

Sermon Discussion

5 April 2020

Philemon 19-22 (read)

I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 22 At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

Dig Deeper

According to v. 7, Philemon had been a blessing to many people. Paul now asks in v. 20 to receive that blessing himself. Is that odd? Maybe forward?

The word “**benefit**” is from the Greek word “**oninemi**,” the verb from which the name Onesimus derives. By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would benefit Paul in the Lord by bringing him joy because of his example of obedience and love to the church. The unity of the church would also be maintained and that would refresh Paul’s heart in Christ. In other words, he would be spiritually blessed.

1. What practical benefits come to mind when you consider a life characterized by forgiveness? In other words, how does extending forgiveness help you? How does receiving it help you?
2. Paul urged the Philippians to “make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” Is there a connection between joy and forgiveness? If so, why do you think so?
3. It sounds like Paul converted both Philemon (1:19) and Onesimus (1:10). That gives Paul a very special relationship with both of them and makes him the perfect person to help make this situation right again. Do you think you have played a pivotal role in certain relationships in your life? How can God use you to bring a godly influence on the people and relationships around you?

Philemon 23-25 (read)

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Dig Deeper

What happened as a result of this letter? Did Philemon forgive Onesimus? We have no direct record of his response to this letter. However, the fact that Philemon preserved this epistle and allowed it to circulate among the churches, strongly suggests that he did behave as Paul has requested.

By 110 A.D., the bishop of Ephesus was named Onesimus. From some correspondence preserved during this time period, many scholars believe this is the same Onesimus who is the subject of Paul's letter to Philemon.

1. Why does grace play a key role in all that is going on in this book? How do you need to have more grace for those around you?
2. Paul is proactively serving as a mediator between Philemon and Onesimus. Have you been in a place where you needed mediation between yourself and another person? Maybe you are in that place now. What can you do (based on what you've learned in Colossians and Philemon) to bring about reconciliation?

Application:

Conclude in prayer for reconciliations of our relationships in Christ and for those outside the church as well. Pray that God would use us as agents to mend broken relationships and patch up disunity in the body of Christ.