. What was Paul's purpose for writing this letter? In verse 10, Paul gets right to the point.
3. Paul had led a young man by the name of Onesimus to Christ, in Rome. But here was the problem. Onesimus had been a servant of Philemon's. He had rebelled against Philemon and fled from him.
4. So, there are three principal characters in this story:
 - Paul – who has a close partnership with Philemon. vs. 1
 - Philemon – the offended lord and master of Onesimus. vs. 11a
 - Onesimus – the rebel and enemy of Philemon, who now has a relationship with Paul. vs. 10
5. In this letter, Paul plays the role of mediator between Philemon and Onesimus. Paul beseeches Philemon to receive back Onesimus, forgive him, and restore him not as a servant, but as a brother in Christ. vs. 15-16
6. Verse 17 is a key verse in the book. Paul desired for Philemon to receive back Onesimus just as he would have received Paul himself.
7. There are some incredible spiritual truths that are put on display here in this little book. We see these deep truths illustrated in this situation between Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus.
 - It is as if the wonderful doctrines that God gave Paul in Romans through Titus are set to real-life drama, right here in this final little book that Paul wrote.
 - It is the perfect book to end Paul's epistles.

First spiritual truth – the doctrine of mediation (Christ is the mediator between me and God.)

1. Onesimus is a picture of every one of us before we found Christ. He had rebelled against his lord and was now an enemy and condemned by law. His actions had separated him from his lord and he was on the run. He was lost and without hope, in a completely alienated position.
2. This is a perfect description of every one of us before we trusted Christ. Ephesians 2:12; Colossians 1:21
3. Our own sin had alienated us from God. We were enemies of God by wicked works, and condemned by law. There was nothing that we could do in and of ourselves to bring reconciliation with God. We were without hope. The problem was beyond our ability to solve.

4. Back to our story. A mediator stepped in to help condemned Onesimus. Paul mediated with Philemon on Onesimus' behalf. Paul did **for** Onesimus what Onesimus could not do for himself.
5. Let's apply this to us and God. We also were in a hopeless, alienated position from God Almighty, but a mediator stepped in to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Praise the Lord for 1 Timothy 2:5! Praise God for the mediator, Jesus Christ.
6. Look back at Ephesians 2:12, but now let's read verse 13. Look back at Colossians 1:21, but now read verse 22. We have a mediator! Somebody went to bat for us, and that somebody was the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. He was fully God and fully man, the perfect mediator between God and man.

**Second spiritual truth – the doctrine of imputation
(Christ takes my sin and gives me His righteousness.)**

1. Notice what Paul the mediator says in verses 18 and 19. Paul says to Philemon, "Whatever he has done against you or whatever he owes you, put it on **my** account. I will pay his debt."
2. As you read this, it becomes clear that Paul is telling Philemon, "Take his debt and all his wrong-doing and put that on my account. Credit me with the wrong he has done. Take **my** good standing that I have with you and put that on **his** account."
3. This is a beautiful picture of the doctrine of imputation. Jesus Christ took our debts upon Himself on the cross. Our sins were imputed to Him on the cross. 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:6-8
 - To impute simply means "to credit." Jesus Christ said, "Take every one of Dan Proctor's sin debts and put them on My account. Don't impute them to him, but to Me." 2 Corinthians 5:19
 - Not only this, Christ said, "Father, take My righteousness and put it on Dan's account." 2 Corinthians 5:21
4. This is the doctrine of imputation. Christ takes every one of our sin debts and has them imputed to Him. The moment we trust Him as our Savior, He takes His righteousness and credits that to our account. And it is all on the basis of our mediator and what He has done for us. It is all done on the basis of our faith in what Christ has accomplished for us.
 - Notice this doctrine of imputation in Romans 4. Romans 4:5-8, 20-25
 - This doctrine is vividly illustrated for us in the story of Philemon.

**Third spiritual truth – identification
(God now receives me as He does His own Son.)**

1. In verse 17, Paul says, "*If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.*" Three times Paul admonishes Philemon, "*Receive him.*"
2. Paul had a wonderful, loving partnership relationship with Philemon. He says to Philemon, "Even though he has sinned against you and wronged you, I want you

