

Philemon Reconciliation in the Daily Life

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Date: 28 December 2025

Preacher: Rob Buttermore

[0 : 00] All right, let me pray, then we'll dig in. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, your word is good. We trust you, we trust your hand in our lives, and we ask that you, by your spirit, would apply your word to our lives today, Lord.

Would you heal those who need to be healed? Would you challenge those who need to be challenged? And Lord, would you have your way with us as we walk through your word today in the book of Philemon? Amen. I pray this in your name, amen.

All right, good morning, church. All right, how would everyone feel if you had a letter written, right, maybe an email or a text message, and it was written to an individual, and then you had it read publicly in front of the church, right?

What if you were the one who were, and what if that letter dealt with difficult topics, right? Offenses were had, and you were the offended one. How would we feel if that letter was read in front of anyone?

What if you were the offeree? How would that feel? And right, that's exactly what we're digging into today. The letter to Philemon walks us through the reality of interpersonal relationships, and how Christ the King, the Lord of all, changes how we do them, right?

[1 : 11] He redeems how we do these relationships, and he brings the ability for openness and clarity, even in times of conflict. I'll go to slide two.

All right, so the letter's broken up into four sections. We have an opening, a short section on Thanksgiving, the body of the letter, and that's Paul's appeal to Philemon in regards to Onesimus, and then finally the closing.

Our plan is to walk through each one of these sections, looking at what's going on, make some conclusions from the text, and then apply that to our lives. The book of Philemon is an outlier in the New Testament for a few reasons.

It's quite short, right? We just read it. It's one chapter, 25 verses, 350 Greek words. It's not a letter written to a church that's in trouble, like we just went through 1 Corinthians.

And it's not a letter like Paul wrote to Timothy or Titus, kind of like a mentor-mentee relationship here. It's Paul writing to a close friend about a conflict that's going on in his life. So with that, talking about relationships, we'll go to the next slide.

[2 : 21] Relationships that are important here to know, Paul and Philemon, two of the main characters here, they did ministry together. During Paul's missionary trips, at some point they had worked together, and then Philemon stayed in Colossae, and Paul kept doing his missions trip.

Philemon was a wealthy man. He had bond servants or slaves, and one of them was named Onesimus. Something happened between those two, and that relationship broke. Onesimus ran away.

He's a runaway fugitive. As he ran away, he went and he found Paul, though. We don't know if he sought after Paul, or if he just randomly came upon him, but he found Paul. Paul preached the gospel to him, and then Onesimus was saved, and actually became a dear, beloved brother to Paul while Paul was in prison.

So the whole letter now is on step four here. Paul is saying, Onesimus, you ran away, but now it's time to go back. What you did, it brought you to the Lord, but it was wrong, and you need to go back to Philemon and make it right.

So Paul's whole appeal here to Philemon is to accept Onesimus back, and we'll dig into more of how to accept him back. At the very end of the letter, we see Paul says, I want to come visit you.

[3 : 32] I want to come visit you, be refreshed by you, and I want to see what happened after we made this appeal to you to see the relationship mended. The whole letter Paul's working through,

he's using words to appeal to his friend Philemon to decide to accept Onesimus, his bondservant back after he's run away.

Paul's writing this letter to influence his brother in Christ towards a direction, but it's not just any direction. It's a direction that puts Christ first in his life. It's a direction that's unmistakably Christian. What Paul is after here with his letter is to put the importance of Christ in Philemon's life at the very center, and to have the end result being something only one Christian could ask another Christian to do.

With that intro, we'll start digging in. We'll go to the next slide. Verses one through three, which Dan just read for us, is the greeting. This seems like a pretty humdrum, normal go with the flow, opening to a letter, but Paul's using it and he's working towards his whole argument, his whole appeal in the letter.

We'll go to the next slide. Paul establishes, he's writing a letter with his disciple Timothy. Paul describes himself as a prisoner for Christ Jesus. He's pointing to the fact that he's physically in prison for his actions tied with his faith, with his relationship with Jesus.

[4 : 50] So that sets us somewhere around 60 to 61 AD. Paul's sitting in a Roman prison. We read through that chapter 28 of Acts, and then this is the same time he wrote the letter to the Ephesians and the Colossians while he's in prison.

And we'll see as the letter goes on, Paul's delicate argument here is appealing toward Philemon to accept Onesimus back as a brother in Christ based on relationships, those relationships we were talking about.

