# Philemon – "All About Forgiveness"

*"The Foundation for Forgiveness"*

Philemon 4-25

I. Prayer

II. Review

***~ Please turn in your Bibles to Philemon (between Titus and Hebrews).***

? What is the theme of Philemon?

⇨ It is important for us to remember this morning that Philemon is **All About Forgiveness.**

☉☉ A Sunday School teacher had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?"
There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. "Sin," he said.

⇨ As we would all admit, forgiveness hits close to home for all of us. We have sinned and therefore we have all needed to seek the forgiveness of another, extend forgiveness to others and act as a mediator to encourage 2 or more people to forgive each other.

⇨ Since this is the case we should all be leaning in this evening to better understand what the LORD is teaching through this book of Philemon.

***~ Let's do a quick review from last night where we covered verses 1-3:***

1. **The Foundation of Forgiveness**
   **a) Humility**
   **b) Determination**

**c) The Origin of Forgiveness**

⇨ We were not able to get to verses 4-7 last night and due to time we cannot cover them in any depth this evening.

⇨ However, I want us to briefly look at them, and I will then give you a quick overview and outline before moving on to the rest of Philemon.

⇨ **Let's begin by reading verses 4-7.**

⇨ Before we look at a brief outline of verses 4-7, let me say something very important. Many people read verses 4-7 casually and say that Paul was trying to "grease the skids" or "butter up" Philemon, in order to manipulate Philemon into forgiving Onesimus.

⇨ This is the furthest thing from the truth.

**Paul is not trying to 'grease the skids' or 'butter up' Philemon so that he would forgive Onesimus, instead Paul is praising Philemon's Character expecting that Philemon would exemplify that same character when it came to Onesimus.**

⇨ Paul bases his appeal to Philemon on Philemon's character.

2. **The Profile of those who Forgive**
   a) **They Produce Thanksgiving**
   b) **They Produce Love**
   c) **They Produce a Life of Encouragement**

**~ It is now time to move on to our 3rd Major Truth about Forgiveness in Philemon.**

III. Exposition

Proposition:

**As we study Philemon 8-25 we will discover 2 more Major Truths about Forgiveness that will lead to a Life of Forgiveness to the Glory of God.**

1. **The Foundation of Forgiveness**
2. **The Profile of those Who Forgive**
3. **An Appeal to Forgive**
4. **The Attributes of Forgiveness**

***~ Before we dive into our 3rd Major Truth about Forgiveness let's first read verses 8-16:***

**READ**

**~ Let's now consider this next Major Truth"**

## 3. An Appeal to Forgive (vv. 8-16)

⇨ Before we dive into these verses, look with me at the word *appeal* found in verse 9 and found again in verse 10:

*appeal* = **παρακαλέω** = to call; to call to one's side; beseech, to urge; to entreat as opposed to command
- it is a compassionate call to do something

⇨ It is contrasted with what Paul says in verse 8: *though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper*

⇨ Instead of just commanding Philemon to forgive Onesimus (Philemon's runaway slave), which he could have done based on his position as an Apostle, Paul *appeals* to Philemon.

⇨ So, we are looking at *An Appeal to Forgive*.

⇨ Now look with me at the first word in verse 8: *Therefore*

⇨ It is critical that we understand what this word *Therefore* is there for.

? What is it there for?

? What is it referring to or what does it point to?

⇨ It points back to verses 4-7.

⇨ The *Therefore* in verse 8 is pointing to Philemon's Christ-like character.

⇨ So as Paul begins to make his *Appeal* to Philemon to forgive Onesimus, he does so on the basis of Philemon's Christ-like Character.

⇨ This is the foundation on which Paul makes his *Appeal* to Philemon to forgive.

⇨ Upon this Foundation Paul builds and gives us a Biblical example to follow when **making *An Appeal to Forgive.*** It is one in which we would be wise to follow.

**~ As we study Philemon 8-16 we will discover 3 Actions to take when making *An Appeal to Forgive* in order that God would be Glorified through Forgiveness.**

***~ The 1st Action to take when making An Appeal to Forgive is:***

**a. Appeal with a Biblical Motive**

⇨ We should always check our Motives when calling someone to forgive us or to forgive another, as Paul does in this letter to Philemon.

? Do we ask others to forgive based on what we will receive from it?