- to take him out of an alienated relationship and put him in a partnership relationship, and treat him just like you would me.”
3. Philemon and Onesimus were alienated in their relationship, so until **Paul** and Onesimus had a relationship, there would continue to be a breach between Philemon and Onesimus.
 4. Think about it. Christ does for us what Paul did for Onesimus. We were alienated from God by wicked works.
 5. But Christ has a loving, eternal, partnership relationship with the Father. John 1:1, 14:9-10
 - So when you trust Christ and enter into a relationship with Christ, do you know what that means? It means He reconciles you to the Father and brings you into that same partnership that He enjoys with the Father!
 - This is why Jesus told the disciples that the only way to the Father was through Him. John 14:6
 6. When you trust Christ, Christ says, “Father, I have paid all their sin debts, I have given them my righteousness; now receive them just like you would me.”
 7. When you got saved you received more than just your sins being forgiven. You received an eternal identification in Christ whereby you are completely accepted and received by the Father. Ephesians 1:6, 3:12; Galatians 4:6-7
 8. If you are saved, you don’t have to slip in the back door of heaven. You are a new creature in Christ. You have a new identification! You have been made one with Christ, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Ephesians 5:30-32
 9. Christ became a curse for us on the cross so that we could be eternally accepted of the Father in Him. You were baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ the moment you were saved (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). You are eternally identified **in Christ**; therefore, the Father receives you as He does His own Son, Jesus Christ.

In Conclusion:

1. Do you see how valuable this little letter is to the believer? Do you see why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this and then preserve it for us as Holy Scripture?
2. This real-life situation illustrates for us many of the wonderful doctrines of Jesus Christ and what He does for the believer.
3. Aren't you thankful we have a mediator? Aren't you thankful that Christ had your sins imputed to Him, and then had His righteousness credited to your account? Aren't you thankful that God now sees you as “**in Christ**?”

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

The Sweetness of Forgiveness – Part 2

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

Forgiveness produces joy. vs. 20a

Forgiveness is a testimony to others. vs. 20b, 23-25

1. Our forgiveness (or lack thereof) has a direct affect on others who are watching us.
2. Notice in verse 20 how Philemon's forgiveness would result in refreshing Paul. Not only this, Paul lists several of his co-laborers in verses 23-24. They also would be watching carefully to see how Philemon would respond to this situation.
 - Would Philemon respond with grace (vs. 25) or with wrath?
 - Others were watching and would be directly affected by Philemon's decision.

3. It is possible to hold internal bitterness against a person and keep it hidden so that nobody else knows, but this is very unlikely. Most of the time, there are others who know of your tiff and are aware of the contention. Word spreads.
1 Corinthians 1:11
4. It is a very poor testimony for a believer when this happens. A believer may say, "But he was wrong and I was right." As a Christian we must understand that there are times when being **right** isn't what matters the most. You can be right, but be wrong.
 - What do I mean by this? You may find yourself in a situation where another person did something wrong that ill-affected you. But, instead of seeking to reconcile your differences with him and apply Christ-like forgiveness, you stew on it and get bitter. Your attitudes are wrong.
 - This is what I mean by being right, yet being wrong.
5. Paul taught that believers should be living in a way that is "*becoming*" to the gospel of Christ. Our lives should make the gospel of Christ look attractive. One of the ways that we do this is by our love and unity, and lack of contention.
Philippians 1:27; John 13:35
6. A believer's testimony should be marked by love, forbearance, and forgiveness towards others. These are the character attributes we should be known for.
Ephesians 4:2-3

Forgiveness brings obedience. vs. 21

1. Forgiveness really is not an option for a believer. It is a command. Notice how Paul words this in verse 21, "*Having confidence in thy **obedience**...*"
2. This was an obedience issue for Philemon. There was not option A or option B for Philemon, if he wanted to be right with God and be obedient. There was only one option. He had to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ.
3. Remember, Paul sent the letter to the Colossians at the same time that he sent this letter to Philemon. Notice what Paul says in Colossians 3:13. Paul assumed that there would be quarrels in the local church.
4. CrossRoads is a wonderful church family. You can see the love and grace of Christ evidenced in very real and apparent ways, on a consistent basis. But, it is not a perfect church, nor are its members perfect.
5. Let me share with you reality. There will be times when other people in this church offend you, hurt your feelings, are insensitive to your needs, and flat out do you wrong. There will be quarrels. Where there are **people**, there are quarrels and disagreements.
6. The question is not whether there will be quarrels; the question is how you will **respond** when the quarrels come.
7. Paul gives us some clear cut commands on how to respond. You can summarize it in two action verbs: forbear and forgive.
 - "Forbear" literally means, "to put up with."
 - There are times when you just put up with people's actions, and you simply apply grace and go on. You just chalk it up to the possibility that

