

Peace in the Power of the Gospel

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[0:00] All right, while we work on that, would you turn into your Bibles to the book of Philemon? And then we'll pray together.

The book of Philemon. Paul writes, I thank my God always making mention of you in my prayers. Say, hear of your love and of the faith which you have towards the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints.

And I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you. Since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have reggotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you but is now useful both to you and to me.

I've sent him back to you in person, that is sending my very heart, whom I wish to keep with me so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel. But without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be in effect by compulsion but of your own free will.

[1:59] For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that 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.

If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. But if he has 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, not to mention 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 heart in Christ. Having confidence in your obedience I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. At that time, same time, also prepare me a lodging.

For I hope that through your prayers I'll be given to you. Let's pray. Father, you are crowned in adoration.

[3:12] And one day you will receive all of the worship and all of the glory due to your glorious name. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that you are Lord.

And it will glorify your Father. But as we come to Passion Week, as you walk the dusty streets of Jerusalem, rejected and despised, forsaken of men, wearing not a crown of adoration or of glory, but of thorns and of shame.

Father, we come to you this morning because of the cost, the payment, the sacrifice, and what we will learn today, the power of what that sacrifice produces.

Father, you know each soul this morning. You know each mind and heart. And you know exactly how to take your word and to produce the power of the gospel in them.

So we ask that you would do that this morning. In your son's precious and holy name. Amen. As we head into Easter season, we need to consider the reality of what does the cross do?

[4:44] What does the effect of the cross have? Do we really think, as believers, the tangible day-in, day-out principles of the power of the cross as we head towards Easter and we see a suffering servant, we see this atoning lamb, we see the glorious resurrection, we weep in grief because of what our sin cost our Lord, we praise and joy at the victory

of Christ, accomplished in his name, we understand that heaven is gained, we understand that lives are transformed, we realize that it changes the nature of how we function as believers in contrast to the unbelievers of the world.

But how does that affect my thoughts, my hearts, my mind, my relationships? As we come to Philemon, this is the very reality of what Paul is writing.

This is a real-time demonstration of these transforming realities that Paul is teaching the church.

Yes, this is a very personal letter to Philemon.

Philemon is in Colossae. He is a slave owner. Onesimus is a runaway slave and I'm not gonna get into much of the historical background, but slavery is thought much differently in the first century, more like economic business.

If you owed a debt or if you wanted to work with someone, there was no difference between those things. You had a master and you were a slave. Paul ministered the gospel to Onesimus as they were in prison together in Rome.

[6:28] And now he's a mediator between Philemon and Onesimus. Onesimus is saved through the gospel, which now presents an opportunity for the grace of God and these transforming, powerful effects of the gospel to create peace now in a severed relationship.

We know Paul as a clear, precise theologian. We're learning about that in the book of Romans. We know Paul as this bold evangelist that goes from place to place, being left as dead, standing up and going to the next place.

We know Paul as a courageous apostle standing firm on the truth and his role given by Christ. We know Paul as a pioneering church planter, making sure that believers have pastors, pastors have churches, going from place to place.

We know Paul as the pastor of all the other pastors. Here in Philemon, we see Paul as a dear brother, no different than you and I in the pew, loving Christ, wanting to see the glory of Christ in another brother.

The faithful Christian who loves the other one, who glories in the gospel and what has happened in another person's life. And surprise, surprise, this letter and how Paul is teaching the church is around conflict.

[7:57] It's around disagreement. It's around a severed relationship. The church, our church, is not immune to conflict.

It's been obvious. I shouldn't have to state the obvious, but we still need to think that way, right? Whether before you were part of 99 or you're a part of SBC or you come in here this morning, a part of another church.

I think in our minds, beloved, I know my heart can gravitate towards this as well, but there's an expectation on others or ourselves that it just shouldn't be that way, that there should be this overwhelming peace all of the time.

You even go into the world and you sin in the world and say, well, aren't you a Christian? Why are you acting like that? We can't be surprised, beloved, in the norm when fellowship takes place, when life-on-life discipleship happens, when preferences and desires and sin occurs, we must think of these realities as an opportunity to glorify God and to reveal to the world the power of the gospel. Does the gospel really make a difference in our relationships tangibly every single day here in this room, in your home, in your neighborhoods? Does the power of God really change the mind and the heart of the people who have experienced salvation when the sting of sin comes in our lives, when the frustration of disagreements happen, when the preferences and opinions are rubbed the wrong way?

