

Strike a Gospel-Pose!

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Philemon or Philemon.

Just kidding. Philemon. Philemon, which is before Hebrews. If you had Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, you went too far. Go back and find Philemon.

If you're visiting with us, you need a Bible. There's a Bible in the chair in front of you, a black Bible. You can pull that out. Excuse me, and go to the back because they renumber the New Testament and find page 168 because Philemon, which is not numbered, is on page 169.

Why did they do that? I don't know, but that's what they did. So 168, and then you look over, you'll see Philemon 169. Philemon, and I'm going to read this short, most intimate letter by Paul.

Read the whole thing. So we'll start in verse 1. It's only 25 verses. And today we're actually going to study verses 8 through 25. Let me read the whole thing, this short little intimate letter from Paul to Philemon.

[1:14] Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, to Philemon, our beloved and fellow worker, and to Apphia, our sister, and to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always making mention of you my prayers because I hear of your love and the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and that love toward all the saints, that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for the sake of Christ.

For I've come to know, I've come to have much joy and comfort in your love because the splachna, remember that from last week, of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Now verse 8. Therefore, though I have much confidence in Christ to order you that which is proper, yet because of love I rather appeal, as I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also prisoner of Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my son whom I begotten in my bonds, Onesimus, who for me was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me, and I have sent him back to you in person, that is, my very heart, whom I wish to keep with me.

Then your behalf he might minister to me in my bonds for the gospel. But without your consent I did not want to do anything, that your goodness should not be as it were by compulsion, but of your own accord.

[2:49] For perhaps he was for this reason parted for a while. You should have him back forever, 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.

Therefore, if you regard me a partner, accept him as me. But if he's wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will repay it, as I should say to you, that you owe to me even your own self as well.

Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my affections, my splachna in Christ. Confidence of your obedience.

Convinced of your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say, and at the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you.

[3:50] Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. I enjoy the comic strip, Calvin and Hobbes.

It's one of my favorites, I love that. My kids love it too. And there's one, Calvin and Hobbes, where the parents are trying to get Calvin to get a picture of him.

And so he'd do all these goofy faces and stuff like that, right? Well, my kids thought that was funny. Especially the twins. So now when you get a picture, they do this.

And one of them, and then you take another picture, the other one's smiling nice, and the other one's going. Because there's one, Calvin and Hobbes, where they say, Calvin, give us a big smile. He goes like this. So the twins think it's funny.

We have to tell them, okay, boys, nice picture now. Both of you, smiling. Not, uh. One time one of the twins was coming downstairs. Hey!

[4:58] I go, uh, he's a, uh. We have a couple of goofballs. We have to tell them to strike a pose. Strike a nice pose. You're getting your picture taken.

In our passage, Paul asked Philemon to strike a pose. And I'm not talking about Madonna song. To strike a pose because a picture was going to be taken.

Philemon had an opportunity. The opportunity to strike a gospel pose. To be a vivid picture of the gospel. It was about to be taken with his former slave, Onesimus.

So I titled this Philippians, Philemon, excuse me, verses 8-25, strike a gospel pose. Strike a gospel pose.

The picture's about to be taken. Here's a long statement for you. Strike a gospel pose.

[6:05] In his providence, God brings situations into our lives where we can take the opportunity to strike a pose, to take the chance to display the gospel.

And our reaction, will you strike a gospel pose? God's taking that picture. He puts you in situations where, is our response going to be the gospel?

Will you take this opportunity to display God's love, to show forgiveness, to be gracious, to love that fellow Christian brother or sister?

Strike a gospel pose. And this is what Paul was appealing to, Philemon, I won't say Timothy, he's appealing to Philemon to respond this way.

This short little book, which could be a vivid picture of the gospel if Philemon would respond in love the way God had loved him.

[7:17] As he was shown love in Christ, so you show that love. Here in God's church, Cottonwood Bible churches, God has shown us his love in Christ Jesus.