? Are we Motivated by the thought of exercising our Authority over another person, just to show we can?

⇨ Neither of those Motivation or others like them are Biblical Motives when making An Appeal to Forgive.

**? Then how are we to Appeal with a Biblical Motive?**

⇨ IN verses 8-9 we find 2 **Biblical Motives** for Making *An Appeal to Forgive.*

***~ The 1st one is:***

**1. The Motive of Truth**

⇨ Look with me at verse 8 again:

*8 Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper,*

⇨ Notice the Word:

*proper* (*required* – ESV; *what you ought to do* – NIV) = this word is used 2 other times in the N.T and translated as *"fitting"*

= appropriate thing to do (the right and holy thing for a Christian to do)

⇨ Paul is pointing to the fact that Forgiveness is the *proper* or right and holy thing for a Christian to do, it is Truth.

⇨ Forgiveness is **not an option** for a Christian, instead It is the "*proper*" thing for a Christian to do.

- Jesus (70x7)
- Ephesians and Colossians (Forgive as Christ Forgave you)

⇨ Philemon knew this and so did Paul, now Paul was gently reminding Philemon of this Truth.

⇨ Paul is Motivated in Making his Appeal to Philemon to Forgive based on the fact that this is what God's clearly calls Christians to do and is therefore **Truth**.

**?** How about those of us here in this room?

⇨ The specific exhortation for us is - to allow the **Truth** of the call to Forgive to be one of the Motives for us Making An Appeal to others to Forgive.

⇨ However, let's not stop just with the Motive of **Truth**, because Paul gives us the example of another Biblical Motive for Making *An Appeal to Forgive:*

**2. The Motive of Love**

⇨ Look with me at the first part of verse 9:

*9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—*

⇨ Notice the phrase *for love's sake*

**?** Whose love is Paul pointing to here?

⇨ Look back with me to verse 5:

*"I hear of your love … toward all the saints"*

⇨ Also look at verse 7:

*"For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love…"*

⇨ Obviously Paul is **Motivated** to *Appeal* to Philemon to Forgive, not solely on the basis of **Truth**, but also on the basis of Philemon's **Love** for others.

⇨ Philemon had proven himself to be a man of much **Love** as exhibited in his Self-Sacrificing **Love** of others.

⇨ Now Paul, based on his own **Love** of others, calls Philemon to Forgive, based on the **Love** that he has consistently displayed.

⇨ Yet, Paul does not end his Appeal by pointing to Philemon's **Love** only.

⇨ Paul also alludes to his own **Love.**

⇨ Look with me at the end of verse 9:
*"since I am such a person as Paul, the aged,"*

⇨ We see Paul's **Love** in the word:
*aged* (*old man*) = This letter was written later on in Paul's ministry when he was probably around 60, but this term means more than just his chronological age.

⇨ His aging was accelerated by all that he suffered for the sake of the Gospel.

⇨ The suffering of Paul for the Gospel was a living illustration of one who lived his life motivated by **Love, Love** of the Lord Jesus Christ and HIS Gospel.

⇨ Not only had Paul demonstrated his **Love** in the past, but he was currently demonstrating his **Love** as evidenced by the last part of verse 9:
*"and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus."*

⇨ When Paul says he is making his appeal based on **Love**, Philemon could not ignore the tremendous example of Paul's Self-Sacrificing **Love** and would therefore be Motivated to demonstrate Self-Sacrificing **Love** toward Onesimus by forgiving him.

⇨ So Paul is Motivated by **Love** when making his Appeal to Philemon to Forgive and he seeks to Motivate Philemon to Forgive with the same Motivation of Love.

**?** Are we Motivated to Make *An Appeal to Forgive* based on **Love**?

⇨ So we see Truth and Love are to be the Biblical Motives when making an Appeal to Forgive.

⇨ Paul summarizes the way **Truth** and **Love** should be used together when he writes:
📖 Ephesians 4:15
*15 but speaking the truth in love, …*

⇨ By the Grace of God I want to Appeal to all of you here this evening who may be harboring Unforgiveness in your heart toward another Brother or sister in Christ.

⇨ I want to Appeal to you to do what the LORD Commands and therefore is Proper to do and forgive that person.

⇨ I also want you to Forgive them based on the Love that I know you have for the LORD and HIS people.