[9:39] The world certainly has their standards and their ways and their opportunities to deal with these things, reconcile differences. Everyone is seeking relief and peace.

You can just know that about the world. Every area of every unbeliever's lives is trying to find peace in something. The gospel not only provides a peace between God and humanity, but a peacefulness of fellowship between brothers and sisters in Christ, in the church.

So what did Paul focus on when he was mediating between Philemon and Onesimus? What are these transforming realities in the power of the gospel being worked out here?

Paul's bringing Philemon, his intentions. Here's what's happening in this letter. I'm presenting Onesimus to you to reconcile because he's now in Christ. I would love to have him in ministry with me and to help me in ministry, but being reconciled in peace between brothers is more important, so I'm sending him back to you so that this severed relationship can have the true peace that Christ provides in the gospel.

That's what's happening in this letter. The gospel salvation brings obligations to the church in Christian relationships.

[11:11] The gospel changes the pursuit and the path of reconciliation and it can provide peace in the power of the gospel. Christ pursues us to have peace with him, but that is also peace within the body, the relationships.

That's why I've titled this sermon Peace and the Power of the Gospel. So as we walk through Philemon here, we're gonna see five transforming realities of pursuing peace in the power of the gospel.

We're gonna see the motivation, we're gonna see the heart, we're gonna see affections, we're gonna see the goal, and we're gonna see the actions. So let's see this first transforming reality in verses eight and nine.

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love's sake, I rather appeal to you. Since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ, Jesus.

Here's the motivation, beloved. The motivation is love. This is the governing principle in the Christian life, the governing principle in salvation. We've already seen that in Romans chapter five.

[12:25] Because of God's love for us, he demonstrated that love in Christ. Our convictions motivate us.

Your convictions motivate you. What you truly believe will come out, wherever those convictions come from. You act on what motivates you to achieve that conviction.

You wanna get stronger? You get a gym membership, where you go up the chief a hundred times. You wanna lose weight? So you put into action some sort of diet. You want to be the valedictorian or go to a certain university?

So you work hard and you have good grades. You wanna make it professionally? You wake up 5 a.m. to go train. Your convictions, your goals, the things in front of you will now change how you act. So Paul, in attempt to bring Onesimus to Philemon, Philemon drives at this motivation. Here, Philemon, before I get to the actions, let me get to your heart.

[13:24] Let me get to the motivation of what should drive you. Verse eight, he says, I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper.

Verse nine, and yet, for love's sake, because of my love for you, our love for Christ, both Paul and Philemon are in tempting positions here.

Paul, as an apostle of Christ, can say, I want to order you, just do it because that's what Christ wants the church to do. Philemon could tell Paul, you should just send Onesimus because he's my slave, so they could be bringing in their status, their kind of worldly status.

Even though Paul's an apostle and that's given by Christ, Paul's not using this apostolic status. Onesimus is, or Philemon's not using this worldly status as a slave owner. Both are tempted to take how their earthly relationships are connected to each other and to use that.

which is every one of our temptations in this room. You go to some personal offense and it's against a status to govern that reconciliation.

[14:42] You shouldn't treat me that way because of X, Y, and Z. I'm your husband or I'm your wife. I'm your boss. Here, Paul gets to the motivation for reconciling in peace and to show what the power of the gospel can do in the heart.

It's love. There is authority here. Paul realizes that and he uses his authority in certain places. You go to the book of Galatians, he's using his apostolic authority to stand on truth.

Now he has a personal relationship here with Philemon. He's not casting it aside as if it doesn't exist. He's choosing not to use it in that manner.

Because to order you is to act according to authority. Paul is proving his love to Philemon to not just use that. He's using personal language.

Look at this language he uses. He says, I am such a person as Paul. He's like, because I'm kind of a nobody here. We're just buds. We're just pals. I'm an old man.