We should respond to each other in that way. Receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul, like God had received him, Philemon, in the gospel through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here's Paul, he's in prison. Not able to do anything except write this letter asking for Philemon for clemency, to show mercy and gracious love to Onesimus, who didn't deserve it.

I mean, none of us deserve it, do we? And Paul's call here, excuse me, to Philemon, is to defy Roman law, to be countercultural.

Be countercultural, Philemon. So how does this begin? It begins here, strike a pose, a gospel pose, because God gave this to you.

[8:30] Verse 15, go to verse 15, not verse 8. Look, it starts here, verse 15. He says, for perhaps he was, for this reason, parted for a while, that you should have him back forever.

Notice the words, while, forever. Notice the contrast. He's parted for you for a while, so you can have him back forever.

Instead of, tactlessly, referring to Onesimus, says, oh, this rebellious, runaway slave of yours. No, Paul said he was, temporarily separated from Philemon.

Wait a minute, that's not what happened. He stole stuff from him. Remember that? Onesimus ran away. No.

No. He was, temporarily separated, from Philemon, so that God, in his providence, could do a greater work, in his life, forever.

[9:40] See, Paul saw the bigger picture, to Onesimus, is his actions. Evil actions. What we mean for evil, God means for good.

When we mean for evil, God will turn into good, according to his sovereign plan. It's like Paul saying, don't you see this, Philemon? God has, probably, worked in his heart.

I mean, if he wouldn't have run away, he would not be saved. So do not underestimate, what God is doing right now, in your life.

This horrible situation, this conflict, with members, and churches, and things like that, do not underestimate, what God's doing. Do you not see, the providential work, of God in this?

For perhaps, Paul says, for just a little while, so that you may have him, back forever. See, God gave this situation, to you, in which you find yourself, a possible conflict, with another believer, within the body.

[10:57] How will you respond? God is about to take the picture, will you strike a gospel pose? And there's three, foundations upon which, this pose must be built.

It's based upon, three different foundations, or three pillars, if you will. Strike a gospel pose, because God gave this to you, but make sure, first of all, base your pose, upon that person, his or her identity.

In other words, a response of gospel love, should happen, because of, who this person is, before you. This person is a brother, sister in Christ, for whom Christ died.

Because look at verse 16. Forever, verse 16, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother. Because he was now, not just a slave.

Philemon, he's a brother in Christ. Notice, a temporal, earthly, demeaning state, versus, an eternal, Christ-exalting, loving relationship with him now, a beloved brother.

[12:23] A dear brother to Paul, but especially to Philemon, now there's that eternal bond. And notice, he says, especially to me, but much more to you also, both in the flesh, and in the Lord.

He was a beloved brother, in the flesh, and that now, Onesimus would heartily, work for Philemon, by working heartily, for Christ. And in the Lord, because his new focus, is on eternal issues.

It's not unearthly things. Go back up to verse 10. Paul says, I appeal to you, for my child, whom I have begotten, in my bonds.

Notice, the imagery of father and son. Father and child. Paul appealed to Philemon, on behalf of his son, his child.

This is who he is. Now. From a slave, to a brother. From a thief, to a true servant of Christ.

[13:32] From a nobody, to a son. To that daughter in Christ. Notice what he says here, in my bonds, Onesimus, verse 11, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful, both to you and to me.

It's actually a play on words. Because the word Onesimus, which was a common slave name, means useful. Or profitable.

His name means that. So with courtesy, grace, and tact, Paul, almost comically, showed the contrasting difference, between the old, Onesimus, who was useless.

Go back to being useless. And the new Onesimus, who is now not just useful to Paul, but now he's useful to Philemon. I mean, you have the before and after picture.

Before Christ, Onesimus was useless, with a mean, hateful attitude. Now after Christ, he'd work with a new attitude, just driving to praise Christ, because he loves Christ.

[14:57] He worships Christ. He's gonna love his brother Philemon. His master. Slaves of Phrygia, were known to be unreliable.

They were known to be unfaithful. That's who he was, Onesimus. So Onesimus, he's gonna go against the flow. He was gonna be counter-cultural. Look at verse 12.