***~ So the first Action to take when making an Appeal to Forgive is:***

**Appeal with a Biblical Motive**

***~ Let's now discover the 2nd Action to take when making An Appeal to Forgive:***

**b. Appeal with a Biblical Focus**

? When Making An Appeal for one Christian to forgive another Christian, what should be your Focus?

***~ Paul shows us 2 Biblical Things on which to Focus.***

***~ First:***

**1. The Focus of Grace**

⇨ Look with me at verse 10:

*10 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment,*

⇨ It literally reads: *"I am appealing to you concerning my child—whom I became the father of (begotten) in my chains—Onesimus".*

⇨ Notice that in the literal rendering, Onesimus' name is not brought up until the end of this verse.

⇨ This is significant to note, because it shows that Paul is Focusing on **Grace** in his Appeal to Philemon.

⇨ By placing Onesimus' name at the end Paul places the focus on the fact that the one about which he is making this Appeal is a brother in Christ.

⇨ Paul was saying that by the Grace of God, I shared the Gospel with this person and God gave him New Birth. This person had become a Christian.

⇨ Before even knowing this person's name Philemon's heart must have rejoiced as he remembered the time when he heard Paul share the Gospel and he was Converted by the **Grace** of God.

⇨ Paul is giving a lavish introduction to Onesimus.

- It's as if he was saying: "And now let me introduce to you My Child in the Faith, who I shared the Gospel with while I was in Prison In Rome and now by the Grace of God he is a fellow brother in Christ."

⇨ This would have caused a great anticipation in Philemon to know who this new brother in Christ was that Paul was referring to.

⇨ To which Paul then says: "Please, join me in welcoming Onesimus."

⇨ Instead of putting the Focus on the fact that Onesimus was Philemon's run away slave who stole from him, Paul stress edthe **Grace** of God that brought New Life to Onesimus which brought Conversion.

⇨ Not only do we see Paul Focusing on **Grace** in his Appeal to Philemon through the way he structures verse 10, but we also see it in <u>verse 11.</u>

⇨ Look there with me:
*11 who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.*

⇨ Paul uses an interesting play on words here. The word *useful* comes from the same Greek root as Onesimus.

⇨ Paul was basically saying that "Useful (Onesimus) was formerly Useless, but now he is living up to his name and is Useful."

⇨ Here Paul is stressing the fact that not only had Onesimus been Converted by the **Grace** of God, but God's Grace also Produced Fruit in his life (useful) which was evidence of his Conversion.

⇨ We also see the evidence of the Transforming **Grace** of God in the Onesimus' life in verse 12:

⇨ Notice what it says in verse 12:
*12 I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart,*

⇨ Remember we learned from Colossians 4:7-8 that Onesimus accompanied Tychicus in delivering the letter to the Church of Colossae and this letter to Philemon.

⇨ As Philemon was reading this letter and these words *I have sent him back to you in person,* there standing in front of Philemon would have been Tychicus and Onesimus.

⇨ As we think about the fact that Onesimus returned to Colossae and to the house of his master, Philemon, we must realize that the practice of the day was if a run away slave was caught he was to be brought back to his owner, who could then punish the slave as he wished. Many times the punishment was death.

⇨ The very fact that Onesimus was willing to return is further evidence of his conversion or transformation by the Gospel of **Grace.**

⇨ This is always the case. When someone has been Converted by the **Grace** of God it will always manifest itself in a changed life.

⇨ Philemon must have been moved by the fact that his Former Slave/thief had been changed by the Gospel of **Grace**, just like he had been changed by **Grace.**

⇨ Philemon new that he had been forgiven completely by God through faith in Christ's substitutionary death on the Cross.

⇨ He also knew that his sin against a Holy God was infinitely greater than anything a sinful man (Onesimus) could have done against another mere man who sinned.

⇨ And yet, in Christ, God forgave Philemon.

⇨ This put things in perspective for Philemon.

⇨ Philemon had been changed by God's **Grace** through Christ, and he was now being challenged to obey God and forgive another man who had been changed by the **Grace** of God.

⇨ How could he do anything but forgive Onesimus.

⇨ The first thing then that Paul Focuses on when making An Appeal to Philemon to Forgive is the **Grace** of God.

⇨ We too must Focus on the **Grace** of God when making an Appeal to others to Forgive.

