

## The Pattern & Power of Radical Forgiveness

Philemon

### Main Idea

The Gospel leads us into a kind of forgiveness that makes no sense without faith and love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Overview

#### **The local church is the audience, instruction, & inspiration for forgiveness**

- Paul addresses Philemon, Apphia, Archippus (Col. 4.17), and “the church in your house” (vss. 1-2)
  - While the letter is addressed to all of these additional parties, the bulk of the letter is addressing Philemon:
    - All the “you’s” of vss. 4-21 are 1<sup>st</sup> person singulars (addressed to Philemon)
- Meaning, Paul wanted the church to know the appeal and both encourage
  - Philemon in it as well as be encouraged (inspired) by it
- Philemon would have welcomed this audience as he loved the “saints” (vs. 4)
  - In so doing we learn the normative pattern of God’s people in a Gospel centered life:
    - The local church is the context whereby we can be spurred on and be held accountable to live faithfully ourselves

#### **The church is born out of Faith & Love in the Lord Jesus Christ**

- Vs. 4 Paul thanks God for Philemon, because of his love and faith he has in the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 3, 6)
  - Love: Affection or devotion towards Christ
  - Faith: Trust, reliance, dependence, or submission to Christ
    - Put together: Paul thanks God for Philemon because he has an affection for and a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ
- The: There is only one Lord Jesus...there are not numerous Savior’s
- Lord: Ruler/King/Authority
- Jesus: Savior
- Christ: Messiah or Anointed...the answer to God’s promises (2 Cor. 1.20)
  - To be in the church is to be one that has love and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:
    - To lose any one of these pieces compromises one’s assurance to salvation
  - All of this is the grounds that leads us to radical forgiveness

#### **Faith and Love in the Lord Jesus Christ demands radical forgiveness**

- We do not know the particulars, however, it is believe that Onesimus was a runaway slave (vs. 16) who possibly stole some money (vs. 18) from Philemon:
  - He had come to faith in Christ under the ministry of Philemon (vs. 10-11)
  - He is being sent back to Philemon so that the Gospel might be dramatized for all involved (vs. 15-16)
  - Paul’s appeal is that Philemon will receive him back not as a bondservant but as a beloved brother in Christ (vs. 16)
  - Paul could have used his apostolic status and told him to do it, however he wanted Philemon to do it under his own free will (vs 8, 14)
  - Paul is confident Philemon will do the right thing (vs. 21)
  - In Philemon’s joyful obedience, he would ‘refresh’ Paul (vs. 20)
- The Gospel is the pattern and the power to move us towards a radical forgiveness (Eph. 4.32)

- Forgiveness is a choice to absorb the payment/penalty for sin or wrong doing and clearing the debt of the guilty. It does not signify that the actions toward the forgiver were okay.

### Questions

**Discussion Starter:** Consider some instances in the lives of your group or in the news where people forgive radically.

1. Who all does Paul address in his letter? What's the significance of him addressing others than Philemon? How can we learn from this?
2. Why does Paul thank God for Philemon? What does it mean to have Faith? Love? Why do we need both?
3. Why do we need all four words in "the Lord Jesus [Christ]?"
4. How does the Gospel give us a pattern and the power to forgive radically? What is forgiveness? What is it not?
5. In what ways will our forgiveness indicate a beautifully counter-cultural community that is in keeping with God's love for us (John 13.35)? Why do we often not want to forgive others?
6. How would it have been revolutionary to not only forgive Onesimus but receive him as a beloved brother? How should this apply to Restoration Church?
7. In verses 7 and 21 Paul says that Philemon's obedience would be of some benefit to him and "refresh [his] heart in Christ." How and why does the joyful obedience of others bring about our refreshment?
8. How does this letter challenge you to live out the Gospel? How have you been refreshed by the obedience of others?

**Accountability:** *Who are you needing prayer/accountability to forgive? How have you been encouraged by how Jesus forgave you? How have you been "refreshed" by the obedience of others?*