And I have sent him back to you in person. That is my very heart. Paul, and Onesimus, remember, they knew that he had to go back to his master Philemon. Remember, we talked about that last week.

So he says, I send them back to you. My very heart is the word *splachna*. Remember that? Which means affections. It means the bowels. The innards.

The inward parts. You know, when you feel something, you get butterflies in your stomach? That's what he's talking about. The *splachna*. I have such affections for Onesimus.

[16:05] Paul has such a tender affection for him. I send him back to you. He's my affection. I love this guy. Brr. And so should you, Philemon.

Notice verse 13. Whom I wish to keep with me. How, how much did Paul love Onesimus? I want to keep him with me. I desire to keep Onesimus with me because of how useful he was to me.

Because of how helpful he was to me. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Onesimus? Wait, this guy?

This guy was a jerk. This guy didn't listen to me. He would always gripe and complain.

Every time I'd tell him to do something. Blah, blah, blah, blah. It's a whole different guy. This Onesimus? Oh, Philemon. Pal, you got no idea. I love this guy.

But, even though he's useful and helpful to me, he's so comforting to me, I don't want to do anything against your will. We're going to get to that in a moment. But here's Paul.

[17:09] If Paul, as a prisoner, was comforted and helped by Onesimus, how could Philemon refuse his appeal to receive him with the loving forgiveness of Christ? How could you do that?

Paul's stressing the change in Onesimus. He's profitable. He's useful. Tenderly loved by Paul. One whom Paul would love to keep for himself. This is his new identity. So when you strike that gospel pose, God has given this to you, based upon the fact of the identity of who this person is, she or he is in Christ.

Their identity, their position, is a Christ follower, a brother, sister in Christ. You should forgive. You should let it go.

How could Philemon refuse to receive him with loving forgiveness? Second post, pillar, basis. Base your pose upon your identity.

[18:27] Look at verse 14. This is where Paul says, But without your consent, I did not want to do anything. That your goodness should not be, as it were, by compulsion, but of your own free will, of your own accord.

To stress this, Paul wanted Philemon to make his decision out of love, not obligation, not coercion. Voluntarily, not reluctantly.

He did not want to take advantage of his goodness, his grace, his love. See, Paul reiterated Philemon's new identity in Christ.

He wanted his decision to be based on that. Remember Philemon, how he talked about that in verses 1 through 7? His faith in Christ drove his love for the people, drove his love for the church there in Colossae.

This was the kind of guy that Philemon was. And Paul's saying, I want you to do this out of that, of who you are in Christ. Not because I'm telling you to do it. Not because of that.

[19:35] But based upon who you are in Christ. You're loved by God. You've been changed. And you're showing this goodness. You're just bubbling over with God's goodness in his church.

Philemon, I want you to respond based upon your identity now too. So based upon that person's identity, brother or sister in Christ, your identity, who you are now in Jesus Christ.

But third, the third pillar, base your gospel pose upon the relationship. Not just upon their identity. Not just upon your identity. But the relationship that you have now. This is interesting. First, it shouldn't be about authority, though that may play a factor.

It should be about relationship, devotion, commitment to each other. Look at verse eight. Therefore, though I have much confidence in Christ to order you that which is proper.

[20:43] The word confidence here, it has the idea of the right. Or the authority. So, Philemon, I could order you to do this.

I could be bold in my authority and order you to do this. But I won't. He could have easily commanded him to do what was right or proper.

That means he would do his duty as a Christian. We should be willing to forgive each other. Of course. It's our Christian duty or responsibility to forgive.

But Paul was not going to order Philemon to do his Christian task. Verse nine, yet because of love, I rather appeal. He'd rather appeal in love for Philemon.

Well, is he talking about his love for Philemon? Is he talking about Philemon's love? It could be an aspect of both. But the idea is, instead of throwing around his apostolic authority, which he could have done, he appealed to the very action that Philemon was showing to the saints, his love for God's people.