And here, Paul's establishing that his own relationship with the Lord has driven him to prison. Paul has sacrificed his own comfort, his own ease, and his rights. By Paul mentioning this, a lot of his letters start with, I, Paul, an apostle, but this letter starts with, I, Paul, a prisoner.

He's foreshadowing what he's going to be asking Philemon to do, to give up ease and comfort and to do something hard. That is the Christian life, and Paul is trying to foreshadow that by saying he's a prisoner here now.

After the clear opening of who is writing this letter, he goes on to who the letter is addressed to, right? The letter is called the letter to Philemon. And Philemon here is described as a beloved fellow worker, right?

[6 : 00] So they have some sort of history. They've done some ministry in the trenches. It could be that Paul was impactful in Philemon's salvation to the Lord. It could be that Philemon was just a ministry partner during his missionary journeys.

Either way, we know that Paul calls Philemon a beloved fellow worker, right? They're both on the same team, and they're both heading in the same direction. Verse two also says this letter is to Apathia, our sister, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and the church in your house, right?

Seeing that this is written not just a one-on-one letter, we're not just reading somebody's private mail entitled for somebody else's eyes, right? It's to these other two and to the local church.

So Paul, so, question is here, is Paul just putting Philemon on blast in front of the whole church, right? As we dig more and more into this letter, we see the context with the whole church in mind. Paul's doing this on purpose. One of the commentaries I read from Douglas Moo, this, I thought, summed it up perfectly. It says, one of the enduring and extremely relevant teachings of Philemon is the degree to which Christians are bound to one another in all their activities through common faith, right?

[7 : 15] Paul's inclusion of the whole church in the address of the letter is not simply a way of putting pressure on Philemon, right? He's not saying, you had better do what I ask you or else the whole church will know what's going on.

No, this is the reflection of a social and theological reality of that early Christian community. The water that the church lived in, right, the air that they breathe was that of both union with Christ and union with each other.

And now as you finish the opening here, verse three closes out with grace and peace, right? I've read so many of Paul's letters and they all open or start with grace and peace and I quickly brush over that.

But that's at the root of what Paul is, right? Grace and peace. This whole being, the root of his words to Philemon is the unmerited favor, the grace which God through Christ has shown him.

And the peace which that has wrought. Right? The peace that Paul is seeking in the lives of both Philemon and Onesimus, there is no Paul and Philemon relationship if there is no grace and peace from the Father and from Jesus.

[8 : 19] If the penalty for sin is not taken by Christ on the cross years before this, if there's no righteousness given to the sons and daughters of God through grace, then there is no peace and this is all for nothing.

So these are not quick verses just to brush over. Paul is doing something here. We'll move to the next slide. Section two is the thanksgiving or the fellowship of faith that Paul and Philemon have. This is verses four through seven, right? Paul moves from his meaningful opening to a thanksgiving to Philemon for his work in the Lord. He wants to express thanks to Philemon. He tells him he constantly prays for him and he tells why he gives thanks for him, both his love and his faith. At the end, here in verse seven, Paul elaborates and says, he has received, right, while Paul's in prison, he's received joy and comfort because of the ministry that Philemon's involved in. Philemon has been refreshing the hearts of the saints and Paul in prison is getting comfort and joy from that. And then before he makes his appeal, he wants Philemon to be sure that he is known, that he is seen, and that he is loved. Paul is no mere internet troll, right?

[9 : 30] He's not disconnected from the situation going on in Philemon's life. He's not taking sniper shots from the outside at a personality just to cut him down. No, Paul here is invested in the life of his brother and he's basing his soon-to-come appeal on all of these things.

We'll go to the next slide. Right? And then as I pause before the section, I'm struck by the way that Paul sees something coming to a head, right? And he doesn't avoid or just manage the situation away.

He doesn't just rush in like a bull in the china shop, start throwing grenades, right? He speaks the truth in love here with his friend. He doesn't flatter. He doesn't do sugarcoating.

But he's also not brash and foolish with his words, right? This is such a skill to watch done so well. So the background we've gone through a little bit, right? Onesimus is the runaway slave or bond servant.

He's run away from his master, Philemon, who is a Christian, right? And then after Onesimus had run away from Philemon, he met Paul in his journeys, right? We said we don't know if he sought after Paul or if he just met him randomly or providentially, but he came to a living faith through Paul's ministry.