[15:53] I just want to love you, brother. And for you to be reconciled with Onesimus. I'm just a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

He's using what God has given him in humility to say, this is really who I'm talking or how I'm talking. I'm an old man who loves Christ.

I'm a nobody. I'm just striving to love Christ. I'm a prisoner for Christ. That's it. That's who's talking here. He's not appealing to his authority.

Yet, for love's sake, I appeal to you. The motivation being love and the willingness to expend yourself for the well-being of somebody else that costs you is still fervently made through this appeal.

This word appeal can be exhort or implore or urge. Paul uses it in other ways. Ephesians 4.1, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. But later, in Ephesians 6, he says, I sent him for this purpose that he may comfort your heart.

[17:05] So, it's kind of using both of those here. I really want you to do this in this manner. I'm not going to force you to do it. It's strong language. It's not overburdening.

It's not overwhelming. But Philemon can't dismiss this either. This is a masterful way to reconcile relationships. This is Paul just being a faithful brother saying, I appeal to you.

I'm not going to force your hand. This has got to come from your heart, your love for Christ, your love for this new brother Onesimus. But he's encouraging him to do that.

Paul's love for Philemon drives him to passionately use this language. Paul's constantly encouraging churches to remember love.

We'll get here in Romans 12. Let love be without hypocrisy. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. 1 Corinthians 13 and then 1 Corinthians 16.

[18:12] Let all that you do be done in love. Ephesians chapter 5. Walk in love just as Christ loved you by giving himself up.

This is a constant motivator in the church. What about Peter? John 21.

We know the story. He blows it royally as my dad says. He's ready to take on an entire Roman army with a shank, with a kitchen knife.

And then around a fire gets confronted, deserts his savior, and then just goes fishing. what were the three questions that Jesus asked?

Did you define Christology to that young lady? Could you have had maybe a little bit of a bigger sword when he took on that army? No, he gets to the motivation of the peacefulness in their relationship.

[19:26] Do you love me? If you loved me, then you're going to respond differently. If you love me, you're going to shepherd my sheep.

You're going to tend my lambs. Jesus tests Peter's desertion of him by asking the very question of do you love me?

Motivations can be many in reconciliation. I just want to reconcile to protect myself. I just want to reconcile and have peace so that this feeling just goes away.

There can be pity, self-pity, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger. Fear is probably the most debilitating response. Usually the most destructive.

You play games with the what if in your mind creating scenarios of why you would never want to have peace with anybody. But in Christ and because of the gospel, the change in who you are internally, you can now love the God who created you and you can love the other sinners that are now saints and children of that God who saved you.

[20:42] Because their nature has been changed too. Their eternal destiny, their identity has changed just like yours. it takes faith to love, beloved.

It takes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to love other brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul said in Ephesians, because of the great love by which he loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions.

So the love of God is what prepared the plan of reconciliation and the peace between you and I, which happens this week as we think towards the cross. He sent Christ.

He sacrificed for you. He didn't just focus on your sin that you had to present yourself in a certain way, but he came to be judged even though he was the innocent sacrifice.

We're not innocent in our sin. We're not innocent in our relationships. We always bring some opinion, some preference, something that motivates self.

[21:58] The debt is the real issue. In the cross, he paid for the sin debt, the gap between heaven and earth, but as we sin, there is still that debt created, or you can even think distance.

When something happens in relationships, there's now a distancing. sin separates, sin divides. The motivation for eliminating that debt is now love, because that's what God's motivation was, even when you were dead in your transgression.

He pursued you. He paid the debt. love for love. And our convictions, our motivations, and the peace that we long for within our relationships in the church should be that same motivation.

Second, transforming reality, the heart. The heart of pursuing peace in the power of the gospel. Look at verse 10.

I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whom I begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but is now useful both to you and to me.

[23:13] So the heart of pursuing peace is salvation, that change in nature that we talked about, that now gives freedom and hope to glorify God in how we can now have the peace in our relationships.

relationships. Salvation now defines our relationships to one another. We always use definitions, friend, family, acquaintance, employee.

They're my Facebook friend. I know them, but they're my Facebook friend. It kind of helps us to think in our own minds how issues are worked out, how deep do we go, how much time do we spend on it.