⇨ We must see and help others see that the **Grace** that Forgave us has also forgiven that other brother/sister in Christ.

⇨ When **Grace** becomes the Focus, <u>then Forgiveness is sure to follow.</u>

***~ Not only does Paul Focus on Grace when making his Appeal to Forgive, but we also:***

## 2. The Focus of Humility

⇨ We see Paul Focus on **Humility** when making his Appeal to Philemon to Forgive Onesimus in verses 13-14.

*13 whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel;*
*14 but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.*

⇨ We first see this **Humility** expressed by Paul towards Philemon.

⇨ Paul could have used his authority as an Apostle and keep Onesimus and just sent Philemon a note and said Onesimus has been converted. I need him here to help me and I knew you wouldn't mind. Would this be O.K. with you?

⇨ If he would have done it this way, it could have been seen as manipulative. It would have been a lot harder for Philemon to say 'No'. This would have made Philemon make a choice *under compulsion* as it says in verse 14.

⇨ Instead, Paul humbles himself and sends Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter calling for forgiveness and reconciliation, so that Philemon could make a decision *not under compulsion but of his own free will* (v 14).

⇨ We also see this humility towards Philemon in the phrase at the beginning of verse 14 *without your consent I did not want to do anything.*

⇨ Paul places the rights and needs of Philemon before himself.

⇨ Paul considered Philemon's and Onesimus' reconciliation before himself and thus lived out:

📖 Philippians 2:3-4

*3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;*
*4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

⇨ Not only do we see his **humility towards Philemon** when making his Appeal, but we also see his **humility towards the Government** of his day.

⇨ The Law of his day required that he return Onesimus to Philemon.

⇨ **Humility** was most definitely a **Focus** for Paul as he made his Appeal to Onesimus.

⇨ Onesimus would have been fully aware of this **Humility** shown by Paul and it would have encouraged Philemon to Humble himself and Forgive Onesimus.

⇨ When Appealing to someone to grant forgiveness to another, we too must Approach it with **Humility**.

⇨ Our **Humility** will encourage others to Humble themselves and extend forgiveness to those who have wronged them.

⇨ I pray that God would make us a people that would Focus on **Grace** and **Humility** when Making an Appeal to Forgive.

***~ We have now discovered the first 2 Actions to take when making an Appeal to Forgive:***

- **Appeal with a Biblical Motive**
- **Appeal with a Biblical Focus**

***~ Let's now discover the 3rd Action to take when making An Appeal to Forgive:***

## c. Appeal with a Biblical Perspective

⇨ By Perspective, I mean the way a person looks at something.

⊙⊙ For example think about the different Perspectives of the Army of Israel when facing the Giant, Goliath and David, the shepherd boy.

When Goliath came against the army of Israelites, the soldiers all thought, "He's so big we can never kill him." David looked at the same giant and thought, "He's so big I can't miss."

⇨ A person's perspective can make all the difference in the world when making decisions.

⇨ Philemon could either have a **Biblical Perspective** or a **Worldly Perspective** when considering the circumstances he found himself in.

***~ The 1st aspect of Paul's Appeal with a Biblical Perspective is:***

### 1. The Perspective of Sovereignty

⇨ Look with me at <u>verse 15-16:</u>

*15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother…*

⇨ Notice the beginning of verse 15:

*For perhaps* = Paul does not presume to know God's working behind the scenes, only God knows how

circumstances work into HIS perfect plan, but Paul definitely alludes to it.

⇨ Now notice the word:
*separated* = this is a passive verb, pointing to the possibility that it was God who separated them

⇨ Look now at the word:
*a while (a little while)* = **ὥρα =** hour
- A temporary separation resulted in an eternal reunion.

⇨ Paul is Appealing to Philemon to Seriously Consider the **Sovereignty of God in this whole situation** by considering the fact that Onesimus' flight from slavery to physical freedom actually resulted in Onesimus' spiritual freedom.

⇨ God either causes or allows all things to happen for HIS Sovereign Purposes, which we cannot always comprehend, but we can always trust that HE will do what is right.

⇨ **The Perspective of God's Sovereignty** is seen throughout the Scripture.

⇨ One great example is seen at the end of Genesis after Joseph reveals himself to his brothers who had sold him into slavery to Egypt.