[10 : 40] And now Paul's telling Onesimus that he needs to go back to Philemon and make it right. Running away, though the Lord used it to bring him to faith, right? Running away was wrong. When Onesimus returns to Philemon, Philemon has two options, right?

He can treat him like any Roman runaway slave, right? That was harsh how they treated runaway slaves. They wanted to ensure that all the other bond servants looked at that and saw an example. Philemon's other choice was to accept him back not as a slave or a bond servant, but accept him back as a brother.

Accept him back as if he was Paul himself coming to Philemon. Right? That's a simple walk through what's going on here, but we'll see even more complexity as we dig into this. So we'll start with the first subsection here, verses 8 through 14, right?

Paul establishes that he is in authority over Philemon in some way. He says he can just outright command what he wants from Philemon. Yet, yet, right? Paul wants to appeal to Philemon instead of command.

And this is a key distinction. Paul knows he can either use a hammer or a scalpel to do the job here. And Paul knows that oftentimes the method of communication is just as important as to what is being communicated.

[11 : 54] So Paul then points out, similar to how he did in the introduction, that he's an old man now. He's a prisoner for Christ. And why does he do this? Right? Is he just using some emotional blackmail?

Is Paul saying, oh, woe is me. My life's so hard. Can you please just do this one thing for me?

Right? I don't think so. Paul is using tactics here, but he's not using emotional blackmail.

Right? What Paul is doing is reminding Philemon that the Christian life is one of sacrifice. And for that reason, Paul is in prison. And that reason is the core of why Paul is making this appeal to Philemon.

Paul continues on by saying that he considers himself the spiritual father of Onesimus. Right? And that started while Paul was in prison. And by that, we can deduce that sometime after Onesimus ran away, he became not only a Christian, he became a mentee, or he became a believer, but also a mentee of Paul.

Right? We aren't told whether Onesimus sought after Paul when he ran away, what the circumstance was that brought him together, but whatever it was, Paul was able to witness to him, see him come to faith, and then build the relationship.

[13:06] In verse 11, we have even more background revealed about Philemon and Onesimus' relationship. Onesimus was at one time useless to Philemon, right? When he was his slave.

And Paul is revealing, and he's contrasting it with Onesimus' current condition. Right? We see he's useful to Paul, but he's also useful to Philemon now.

Something ontological has changed about Onesimus. Right? He has changed from one thing to another. His whole being has changed when he's come to faith. So, Onesimus has his place where he fits in with Paul.

He's comfortable there. He's useful to Paul, but yet Paul is sending him out. Right? Another sacrifice by Paul. He's sending him to a place where he's going to be out of place with Philemon. Right? He's probably not going to be welcomed. Right? Paul's not being very pragmatic. Right? But still, Paul is confident in his choice here. Verse 14 is the heart and motivation behind the appeal from Paul to Philemon.

[14:18] Right? He could have made this a hard request. He could have just used his authority as a big A apostle Paul and said, I command you or I direct you of this.

But, but, but, but, instead he wants Philemon to make this decision on his own. Right? In order that the goodness of Philemon's decision shows the goodness of God. Right?

He wants Philemon to make this because he knows that Philemon's a Christian. Right? He's someone that Paul knows and he knows his pattern of life. He knows he can expect goodness in the decision of what Philemon's going to make.

So he's not heavy handed in just commanding him to do this. And right, Paul is a leader in the church. He does have some authority. But notice he doesn't use his authority like a tool to change and to manipulate things just so Paul gets his way.

He wants this decision to be of Philemon. Right? This is the good leadership that God calls leaders and disciples in the church to. Right? He wants them to walk through the principles behind many of our interpersonal relationships that we have.

[15:22] But he doesn't want to make that decision for them. He could hand them a note, tell them what to do, but instead he's laying out all the things to think through first as Philemon makes this decision.

But he's not making this decision for him. And that's where growth comes from for the Christian. Right? I'm always struck by David's final words in 2 Samuel 23. David's final words before he dies and Paul knew these well.

Right? He says, When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloud this morning, like rain that makes the grass sprout from the earth.

Right? This is the mind of leadership with God's people. And that's what Paul is doing here with Philemon. He wants to see growth in Philemon, so he's leaving this decision up to him. Paul then, keeping in mind throughout this whole letter, he says, Hey Philemon, this is probably God's providence.