As believers, this now, salvation is the defining reality in conflict. That salvation has occurred between me and God, that's the heart of it, so now we pursue peace with others.

Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment. Things have now changed for Onesimus.

[24:31] He ran away. He interacts with Paul. Paul now, because of this word, begotten, give birth to, it's the same word in John chapter 3.

You must be born again. You must have a changed heart and a changed nature. people that are now dead in their trespasses and sins are now alive, and that changes things.

What do you think of the people who saw Lazarus come out of the dead? You think that changed them a little bit? I hope so. Maybe not those Pharisees who saw him and were angrier now.

What about Jesus? What did that do to the disciples? He rose from the dead. Because I'm saved, you're saved, salvation is a holistic event that changes everything about the heart, soul, mind, and the strength to accomplish God's will.

He's now born again. These old desires, these old ways of reconciling, these old ways of pursuing peace, these old ways of figuring out relationships are now in Christ.

[25:47] they're replaced with new desires. Then look at Paul in verse 10, my child. The way that he's just thinking about him.

Paul uses this in 1 Corinthians 4 when he says, I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. To have your mind changed in the way that you think.

he's in prison and somehow Onesimus hears the gospel connected to Paul. He gives his life to Christ. He's now ministering to Paul in some capacity.

And this is just something only the Lord could do. The meaning of Onesimus is useful. So now he's using a play on words. He was useless, but now he's useful.

He's useful to both of us. There's a change. He's not just simply an employee anymore. He's not just simply a ministry partner.

[26:53] He's a brother in Christ. And Paul's communicating that transformation that's taking place so that Philemon knows that. Very salvific language. The fruit's there.

He's saved. this has always been the case. There's nothing in an earthly manner now that separates us.

That's what Paul is getting at. Eternal reconciliation has taken place. Now relational reconciliation. Eternal peace and now relational peace can take place because of the power of the gospel. We understood the last point that there's an elimination of distance or debt because of sin or conflict. That love now wants to sacrifice to clear that debt.

We have no power to do that in and of ourselves. It is still a supernatural power from the gospel which we have been given by God. The capacity that you have is still not your own.

[27:58] And it's our natural tendency to gauge the situation whether it is sin, whether it is just a difference of opinion and there's a struggle, there's a frustration there.

It's our natural tendency to gauge the situation on our own perception rather than on what salvation has already accomplished and what salvation now can accomplish between the relationship. We tend to think that freedom or peace in the relationship will take place when we handle them according to our own thought processes or our own standard, our own approved methods.

We can focus on the sin that separates rather than the power that brings together. We must remember, beloved, that there is no relationship on earth that has more sin in between it than yours and God when he saved you.

None. Comparatively, it is universes apart. If he satisfies that debt, clears us from our payment, we trust the Lord that what he has already done and provided the power for us to do in faith, to love other brothers and sisters because of salvation, God's peace can be pursued because it was already accomplished at the cross.

[29:33] Third, transforming reality. We have the motivation, which is love. We have the heart, which is salvation. Third, we have affections of pursuing peace and the power of the gospel.

Look at verse 12. I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wish to keep with me so that on your behalf he might minister to me and my imprisonment for the gospel. But without your consent, I did not want to do anything so that your goodness would not be in effect by compulsion but of your own free will. The affection is a willing heart, giving heart.

Man, these verses are special. When we talk about pursuing peace, reconciling relationships, I kind of walked through this at 99 and I called the entire book Affectionate Gospel Fellowship.

That was like six sermons. I'm trying to put all those in this one, so thank you for your patience already. This is Paul's inner gut life.

[30:44] This is the inner affection for a fellow believer. Paul deeply loves Onesimus.

He's kind of agonizing over this reality that he has to do this for love's sake and because of salvation, but in his heart he's struggling to do it. What you and I feel all of the time, he's sending his very heart heart.

It's like sending a piece of yourself away. Three times in Philemon, the hearts of the saints would be refreshed. And refresh my heart in Christ.

This is the inner being, the inner man, the immaterial you where all of your affections are felt. All of the circumstances of life touch reality and who you are.