- they may have been having a bad day, or it was totally unintentional, or they don't feel well, etc.
- Then there are times when the offence really stings, and you can't just blow it off and forbear. You have to intentionally face the cross and apply Christ-like forgiveness.
8. Here is what I have found in my many years of ministry. As you grow in the grace of Christ, when offenses and quarrels come:
 - About 80% of the time, you can just forbear, apply grace, and go on with no ill effects.
 - About 15% of the time, you find yourself unable to put the offense out of your mind, so you have to talk to the Lord about it, lay it at His feet and apply Christ-like forgiveness.
 - About 5% of the time, the offence is so great that you must sit down with the person and seek to resolve it, and then apply Christ-like forgiveness.
 9. The more immature we are in Christ, the more those numbers flip the other way, where everything is a big issue, and we are always mad and offended. People are always “doing us wrong.” We are always in a tizzy over something.
 10. But the point is, forgiveness is an obedience issue. A believer cannot harbor bitterness and anger and be right with God. Unforgiveness gives place to the devil. 2 Corinthians 2:8-11

Forgiveness enhances our prayer lives. vs. 22

1. Paul expressed great confidence in Philemon's prayers. This is because Paul felt confident that Philemon would do what was right with Onesimus and forgive him.
2. Bitterness will always hinder your prayer life. The reason why is very simple. When you are hanging on to grudges and full of bitterness, you don't feel like praying. As we said earlier, your spirit knows that this is hypocritical and it hinders your prayer life.
 - Almost guaranteed, bitter people are not praying people.
3. Oh, the liberty that comes when you obey God's Word and apply forgiveness to every offence and every wrong. The black cloud that was over your head will be gone and you will feel free to be able to commune with God.
4. Unforgiveness is sin, and sin always hinders your fellowship with God.
5. When you decide to apply Christ's forgiveness to your earthly relationships, you will find that instead of being bitter, you will be praying for that person at whom you were bitter.
6. This is so much more productive, both for you and for him.

In Conclusion:

1. Why should we forgive? At the end of this little letter, we have seen five powerful reasons to forgive.
 - It brings peace of mind.
 - It produces joy.
 - It is a powerful testimony to others.

- It brings obedience.
 - It enhances our prayer lives.
2. Why would we **not** forgive? A person may say, “Why should I forgive and let them off the hook?”
 3. Do you know what the reality is? When you refuse to forgive, who is on the hook? You are! Everywhere you go, it follows you, robbing you of your peace and joy.
 4. When you choose to forgive, you are letting them off **your** hook. This means you are free! The sweetness of forgiveness is that it sets you free.

What Does the Bible Teach About Slavery?

1. The issue of slavery is not something that we have to deal with in our culture, here in America. At one time it was a major issue. Thank God, it is not today. But, this is still an issue in many cultures even in the world today.
2. The word “slavery” does not appear in the King James Bible, but the concept of compulsory service of one person to another **does** exist. For the most part, the King James Bible uses the word “servant.” Jesus Himself took on Him the form of a servant.
3. Servanthood was embedded in the culture of Bible times. It was extremely common. It was not a racial issue, but an issue of a person's social and financial status. It wasn't uncommon for even doctors, lawyers, or politicians to be operating under the servanthood of another person. There was a caste system embedded in the culture.
4. Servanthood in Bible days and culture, for the most part, was not the same as the wicked slave trading that took place in the 17th and 18th centuries here in America. The compulsory service that we see in the Bible was not based on race or skin color.
 - Many times, compulsory service in the Bible was similar to people today going into the military. Once they sign on the dotted line, they become the property of the military, and they are told exactly what they must do and where they must go. Their service is compulsory. They cannot just choose to come and go, or leave when they want to. They are under the authority of the officer that is over them.
 - Illustration: A person commits crimes and has court-ordered community service. It is compulsory service.
5. As we will see, many times compulsory service in the Bible was an act of mercy to provide for the poor rather than an act of exploitation.

What were some reasons why people may have found themselves to be servants?

1. You sold **yourself** to be a servant.
 - If you were poor and unable to provide for yourself and your family, you could choose to basically sell your services to another person. You became their property and gave up your rights. But, in turn, your family would be provided for.
 - A Jew could actually do this, and sell himself to another Jew under the Old Testament law. Leviticus 25:39-41
 - Israel could buy the services of foreigners, also. They couldn't go and kidnap them, and force them to be bondmen, but they could go and purchase their service (Leviticus 25:44-46). Exodus 12:45 speaks of foreigners and hired servants.
 - God even made provision for these bondmen to become proselytes into Israel if they so desired. They could be circumcised, participate in Israel's festivities and Passover, and were also given the weekly Sabbath rest.
 - A Jew could also sell himself to serve a rich Gentile. Leviticus 25:47