Right? This is probably God's good hand in what's going on. Onesimus ran away and that was wrong, but God's hand is not separate from what's going on. Right? If we think through Genesis 50-20, Joseph and what his family did to him, but Joseph can confidently say, As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

[16:41] Right? God is never the author of sin, but boy, he can use our situations that people get into and he can show how glorious he is in those things. And that seems to be exactly what God is pointing, or what Paul is pointing out here.

There is hardship, right? Paul's acknowledging that and he's doing it completely. But what God is doing here is temporarily separating these two who had an earthly relationship, but he's bringing them together to restore their earthly relationship, but also make a new spiritual relationship that will

never end.

Right? Before all this, Philemon and Onesimus, right, their relationship is going to come to an end. Either death or Onesimus got his own freedom by paying for it. But what's happened now, through salvation, there's a stronger and longer relationship that was forged.

Right? Verse 16, Paul's dive further into how important this change is in Onesimus' life. Right? He's changed from one thing to another, from a slave or bond servant to now a brother.

There's been a family connection that's being made here due to Onesimus being saved. Right? Paul announces that Onesimus is now Philemon's relation in the flesh. It wasn't a mistake how this happened.

[17:53] It was with purpose. And Paul's laying all that out as he's making this appeal to Philemon. One feature of this letter you'll notice is the term slave or bond servant in verse 16.

Right? We should define what that means in the times when we're reading it. The relationship between Philemon and Onesimus and how different it is from what we're familiar with with slavery when we commonly talk about it. Right?

In this letter it doesn't mean that Onesimus was any particular race. It doesn't mean that he did any particular job. It didn't mean that he was any particular minority because in most cities of the day it seemed the majority of the working population were considered slaves.

Right? A kind of indentured servant. The letter to Philemon doesn't tell us exactly what Onesimus does for Philemon. Right? He could have been even a professional like many doctors and teachers were in the day.

They were indentured servants. But Onesimus clearly was a slave or a bond servant. Right? An indentured employee of some kind. Yeah, with that we'll dig into verses 17 through 20.

[18:54] Right? This is when the appeal is finally brought to Philemon. When you look at the ratio of words that Paul has spent so far on his background, on his love, on his care, on God's providence in their lives and now he's finally making the appeals 17 verses in.

That ratio of words is interesting to think through. Paul doesn't just come right out at that making the appeal. I think that's important. Right?

And Paul's appeal is this. He says, receive Onesimus back as if Paul was coming to visit. If Philemon is a partner in the Lord with Paul, then the same bond is there with Onesimus and that should be lived out in relationship.

The gospel has changed these relationships. Right? Yes, in a way that's spiritual, that's true, but also in a way that should be visible and sacrificial. Christian proclamation might make the gospel audible.

That's what we're doing today. Right? We're proclaiming the gospel. But Christians living together in local congregations makes the gospel visible. Right? The church is the gospel made visible.

[19:57] And then following on from that appeal, we have Paul acknowledging, right, he's not just hand-waving the offense, but he's letting everyone know what happened. He's letting everyone know that it was a thing, but now he goes further and he wants reconciliation between these two.

And Paul himself is ready to absorb the offense personally. He says, if there's any interpersonal debt, if there's any economic debt, if there's anything lacking, Paul is telling Philemon, change the debt from Onesimus to me.

Let me take that on. From a man who could not pay his own debt, right, Onesimus is this runaway slave, to Paul the apostle with deep relational pockets.

Right? That sounds familiar, doesn't it? The same way that Jesus took on the debt that we all owed because of our sin, he paid it fully with his riches. And that's what Paul is doing here for Onesimus. Paul is not using his position or authority in life to keep someone down, but he's using his position of authority to bring somebody else up. And he's going down to do that, right?

[21:00] He's incurring a debt to do that. In no way is this salvific, right? But in the capacity that Paul has, he's putting his capital on the line so that he can point to the ultimate debt payer.

Paul is in his limited ability following Christ's example here. He's taking his cross and he's bearing it. Paul is personally invested with his own effort and with his own money.

Reconciliation calls a Christian to personal, sacrificial investment. In the second part of verse 19, Paul goes personally again. He says, these are my very words.

No one's ghostwriting this for me. The money, if it's needed, it's as good as yours. I will repay it. And then Paul finishes to Philemon here. He says, hey, remember your salvation.