[22:00] It's about relationship. And notice he says, since I am such a person, end of verse nine, as Paul, the age, and now also prisoner of Christ Jesus.

In other words, Philemon, I'm an old man now, buddy. I've been around the block a lot more times than you have. I'm feeble, plus now, I'm a prisoner for this gospel.

I'm a prisoner of Christ Jesus for this gospel. This gave further weight to his loving appeal to Philemon. Philemon, I've lived long.

I'm in bonds for the truth. In other words, I've suffered much for this gospel truth. my brother, I appeal to you in this way. Notice how he brings up the relationship later on in his letter.

Look at verse 17. Verse 17, therefore, if you regard me as a partner, the word actually means fellowship.

[23:14] If we have fellowship in the gospel, if we're partners in ministry, I mean, this will go even further, for Philemon because he was the pastor of the church there in Colossae, quite possibly.

It's not only do we have fellowship in terms of in our relationship with Christ, but now, you're a pastor, I'm a pastor. So because of this, if so, then, he says, accept him as me.

The word accept means receive him kindly. It means, welcome him into your circle of friends. I accept him as me.

It's as if I were the one coming. It's as if I were the one walking through those doors. It's stronger than just, do this because I told you to. I mean, right? Do this based on our relationship together in the Lord Jesus.

We have a relationship. We spend this time together. together. We have this relationship. Doesn't that mean anything? Philemon, I want you to grant him all the rights and privileges that pertains to one who's part of this Christian fellowship and who's returned to you as a humble, penitent child of God with love for you and do this because of our relationship.

[24 : 41] Notice what he says in verse 18. He graciously offered to assume financial obligation of Onesimus verse 18 but if he, Onesimus, has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account verse 19.

Yes, I, Paul, I'm writing this letter with my own hand. I will repay it. Now, he didn't say Onesimus did steal anything. He just says if. But if he does, tactfully, graciously says this, put it on me.

He says, I'm writing this letter with my own hand. I will repay it which, a handwritten statement as such, one writer put this, quote, carried weight and legal validity in this time period in the first century.

So, although in all this, he's telling Philemon, do this and if this is any type of obligation he owes, I will repay it.

Verse 19, lest I should say to you that you owe to me even your own self as well. And that's Philemon. Remember that? Philemon owed much to Paul because Paul was a major instrument in Philemon's spiritual life.

[25 : 55] Philemon was converted under Paul's ministry. Remember that? Remember we had that little thing that happened?

Just to let you know. So that in itself should cover Onesimus, right? You would think. And see, this is how this relates to the gospel because we are indebted to God but he showed his gracious love in Christ Jesus.

We were indebted to God and yet he made the first initiating move. But when the kindness of God and his love for mankind appeared he saved us.

Titus chapter 3. We'll look at that in a few weeks. And if you're here and you're not a Christian and you need to respond to the gospel respond today.

Repent and trust Christ. You can have the love of God in Christ and God will forgive you of all your sins and the Lord Jesus will satisfy you.

[27 : 08] Come. He'll save you. Because we are indebted to God but God showed his gracious love in Christ Jesus by having him die on behalf of sinners and bringing him back to life.

So may we show that same love towards each other as his people. May we be pictures of the gospel. Pictures of the truth.

According to God's divine plan and by his great grace Onesimus was converted so receive him back as a brother in Christ not being angry with him though he had just grounds to be angry with him.

And that's why I put this up last week. The more we see how God's love has benefited us the more inclined we are to extend that same love towards each other. The more we see God's mercy upon us I mean he who's been forgiven much loves much right?

When you look at your past you see just a horrible sin and then you see God has been so merciful to you then why can't Christians get along in a local church?