📖 Genesis 50:20
*20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive..*

⇨ By Appealing with **The Perspective of Sovereignty** Paul would cause Philemon to realize that God has a greater Purpose in Onesimus' flight and his forgiving Onesimus than Philemon could ever imagine.

⇨ When making an Appeal to Forgive we too must help people see **The Perspective of Sovereignty.**

⇨ We must help them consider what God wants them to learn in the midst of the painful situation they find themselves in and that God will use it for HIS glory regardless.

***~ The 2nd aspect of his Appeal with a Biblical Perspective is:***

**2. The Perspective of Unity**

⇨ Look again at verse 16:

*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.*

⇨ In God's Sovereignty Philemon received way more than a slave back; he received a *beloved brother* which were the very words that Paul used to describe Philemon in verse 1 of this Epistle.

⇨ Paul is Appealing to Philemon to have **The Perspective of Unity** in this situation.

⇨ Since Onesimus is now a *beloved brother* then Forgiveness is the only option that would promote **Unity** in the body of Christ at Colossae.

⇨ Remember that this letter was not only addressed to Philemon personally, but it was also addressed to *the church in your house* (v. 2)

⇨ The contents of this letter were meant to be shared with the other Christians in Colossae.

⇨ Philemon's forgiveness of a fellow *beloved brother* would have promoted incredible **Unity** in the Church at Colossae.

⇨ It is imperative when making an Appeal to Forgive that we help people see **The Perspective of Unity.**

⇨ Forgiveness Promotes **Unity** in the body and therefore serves as a great witness to a watching world who knows nothing of true Forgiveness.

***~ Before we discover our 4th Major Truth about Forgiveness let's first read verses 17-25:***
**READ**

**~ Let's now consider the 4th Major Truth about Forgiveness in Philemon:**

## 4. The Attributes of Forgiveness (17-25)

**As we study Philemon 17-25 we will discover 7 Attributes of Forgiveness in order that we would Exhibit Forgiveness to the Glory of God.**

***~Let's begin by discovering the 1st Attribute of Forgiveness from this last section in Philemon.***

### a. Forgiveness is Exhaustive in Scope

⇨ Look with me at verse 17:

*17 If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.*

⇨ Notice the first 2 words:

*If then (So if you)* = the grammer here in the Greek assumes the condition as a reality – i.e. *'Since' you regard me …*

⇨ Before further making a request of Philemon to Forgive Onesimus, Paul reminds Philemon of their committed partnership in the Gospel.

⇨ This Partnership in the Gospel is what Paul bases his appeal to Philemon on at the end of verse 17:

⇨ Look at the 2nd half of verse 17:
*accept (receive, welcome) him as you would me.*

⇨ AS a *partner* in the Gospel with Philemon, Paul knows how Philemon would *accept* him.

⇨ Philemon would *accept* him with open arms with no strings attached.

⇨ Paul is now calling on Philemon to accept Onesimus as a *partner* in the Gospel.

⇨ Philemon would have *accepted* Paul with joy as one who was sent by God, therefore he was to *accept* Onesimus in the same way.

⇨ Philemon's **Forgiveness** to Onesimus is to be **Exhaustive in Scope.**

⇨ It is to know no bounds. There are to be no strings attached. He is to Forgive him completely.

⇨ In fact true Forgiveness is always **Exhaustive in Scope.** If you haven't Forgiven Completely, then you haven't Forgiven at all.

⇨ Consider the one from which all Forgiveness ultimately stems, God the Son – JESUS.

⇨ When HE forgave us HE did it completely or **Exhaustively.** He did not forgive 99.99 % of our sin, but HE forgave it all.

⇨ Philemon would have clearly understood this, because Paul had taught this to Philemon and the Church at Colossae.

⇨ Based upon this truth Paul was calling Philemon to Forgive Onesimus **Exhaustively** just as Christ had Forgiven him.

⇨ The Proof of this **Exhaustive Forgiveness** would be seen as Philemon *Accepted* Onesimus as Full-fledged *Partner* in the Gospel.

**?** Is our Forgiveness **Exhaustive in Scope** and therefore True Forgiveness?
**?** Are there any strings attached to our forgiveness?

***~ Let's discover the 2nd Attribute of Forgiveness found in our passage this morning:***

## b. Forgiveness is Expensive in Cost

⇨ Look with me at <u>verse 18:</u>

*18 But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account;*

⇨ Onesimus had *wronged* Philemon by running away.