Where the image of God comes into play. Your emotions, your thoughts, your convictions. All of the human experiences. That's what Paul's talking about. This is the seeing your child walk to kindergarten for the first time.

[31:54] Watching your kid go off to college for the first time. This is seeing them march off to the military. This is what's going to happen a lot of times this year is sending them off in marriage. So the two can now become one flesh.

It's a piece of your own flesh and blood. That's what Paul is communicating here. Think of the sacrifice a little bit that Paul's making here.

Rome and Colossae are not close. They're like 1300 miles away. It's a five hour plane flight, which they didn't have then, but I checked anyways. How does Paul know he's ever going to see Onesimus again?

He's got to go over like two oceans. He's got to go from Rome through Greece into Turkey. He doesn't know. But he's willing to send him.

Even at the gut level. Because the priority is peace. The priority is Philemon's freedom to choose what is godly.

[33:02] This word minister is that normal word for deacon. He just serves Paul unreservedly. There's been a precious service to him.

Think of a time that somebody just served you. You were sick or you served your family and they're just almost a part of your life now. You almost consider them family. That's what Onesimus was to Paul now and the way that he served him.

He's like, I'm just sending all of my guts to you. Man, I love this kid. But I got to send him. He's not forcing it. The NIV here is interesting.

It says, so that any favor you would do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. Paul's letting Philemon know you're getting a family member.

It's stinging a little bit. But I want you to do this willingly, my friend. The affections of the gospel.

[34:06] This is real, but it's a choice. This is not a feeling. You give yourself to others to serve them in the church. To other believers.

To your husband or to your wife or to your family, your kids. This is what relationships could be in the life of the church. And ultimately really should be over time.

I feel Paul's pain. As a pastor living in a very transient town and you serve people and people have served you and then in the Lord's providence they go somewhere else.

And you miss them and you long to see them again. You've all experienced the exact same thing. Paul's making that decision. I'm sending him back.

He's not saying I'm an apostle. I need ministry here. I need to be encouraged. I need to build up in prison. I need to get sent out again. I'm sending my very heart.

[35:11] There's affection here. We have this idea in the life of the church sometimes that relationships, even in the church, they have to be connected by worldly interests before they can be real.

That worldly relatability in our relationships must form before spiritual relatability. It's not how God designed the church to work.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ far before we have some interests that we love. Those are good and those are wonderful and maybe because you love hiking together with someone else you do discipleship and you talk about truth.

That is wonderful. But that is not the realness of the relationship. It is the eternal reality that you are going to be perfected in glory with this brother or sister and they are going to sing perfectly, worship perfectly, communicate perfectly, be in one another's lives perfectly one day, be totally transformed one day perfectly.

That is where relatability comes in. What did Paul and Onesimus have in common? You have an apostle who has been chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

[36:30] You have a runaway slave who is just trying to get out of dodge and flee from whatever was happening. Now they are sharing a jail cell? Onesimus is in Christ and Paul says, the way he serves me now is sending my very heart, the affections that was cultivated in that relationship was because of the gospel and because of the way they served one another.

Each of you belongs to this ministry, beloved, being in Christ. There is no greater value, no less value. We are in Christ together. We have different gifts to serve the body.

The relationships that we have in the church will take time, take time to grow, but we need to pour into them. We need to make time.

An hour and a half, 90 minutes on Sunday morning will not do the trick. The more time we spend with each other and we're working towards that, the things that are happening in ministry and there's a lot of wonderful things happening in ministry and life here.

But where we spend our time does reveal our priorities. And of course, they can be good things, but they're never neutral. To have this kind of affectionate relationship in the life of the church where service in the body together is like family members living together.

[38:09] It takes a willing heart and an affection. Think of Romans 1 that we've already gone to when Paul says, like, I just can't wait to get there.

I want to impart a spiritual gift to you that I've been given and I want you to impart your spiritual gifts to me. Paul hadn't met them yet. He's longing to see them. He's like, I can't even wait to meet you because you have something given by Christ that I get to experience.

I have something given in Christ that you get to experience. I can't wait to just get together and make it all work. Paul hadn't seen them yet. We can be in the same pew sometimes for years and not even know each other.