2. You stole from another person. Exodus 22:3
 - If you were a Jew and stole from another person, you had to make full restitution according to the Old Testament law. If you could not make it right, you became a servant to that other person until it was made right.
 - The longest a Jew could serve another person was 6 years, and in the seventh year (the year of jubilee), all servants were set free.
3. You could not pay your debts. Exodus 21:2-6
 - If you borrowed money and could not pay it back, you didn't just file bankruptcy and walk away from it under Old Testament law. You became a servant to the person you owed. Remember the verse, "*The borrower is servant to the lender?*"
 - Again, six years was the maximum you would be required to serve.
4. You simply chose this life.
 - If you were a servant to somebody else, but you found it to be a good life, and you were well provided for, you could choose to remain a servant to that person. Deuteronomy 15:16-17
 - This is why the word "servant" in the Bible does not **always** carry the idea of compulsory service. The word "servant" definitely carries the idea of subjection or subservience, sometimes involuntarily, but sometimes voluntarily.

What are some biblical warnings about the issue of servanthood?

1. A person could not be kidnapped and forced into slavery or sold as a slave. This was strictly forbidden, both in the Old and New Testaments. Kidnapping was punishable by death. Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7; 1 Timothy 1:10
 - Slave trading is associated with the heathen, and with Satan's policy of evil. Revelation 18:12-13
2. Foreign slaves who ran away from their Gentile masters were to be welcomed in Israel, and not returned to their masters. Deuteronomy 23:15-16
3. Servants were never to be treated with cruelty. Exodus 21; Ephesians 6:9

What did the apostle Paul teach about the issue of servanthood?

- As we said earlier in this lesson, Paul lived in a day and culture in which it was very common for people to have servants working for them.
 - Some of the reasons were legitimate (theft, unpaid debt, etc.), but some may not have been. Therefore, Paul gave guidelines and principles that would help a believer to show forth Christ whether he found himself a servant or free.
1. Glorify Christ and reflect His grace no matter your social status. 1 Corinthians 7:20-22
 - Every believer is **free** in Christ, and every believer should be a **servant** of Christ. So, no matter your outward social status, reflect the grace and life of Who you belong to, Jesus Christ!

- What is the application of this? You may be a CEO with 100 people working and serving under you, or you may be flipping burgers for minimum wage, but regardless of your outward position, both of you can reflect the same Jesus to those around you.
 - We are all saved under different situations and with different backgrounds. Some believers are called upon to serve the Lord in tough circumstances. Paul taught that your social status is not the issue. Christ in you is the issue.
2. Treat those who serve under you fairly and with respect. Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1
 3. If you are a servant, serve with a right attitude and a right work ethic, as if Jesus is your boss. Colossians 3:22-23; Ephesians 6:5-7; 1 Timothy 6:1-2 (yoke: you are forced to serve out of law or obligation); Titus 2:9-10

How does Paul's gospel impact the issue of servanthood?

- The Bible approaches many cultural issues from an inside-out approach. The way you change culture is by changing the hearts of the people within the culture. This is what the gospel of grace and the doctrines of grace do. They change the way people think and act.
 - Paul gets to the very root of the issue by dealing with the overriding issues of love, grace, patience, kindness, etc. Here are some of the doctrines that Paul taught that would greatly impact the way a person thought about servanthood:
1. Paul taught that there are **no** social distinctions in the body of Christ.
 - There is no caste system. The ground is level at Calvary.
1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11
 2. Paul taught that when a servant is saved, he should be treated not as a servant, but as a brother in Christ. Philemon 15-16
 3. Paul taught that God is no respecter of persons, and eternal rewards are given on an absolutely equal basis. Ephesians 6:8-9
 4. Paul taught that Christ was a servant (Philippians 2:7) and that he himself (Paul) was a servant (Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1), and that all believers are ultimately servants of Christ, not men. 1 Corinthians 7:22-23

Concluding Thoughts:

- All of these doctrines would ultimately lay an axe at the root of slavery and help to abolish the evils of slavery.
- When one reads Paul's writings, you will not find a verse calling for the abolition of slavery, just as you will not find a verse calling for the abolition of drugs, alcohol sales, pornography, or lewd nightclubs.
- Paul could not just command all servants to flee from their masters and all masters to liberate their servants. Many times, servanthood was due to unpaid

debts, crimes committed, or because a person was poor and **chose** to sell himself as a servant.

- Imagine the chaos and the reproach it would bring upon Christ if all the servants were rebelling and fleeing, and all the masters were kicking out their servants who had no way of providing for themselves.
- Rather than doing this, Paul dealt with the issue from the inside out. His passion was to get people saved and then ground them in sound doctrine. When Christ lived in them and they were rooted in the doctrines of grace, they would begin to demonstrate Christ's grace and reflect it to one another, and do what is right and godly. Many of the cultural issues would, in turn, take care of themselves.