⇨ Look at the word:

*owes* = a moral or financial debt

⇨ It is in the <u>present tense</u> indicating an ongoing or outstanding debt.

⇨ The debt owed may be referring to Onesimus stealing money from Philemon to finance his escape to Rome.

~ OR ~

⇨ The debt owed may be referring to the financial loss Philemon incurred by the loss of Onesimus' services as a worker.

⇨ The grammar here using the word '*if*' is not questioning whether Onesimus had '*wronged*' or '*owed*' Philemon anything.

⇨ Paul assumes this to be fact. (*since*)

⇨ So, we see that Onesimus had fled and owed Philemon a debt.

⇨ **Forgiveness** would be **Expensive in Cost** to Philemon, due to the debt owed him by Onesimus.

⇨ Now look at Paul's response to the debt Onesimus *owed* Philemon, found at the end of <u>verse 18:</u>
*charge that to my account* = this was a commercial and legal trading term of the day

⇨ Paul was saying. "I'll take care of his debt, so do not let that get in the way of you Forgiving Onesimus."
~ OR ~
- "Take his name off your books and put mine in his place."

⇨ Paul further stresses his seriousness about paying Onesimus' debt in <u>verse 19.</u>

⇨ Look at the <u>first part of verse 19</u> with me:
*I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand,*

⇨ We are not sure whether Paul wrote the entire letter with his own hand or dictated it to someone, but we do know that this part of the letter was written in Paul's own handwriting.

⇨ Paul's statement here about writing with his own hand was in effect placing his **signature** on this bond making it legal and binding.

⇨ Not only did his own handwriting stress his seriousness about paying Onesimus' debt, but the next phrase further solidifies how serious he was concerning this matter.

⇨ Look at the phrase:

*I will repay it*

= a legal term that appears on promissory notes; a guarantee of Paul's intentions; full payment for a debt; IOU

⇨ As **Expensive in Cost as Forgiveness** would be for Philemon, Paul goes the extra mile in offering to pay the Cost in order for Philemon and Onesimus to experience Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

⇨ If Philemon accepted Paul's offer to Pay the Debt, it would no longer be **Expensive in Cost** to him, but it would be **Expensive** for Paul.

⇨ **Forgiveness** is always **Expensive in Cost** for someone.

⇨ Paul's statements of *charge that to my account* and *I will repay it* inevitably would have brought to Philemon's mind the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ.

⇨ Philemon would have been reminded of the fact that his sin placed him in debt to a Holy and Infinite God.

- He could not pay his debt incurred from sin.
- Therefore, his debt had been charged to someone else's account.

⇨ Philemon would realize that what Paul was doing in asking Philemon to charge Onesimus' debt to his account, was a picture of what Christ did for him.

⇨ Philemon's **Forgiveness** was **Expensive in Cost** for the LORD Jesus Christ.

⇨ Now notice the last part of verse 19:
*(not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well).*

⇨ Paul is referring to the fact that he had introduced Philemon to the Gospel and led him to faith in Christ.

- The grammar here has Paul stating this in a *reluctant way* as not to lord this over Philemon or put undue pressure on him.

⇨ Yet, Paul wants Philemon to see Onesimus' debt in the proper perspective.

⇨ Were it not for God using Paul to share the Gospel with Philemon, Philemon would still be in his sin.

⇨ Therefore, compared to the debt that Philemon owes Paul, Onesimus' debt is insignificant.

⇨ Philemon would be compelled to do the right thing and Forgive Onesimus.

⇨ Yes, this **Forgiveness** of Onesimus would be **Expensive in Cost** to Philemon, but it paled in comparison to the INFINITE **Expense** that was incurred by God the Father in Giving HIS sinless Son to die in Philemon's place.

⇨ In light of this Philemon could do nothing but Forgive Onesimus.

? Do we understand that **Forgiveness is Expensive in Cost?**

? Do we understand that our own **Forgiveness** was **Expensive in Cost** to the Holy God of the Universe?

⇨ Every Christian has been forgiven an infinitely far greater debt than any debt owed to us.

⇨ When we understand this truth, we can do nothing but Forgive others from the heart.