Not really know each other. This is a call to that end. And in contrast to Romans, think of Proverbs 18.1 where Solomon writes, he who separates himself seeks his own desire.

If there is a separation there, we need to give our hearts a systems check. Am I purposely separating because I want something else than what the power of the gospel can provide in my life?

[39:27] A willing heart and reconciliation and peace will desire what God wants to produce in you, but it must be intentional. It must be purposeful.

And you must seek it out with other believers. I don't think you guys want to have to force it in a jail cell.

Praise God that we have the freedom to do that. Maybe one day in Canada or around the world that may have to be the case. But we have the freedom to walk across the sanctuary, to walk across the house in our growth groups, to interact with people, to pursue the affectionate joys of what the power of the gospel is doing in one another's lives.

The first transforming reality is the motivation, which is love. The second transforming reality is the heart, which is salvation. The third transforming reality is the affection, is the willing heart.

The fourth transforming reality of the goal is the goal. The goal of peace and the power of the gospel. And that is unity. So the goal of love and salvation and a willing heart is a unified relationship that shines the light of Christ to the world.

[40:48] Not merely for our own personal benefit and just merely to see God's work in one another's lives, but the world now gets to see that the priority for God in his church is the unity of his son Jesus Christ with his body in a way to witness to the world because in his plan for the church, that's the effective way.

That's why we read John 17 this morning. So that the world would know. I in them, they in us, I in you.

A tenderhearted unity between the body. Look at verse 15. For perhaps he was, for this reason, separated from you for a while that you would 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.

This separation by the providence of God used by God to accomplish glorious things, we praise him for that. Sometimes we just think, how in the world is this going to work out?

[42:03] And you look back and you're like, that's exactly what needed to happen for this person to be saved. He saves Onesimus, he's useful in ministry to Paul, displays the glory of God and love and salvation and a willing heart.

Now Paul is helping the mind of Philemon to understand who he is getting back. Not merely a slave, but oh, so more. You're now unified together with this man. Sovereign hand of God was producing something far greater.

You even think of Joseph comforting his brothers in Genesis 50. What you meant for evil, God meant for good. God was accomplishing so much more than what you could have ever hoped or dreamed or imagined because of this separation, because Onesimus ran away.

Paul's encouraging Philemon that when Onesimus returns, he has a changed man. He's no longer a slave. He's a beloved brother.

So treat him that way. The love and salvation and willing heart to focus on, the production of that, the goal of that is a unified family, a unified church.

[43:26] church. We desire for unity. I hope you do. You long for unity. I pray that the elders pray for unity.

I pray you pray for unity in the church, but the question is are we willing to work for that unity, pursue unity, and to exalt Christ by saying the power of the gospel is working in that person. So I'm going to do the hard work which we'll think about even in the last point. A true togetherness, locking arm in arm, suffering together.

And Paul says maybe the reason for all of this is that you have him back forever. He's more useful maybe to you than he is even to me. Both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Maybe he's going to allow your business to flourish. Maybe he's going to be a part of the church of Colossi there and be of greater ministry usefulness. Again, Jesus says in John 13, the world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.

[44:37] Romans 15, one accord, one voice, glorify the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4, one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.

It's not merely just for you. The peace that you experience within a relationship affects now the entirety of the body in the same way that sin in a relationship can affect the entirety of the body. The goal should be unity. I want to be unified with this person in Christ. Sometimes our goal is to manage relationships.

You and I have done it. See someone across the way. Take a different route. Don't want to deal with that this morning. Don't want to talk to that person today.

You may do it in the world. Sometimes you do it in the church. We try to just kind of manage, make sure everything's okay in my little world. Is that what Christ was intending as He carried the wooden cross?

[45:54] The Calvary? No. He wanted the unity of what the power of the cross would produce so that we would be one.

We would all be one. Lastly, the last transforming reality. You have the motivation which is love. You have the heart which is salvation. You have the affections which is a willing heart. You have the goal which is unity. You have the actions now for pursuing peace and the power of the gospel. And this is grace-filled sacrifice and forgiveness.

I know that's a mouthful. Grace-filled sacrifice and forgiveness. So you're motivated by love. You realize that now salvation has taken place.

