



Beyond Forgiveness to Heart Shift

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Philemon: ¹Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to **Philemon** our dear friend and fellow worker— ²also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home: ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear about **your love** for all His holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷**Your love** has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have *refreshed the hearts* of the Lord's people.

⁸Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— ¹⁰that I appeal to you for my son **Onesimus**,^a who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

¹²I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. ¹³I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favour you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. ¹⁵Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; *refresh my heart in Christ*. ²¹Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

²²And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. ²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. ²⁵The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

^a **Colossians 3:22; 4:1, 7-9:** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord . . . Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven . . . Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with **Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you**. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

A Surprising Introduction to Philemon

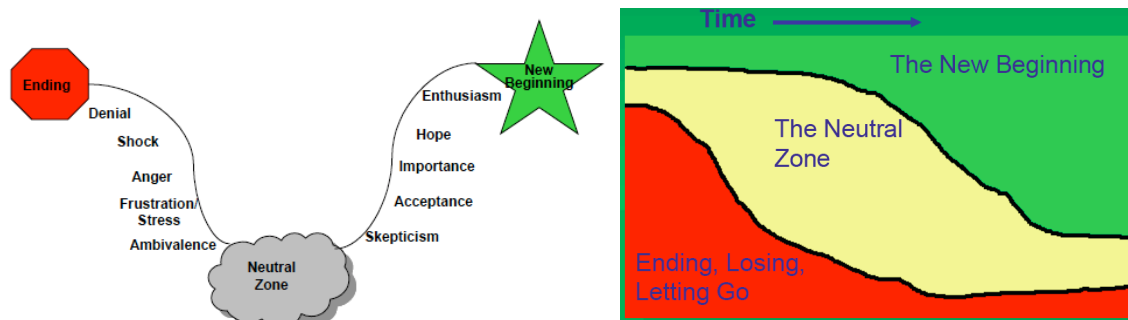
Essence of Message:

Advocacy on behalf of others requires a generous spirit, relational integrity, reverent expression and redemptive expectations. Moving beyond forgiveness to a heart shift requires: remembering one's own experience of grace, letting go of former practices, conventions and attachments, allowing space to settle and transition mind and heart, and the prospect of a new and better arrangement. There is hope for runaways because no condition is permanent, by God's grace!!!

Notice this from Book of Philemon:

1. **Philemon**, Apphia (wife), and Archippus (his son)
2. **Paul**, his character and prior relationship with Philemon: prisoner (1) willing to suffer for the gospel; prisoner of Christ Jesus' (1), not of Nero (see Exodus 21:5-6); great affection (for Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus) (1 & 2); thankfulness (4; see 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philippians 4:6!); prayerful (4); hopeful and intentional (22, see Mark 11:22).
3. **Context of Colosse** and other letter (Philemon as 2nd Colossians).
4. The Prodigal **Onesimus**: The name Onesimus means "useful".
5. **A word about slaves and message** of Paul to slaves and masters (Gal 3:28): "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are **all one** in Christ."
6. **Model** in the art of letter, postcard, e-mail writing, verses 7-10, Paul's appeal to Philemon:-
 - Be consistent with the love so often shown to the saints (7 & 8), with a slight and **inclusionary stretch**
 - Appeal to **heart shift** rather than compliance to command (8-9).
 - Respond for love's sake (9), for the old man (9), for a prisoner (9), for one who was now his son (10) and for one who was saved through Paul's affliction (10).
7. **Providential power of God** at work. Runaway connects with Paul in Rome (1000 miles away)
8. God's power in the **transformation of a life**. Onesimus changed: 'my son Onesimus' (10); 'useless, but now useful' (11); 'a dear brother' (16); no one is beyond redemption: **No condition is permanent!** Ignatius, writing to the church at Ephesus about forty years or so after Paul wrote to Philemon, makes reference to a certain Onesimus, who is identified as the overseer or bishop of the church at Ephesus.
9. The necessity of **right spiritual relationships**: right with God –right with man (12). Repent of our sins (Isaiah 55:7) and make restitution (Luke 19:8; Acts 16:33)!
10. Pictures of the whole **scheme of redemption** We wander or runaway from God...' (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:25); the Lord, our Advocate with the Father, having borne our sins' (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:1); and God receives us on account of who Christ is and of what He has done for us' (Ephesians 1:6).

- **Unsurprising Difference between a Bicycle and a Frog: Technical versus Adaptive Challenges**
- **Imagine Philemon Dilemma: Beyond a Single Incident of Forgiveness to the Challenges of Heart & Mind Shift**



William Bridges

- **Different kinds of runaway slaves:** Slaves to culture, slaves to “the way we were,” “A.W.O.L.” sons and daughters; The Prisoners of War (P.O.W.) . . .
- Prayer for **Paul types:** Advocates, sponsors, mentors, encouragers, way-makers
- Prayer for **Philemon types:** “Offended” who are invited to transitions of heart and mind
- Prayer for **Onesimus types:** Runaway slaves who are invited to be transformed and then to bravely “come home”

Lewis B. Smedes on Forgiveness:

- “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”
- “You will know that forgiveness has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.”
- “Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.”
- “When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it.”
- “It takes one person to forgive, it takes two people to be reunited.”

Moose Jaw Alliance Church