***~ Let's discover the 3rd Attribute of Forgiveness found in our passage this morning:***

**c. Forgiveness is Exhilarating to Others**

⇨ Look with me at verse 20:

*20 Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.*

⇨ Notice the phrase:

*let me benefit from you in the Lord*

⇨ Especially notice the word:

*benefit* = from the same root as *Onesimus*

⇨ Just as we saw in verse 11 Paul is using a play on words here with the word *Onesimus* which also means useful or benefit.

⇨ Paul is basically asking Philemon to be his 'Onesimus,' his benefit.

⇨ Notice the phrase:

*in the Lord* = this points to the fact that it would be a spiritual benefit

⇨ Philemon's forgiveness of Onesimus would bring a spiritual benefit to Paul.

**?** What would this spiritual benefit be?

⇨ Look at the last phrase in <u>verse 20:</u>

*refresh my heart in Christ*

⇨ Now notice the word:

*refresh* = to cause to rest; give rest; implies relaxation, and "refreshment as a preparation for the renewal of labor or suffering" (Lightfoot)

- A military term speaking of an army resting from a march

⇨ Look back at verse 7 with me:

*7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because* ***<u>the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you</u>****, brother.*

⇨ Philemon had *refreshed* his brothers and sisters in Christ through his sacrificial love for them.

⇨ His Love was **Exhilarating** to the church at Colossae. It <u>energized</u> them to love like he did and keep fighting the fight of Faith.

⇨ Paul is now saying to Philemon, "By forgiving Onesimus, you will *Refresh my heart* just as you *refreshed the hearts* of the saints in Colossae."

⇨ The spiritual benefit that Paul sought from Philemon was to be *refreshed* or **Exhilarated** by Philemon's Christ-like Forgiveness of Onesimus.

⇨ Philemon's Forgiveness would **Exhilarate** or energize and inspire Paul to continue to be Christ-like in his forgiveness of others.

**?** When we see Forgiveness exhibited in the lives of others, are we **Exhilarated** in such a way that it inspires us to forgive?

⇨ Please, know that your Christ-like **Forgiveness is Exhilarating to Others.**

***~ Let's discover the 4th Attribute of Forgiveness found in our passage this morning:***

## d. Forgiveness is Extravagant in Practice

⇨ We have seen Paul ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother in Christ.

⇨ Now look with me at the last part of verse 21:
*I know that you will do even more than what I say.*

⇨ Some have speculated that Paul is not only asking Philemon to forgive, but the *even more than what I say* is a request to free Onesimus from his physical position of slavery.

⇨ Others have thought *even more than what I say* is a request for Philemon to send Onesimus back to Paul in Rome to serve him there.

⇨ This does not seem to fit, because in verse 22, Paul says he plans to come to Colossae to visit.

⇨ Instead of either of these 2 options (physical freedom and Onesimus back to Rome), it seems clear that Paul is stressing that real Forgiveness goes beyond the mere minimum and is instead **Extravagant in Practice.**

- It is Lavish in its expression.
- It doesn't just say I forgive, but it goes the extra mile to assure forgiveness.

⇨ Paul may not have been specifically asking Philemon to free Onesimus from his Physical slavery, but Philemon's heart of wanting to be **Extravagant** in **Forgiveness** may have led to this.

☉☉ We are all familiar with the story in Luke 15 of what is called "The Prodigal Son." The Son just wants a forgiveness that will allow him to be a servant to his Father, but his Father would have none of that. Instead the Father puts his best robe on him, puts a ring that symbolizes authority on his finger, puts sandals (which slaves did not usually wear) on his feet and then kills the fattened calf which was reserved for the most special occasions. The Father did not do the minimum of Forgiveness, but instead his **Forgiveness** was **Extravagant.**

**?** How about you?

**?** Is your **Forgiveness Extravagant** or does it only do the minimum that counts technically as Forgiveness?

⇨ By the Grace of God let's be people who are **Extravagant** in our **Forgiveness** so that the world could see a glimpse of the Forgiveness that Christ gives.

***~ Let's discover the 5th Attribute of Forgiveness found in our passage this morning:***

**5. Forgiveness is Expected in the Church**

⇨ Look with me now at the first part of verse 21:

*Having confidence in your obedience*

⇨ Paul fully **Expected** Philemon to Forgive Onesimus.

⇨ After all **Forgiveness is Expected in the Church.**

⇨ The obedience Paul **Expected** of Philemon was to the LORD, for this is what the LORD commands us to do.