Right? The gospel message that I brought to you, the impossible was done through your life in Jesus. Therefore, forgive this man something much smaller. Look backward at who and what was done in your life and live in the present.

[22 : 06] Make this decision with Onesimus in the present in light of what Jesus has done in your life. And then in verse 20, you can hear Paul's last effort in this appeal. He says, I'm in prison, but I would praise the Lord.

It would be refreshing to me if you receive Onesimus back as a brother rather than a runaway slave. Right? A praise to God and a refresher to Paul who's in prison. Paul wants to keep going. And moments like this can be a refresher, a joy, a comfort for Paul as he's in prison. Right? And all the ones who are reading this, this is to the church, to Aphia, to Archippus, and all the people we see at the end of the letter, they're all witnessing what's happening and going down.

And right? That is a refresher for everyone to see this happen. We'll slide, we'll go to the next slide. We go to the letter closing, verses 21 through 25. So he's opened the letter, he's given thanks for Philemon, and now he's made his appeal and now he's ending his letter with this closing.

We'll switch lines again. Paul, Paul's closest with Philemon continues to be on display in verse 21. Right? He knows Philemon, they spent a lot of time together, they have been ministering in the trenches, so Paul can confidently close his letter knowing Philemon will hear his appeal, but also confident he's going to walk into this hard thing that Paul has asked him to do.

[23 : 26] And Paul knows him enough that when Philemon sees his appeal, he's going to accept Onesimus back as a brother. And as he's walking in faith, Philemon's not going to do only that, he's going to do much more.

Just like Philemon was described earlier, refreshing the saints, he's going to continue on in Christian ministry. Accepting Philemon back is not the end, accepting Onesimus back is not the end of Philemon's ministry.

And then Paul goes on with his future plans. He says, Philemon, prepare a room for me. Paul plans to visit him. Paul's in prison, but he plans to, when he gets out, Lord willing, visit Philemon to see Philemon, to see Onesimus, and to see the result of what happened.

And then verse 23-24, Paul closes many of his New Testament letters this way. He says that while he's writing this letter, there's many people who are with him at the same time, and they all approve or endorse what he's saying.

These people must have been familiar with both Paul and Philemon, and they want to send their greetings with what is being said. And this probably functions the same way his request to come visit him does, the same way. It's a little bit of outside pressure to say all these others are witnessing this whole ordeal go down, and they have the same expectations, and they're appealing to Philemon in the same way.

[24 : 41] Accept Onesimus back as a brother. If Paul is letting them know that he's writing a letter to Philemon, he surely told them the topic of what he's talking about, the themes, and they all are on board with signing this letter.

And ending off here in verse 25, he lays out the familiar grace benediction. Paul includes in all of his letters, and it's almost an exact copy from Philippians. Paul is so familiar with the grace of God that it seems to be a copy-paste job from his other letters.

But it's not something that Paul says lightly, right? He is daily aware, wherever he is, that the grace of the Lord is ever present with him and with all believers. He desires that Philemon, in dealing with this appeal on his life, that the grace of the Lord would be with him the whole time, right?

He never wants Philemon to lack a vision for what the anchor, what is the anchor of life that makes Philemon's life possible and this appeal possible. Grace.

This unmerited favor given to Philemon and all believers. We'll go to the next slide. Right? So what do we do with this letter now? We just walk through the whole thing, right?

[25 : 49] We've peeked into the lives here, Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul in this church, and we've seen this whole interchange happen. But what do we conclude from this? Right? First, I think we should expect conflict in the church.

This might seem like an odd conclusion from the letter, but if we're not expecting conflict within the body, then when it does come along, right, we'll either be shocked by it and not know what to do, or will people who ignore it, who minimize it, right, those are the two ditches to avoid.

So church, expect conflict. Don't do a thing to create it, but know that it will come nonetheless. And what it does, have a category for it in your mind, right, plan for it like Paul did, and apply the forgiveness of sins to the daily life in that.

Next, how many times have we seen a situation coming from a million miles away? We've seen the train coming down the tracks and know that it's probably going to cause an issue, but instead of speaking clearly into it, we choose to ignore, to minimize, and avoid it altogether.

If you guys are anything like me, this has bitten me over and over. In the home life, at work, in the church, the principle is evident wherever you go. This tells us, right, we should be in the lives of others in a way that the rest of the world is not.