[28 : 25] Does it make sense? Am I supposed to stop? Look at verse 20 Somebody's trying to FaceTime Hey I'll be right there with you hold on he's preaching right now it's a great sermon you gotta listen to that okay bye Verse 20 Yes brother let me benefit from you and the Lord if you grant undeserving love to Onesimus you are in actuality granting this love to me Remember when Paul wrote this in verse 6 and 7 last week we looked at this looked at this he says Philemon you refreshed brethren they were so oh so refreshing Philemon is so refreshing Paul says refresh me refresh refresh my splachna refresh my affections in Christ when you bless him you're blessing me at the end of the day as far as Paul was concerned he wanted to benefit from Philemon's love and he'd refresh his splachna if Philemon would be a picture of the gospel so friends show that love be

that picture strike a pose strike a gospel pose and notice what he says here in verse 21 he's convinced of gospel obedience as one writer put it having confidence or literally convinced of your obedience and right to you what was he going to obey free Onesimus forgive him

I think that's what he means receive him with loving forgiveness gospel obedience he was convinced of that he was convinced that those who benefit from the gospel show that same love to each other those of us who benefit from the gospel we're going to show that same love to each other at least we should right in theory and Paul knew that Philemon would respond as a vivid picture of the gospel notice he says since I know that you will do even more than what I say how we don't know he doesn't say but whatever it was Paul knew Philemon would display Christ because he was already showing that love towards the church body he's convinced of that I know you're going to do it I'm convinced of your gospel obedience but then he also he reminds

Philemon of his love for him once again the reminder of his love verse 22 at the same time also prepare me a lodging for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you he didn't not that Paul think he was going to be released necessarily soon but he was confident he'd be able to see Philemon notice he says through your prayers because your prayers I'll be released he's reminding him I look forward to seeing you Philemon just remind you of my love for you I care about you and then in all this Paul ends with encouragement to Philemon which is always good for pastors encouragement notice verse 23 Epaphras my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus Epaphras was there with Paul in prison Mark Aristarchus Demas Luke my fellow workers they greeted Philemon why does he bring this up because you know what

Philemon probably knew these guys personally isn't it great to hear from people you haven't heard from in a long time I mean cell phones like that pretty scarce in those days there's only two towers one Roman Empire the other in China and the one Roman Empire is over here near Spain so covers was horrible it's that time he's trying to give him some encouragement I long to see you I look forward to seeing you and this would encourage you that's why he gave this short little greeting and then the benediction the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit or with your soul with your personhood that's what he means this benediction was a prayer that God's gracious love would continue to show itself in Philemon's life he was confident of that so here it is in this providence

God brings situations to our lives will we we can take the opportunity to strike a gospel pose to take the chance to display that gospel in our reaction will you strike a gospel pose not just as a fake thing but in reality a real gospel reaction will you take this opportunity to display God's love love to show forgiveness to be gracious to love that fellow Christian brother or sister yeah my study I was reminded what Travis said last Sunday I remember he said just between me the two of us out loud but I remember he said this there's no biblical reason to leave this church and there's no biblical reason we cannot have reconciliation

[34:33] I mean we really think about it that shouldn't happen right I mean in theory right it shouldn't happen you know and we all know it does it's sad but here here's the encouragement for us as we closing out this crazy year of 2021 come to the end how are we going to be vivid pictures of the gospel and God's church would you pray with me and father we thank you in two ways first we thank you when we respond poorly and wrongly we're reminded that's why Jesus had to die and also second reminded that your spirit who works in us molding us and shaping us by the power of the spirit that we would be a people that display you as we'll see soon in the book of titus who demonstrates godliness that we would be vivid pictures of the gospel help us as a church to do this to be this to display this for this is how this is how the world will know that we're

Christians you're followers Jesus disciples of you when we love each other and care for each other in ways that this world does not understand they think they do and yet they don't help us to be counter cultural if I can encourage you at this time which we do every week take some time to between you and the Lord we'll have a time of silence it's like about a minute or so somewhere around there where you can fill your mind with truth and ponder what we've seen here in this short little letter of Philemon let your mind be filled with gospel truth and be encouraged in that way between you and the

Lord and then we'll sing and we'll pray together as part of our service let this time between you and the Lord be a wonderful time a good time a cherished time having heard God speak from his word and for you to say oh God now please work in my heart work your gospel work your gospel work in my heart do that now please if you would you you you you and you you