⇨ Jesus teaches in the Gospels that we are to forgive each other.

⇨ Not only do we see that **Forgiveness is Expected in the Church** by Paul's words of confidence in Philemon in verse 21, but we also see it by Paul's intention expression in verse 22.

⇨ Look now at verse 22:

*22 At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.*

= Paul expected to be released from house arrest in Rome and intended to visit the church at Colossae.

⇨ Paul's mention of his visit was meant to communicate that when he came, he **Expected** that Philemon would have forgiven Onesimus.

⇨ Now notice the phrase *through your prayers I will be given to you.*

⇨ The words *your* and *you* are plural, meaning that Paul is now addressing the Church that met in Philemon's house as well as Philemon.

⇨ This was a subtle reminder not only to Philemon, but also to the Church of Colossae that **Forgiveness is Expected in the Church.**

⇨ If Philemon needed any encouragement to do what was right, the other believers at Colossae were to encourage him to do the right thing and forgive Onesimus.

? Do we realize that **Forgiveness is Expected in the Church?**

? Are we willing to hold each other accountable to the Biblical Call of Forgiveness?

⇨ Let's be a people where Forgiveness is Expected between those who are committed to each other in the body of Christ.

***~ Let's discover the 6th Attribute of Forgiveness found in our passage this morning:***

## 6. Forgiveness is Exemplified in Leadership

⇨ Look with me now at verses 23-24:

*23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,*
*24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.*

⇨ Notice that Paul mentions 5 men in these 2 verses and calls them all, *my fellow workers* (v. 24)

⇨ All of these men would have been known by Philemon to be men who had shown themselves Faithful to the cause of the Gospel at this point in the early church.

⇨ I want us to focus on just one of them.
*Mark* (v. 24)

⇨ This is the John Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark. He deserted Paul & Barnabas on their 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:13). Mark was also the one who Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over before another missionary journey (Acts 15:36-39). Paul did not want to take Mark along for fear that he would desert them again if things got tough.

⇨ Obviously *Paul* and *Mark* did not have the greatest of relationships and this story of their broken relationship would have been widely known in the early church.

⇨ Now here at the end of the letter to Philemon, Paul calls *Mark* his *fellow worker.*

⇨ Paul had obviously forgiven and reconciled with Mark.

⇨ Here was a loud and clear message for Philemon to **follow the example** of Paul in Forgiveness.

⇨ IN calling Philemon to Forgive Onesimus, Paul was not asking him to do something he would not do himself.

⇨ Here we clearly see that **Forgiveness is Exemplified in Leadership.**

⇨ It is Imperative for us to understand that **Forgiveness is Exemplified in Leadership.**

⇨ The reason it is imperative is, because we are all Leaders in some way or the other.

⇨ We learn to Forgive from those who lead us or those we look to as leaders. (Pastors, teachers, parents. Etc…)

**?** What kind of Example are you setting in the area of Forgiveness to those you lead?

***~ But the 7th Attribute of Forgiveness found here in Philemon shows us that:***

**g. Forgiveness is Empowered by Grace**

⇨ Look with me at the final verse in this little Epistle:

*25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

⇨ This is the Key to Forgiveness.

⇨ As Paul signed off in his letter to Philemon he wanted to reminded him of what would enable him to carry out the call to Forgive.

⇨ Here we see that **Forgiveness is Empowered by Grace.**

⇨ Only *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ* could **Empower** Philemon to Forgive Onesimus.

⇨ We must remember that Grace goes beyond just unmerited favor or getting something you do not deserve.

⇨ It is also the desire and power to do God's will.

***~ Paul makes this clear in:***

📖 1 Corinthians 15:10

*10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them,* ***yet not I, but the grace of God with me.***

⇨ Paul knew that what he was asking Philemon to do was not humanly possible. Philemon needed super natural power to Forgive Onesimus like Christ had forgiven him.

⇨ We too must realize that in order to Forgive like Christ has Forgiven us, we cannot do it in our own strength.

⇨ We must be **Empowered by Grace.**

IV. My Response

1. **The Foundation of Forgiveness**
2. **The Profile of those Who Forgive**
3. **An Appeal to Forgive**
4. **The Attributes of Forgiveness**

**?** Do you know the Forgiveness of Christ in your life?