[27 : 06] Paul is speaking into Philemon's life in a loving and caring way, right, biblically loving and biblically caring way. Right, we could be nosy, busybodies gossiping about the lives of others, or we can be ostriches with our heads in the sand ignoring the trouble, but that's not the call we have on each other's lives.

Look to the words of Paul to Philemon for what the pattern this looks like in a healthy Christian relationship. Next, the church is not supposed to be filled with carbon copies of the same person. Think about how Philemon and Onesimus, how different their worlds are. One, wealthy in Colossae, and the other, poor, a bondservant. But, how they're called brothers here.

Paul doesn't just tell Philemon, hey, move on from him, no big deal, go find other wealthy Christians to do life with. That's not the message. Right, one of my favorite quotes from the book *Compelling Community* talks about this when it says, there's two types of communities that exist in gospel preaching evangelical churches.

One of them is the gospel plus community. Right, in the gospel plus community, every relationship is founded on the gospel plus something else. Right, an example, Sam and Joe are both Christians.

[28 : 16] But, the real reason they're friends is because they're both singles in their 40s. Or maybe they share a passion to combat illiteracy. Or maybe they both work as doctors. Right, in the gospel plus community, church leaders enthusiastically use similarity to build community.

But as a whole, this community says little about the power of the gospel. The other type of community is called gospel revealing community. Right, in a gospel revealing community, many relationships in the church would never exist except for the truth and power of the gospel.

Either because of the depth and care for each other or because the two people in a relationship have little in common except for Christ. And right, while the previous similarity based relationships, they do thrive in this church, they are not the focus.

Right, instead church leaders focus on helping people out of their comfort zone to cultivate relationships that would not be possible apart from the supernatural. And this community reveals the power of the gospel in them.

Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus live in gospel revealing communities. The supernatural reality is clear and it's present and allows for those who might have nothing in common, Philemon and Onesimus, to put aside social norms, to dig into each other's lives and speak the truth and love to each other even when it's hard.

[29 : 40] Church, we can be that for someone else. And church, we can allow someone else to be that for us. The encouragement here is get uncomfortable in the church.

And finally, reconciliation. This whole letter, right, it involves personal, sacrificial investment. Look to Paul's Philemon, look to Paul's relationship with Philemon and how it allowed him to speak into the situation.

Those ratio words that reflected their past history and their experience compared with that one verse, 17, the appeal, because Paul had invested so much because they knew each other so well this whole interchange was possible.

If Paul had written verse 21, right, as a distance acquaintance that Philemon barely knew, this probably would have been taken a completely different way. Right? Philemon would say, this guy doesn't know me.

He doesn't know my situation, my background, my financial status. He doesn't know anything about me. Who is he to make this appeal to me? Right? These are the internet warriors, right?

[30 : 47] The comment section peanut gallery. Even the things that I and we mumble under our own breath. But the call here, if there's a situation that we don't know what's going on and we think we should be speaking into it, it might be a call to pause, pray for understanding, and possibly a call to invest and spend some personal capital to get to know what's going on.

Get to know the people. But it is not a call to take sniper shots from the outside, to cut down a brother or a sister. Right? To be clear, there are situations where it's our duty to speak into gross and obvious sin.

Hear that. But that's not always a situation. And if you find yourself in a situation like that all the time, you've possibly fell into the trap like I did when I was younger, when I was a hammer and everything was a nail.

but the call here is to spend, invest, and be sacrificial in these moments. Let me close this in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, you have done a great work.

You have made a way for a sin-filled people to be reconciled to you, the perfect one. You have not only made a way, but you have secured and applied salvation to your people.

[32 : 08] Father, you care about relationships and we see that in the Trinity. We see that in your blood-bought purchase on the cross and we see that here in Paul's letter to Philemon talking about Onesimus.

Father, since the fall, relationships between people have been broken, but you are a God of reconciliation, even at great cost to bring people together.

Father, one day all things will be reconciled to you perfectly, but now we get to walk in faith, seeking unity through Jesus in our daily life.

Father, would you help us walk in obedience to your word here in daily life, trusting that when we see conflict, when we see trouble, that we would be agents of reconciliation like Paul, that we should be forgiving like Philemon and that we should be obedient like Onesimus, all while pointing to the one who did the impossible reconciliation that we could never do.

Father, we humbly ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.