You're willing to do that and you want unity. Now it's realized by actions. Look at verse 17. If then you regard me a partner accept him as you would me but if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything charge that to my account.

[47:06] I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will repay it. Not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well. Yes, brother let me benefit from you and the Lord refresh my heart in Christ having confidence in your obedience I write to you since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

At the same time also prepare for me a lodging for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you. If then verse 17 if you think of me regard me as a partner the word is that word for fellowship if you consider me in fellowship with you and you with me in Christ fellow believers with fellow purposes with fellow goals together he makes this reminder he takes that personal status out of it that we've already talked about I want you to accept him which is where I get the concept of forgiveness I want you to bring him into yourself this means to receive to welcome into a circle of acquaintances to welcome with friendliness with which hospitality is the result bring him back into your world as a beloved brother as whom

I have begotten in my imprisonment I already know this about you because if you look up to verse 5 I hear of the love and the faith which you have towards all the saints I've come verse 7 to have much joy and comfort in your love because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you Paul knows that's the reality he front loads it in verses 4 through 7 accept him as a believer as the prodigal son as the father that runs towards the son after the son has royally blown it this forgiveness that Philemon can have towards Onesimus this this kind of peace this kind of unity that believers can have and what we have this is what separates Christianity from all other religions what separates

Christianity you might get asked every once in a while forgiveness a reconciled debt in Christ a lot of people know about God you can have theology about the Trinity or Christ's deity you can even repeat the gospel which is a transforming message and not believe it many can know and even

mouth the words on a theology test of course you can't be a Christian without these things but at the heart of it Christianity what separates Christ and Christianity to shine in the world is that the offer of forgiveness is real and true and you have freedom in Christ you have freedom in your relationships you're together with the church with how sin is dealt with how sin is dealt with how it's exposed how it's confronted how it's absorbed in heaven from

God every religion is seeking this same reality to resolve the issue of a guilty conscience because of sin every religion is trying to figure out a way how do I resolve this guilty conscience because I know who I am on the inside that's what Romans 1 and 2 is about as we've already seen the world is trying to numb that reality world is trying to numb it out figure it out on their own other religions try to purge it through self exalting rituals maybe you're sitting in this room using church as a self-exalting ritual right now to make yourself feel better about a guilty conscience the heart of the Christian lives here the heart of Christianity is that we have true forgiveness in the power of the gospel and Christ's actions revealed that power he came he lived the perfect life he died on the cross he went to the grave he rose again in power he's at the right hand of the father in a seating for his people so that

[52:01] God would accept sinners to himself so that he would forgive sinners and grant them peace these are actions that's how we're accepted death burial resurrection in the Lord Jesus Christ the spotless lamb perfect righteousness are our actions reflecting that when we're pursuing peace and the power of the gospel monosimus can pay if you regard me as a partner accept him but if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything charge that to my account Paul says put it on my debt sheet put it on my receipt because this word here is the same word in Romans 5 that talks about the imputed sin or imputed righteousness imputed means something that is put on you the righteousness we have in

Christ is put on us by Christ says put that on my account what did Onesimus have he's a runaway slave he probably racked up quite a bill too look at verse 20 let me benefit from you in the Lord refresh my heart you kind of even owe me a little bit yourself by layman he says in verse 19 not to mention to you that you owe me owe to me even of your own self as well Paul's refreshing is the ability for him to love think of salvation have a willing heart understand unity so that his action is I'll take it on myself he's refreshed in

Christ when he gets to pay the cost to unify and reconcile two brothers we're refreshed normally when we get away from the situation we get a good vacation we get respite we move along or it's just over with I don't have to deal with it anymore Paul says no my refreshment is actually the sacrificial actions that I'm going to take so that the power of Christ can be seen in this relationship he says you know what I have the confidence that you're going to obey you're probably even going to do more than what I say because I just know who you are that kind of action giving the preference or giving the encouragement or giving the hope but Philemon I know you as a man I want you to do this willingly

I'm giving you the opportunity and I'm also forecasting that you're probably going to do more how much hope do you think that provided for Philemon verse 22 at the same time just prepare me a lodging for I hope that through your prayers I'll be given to you I can't wait to see you again the action of coming towards him again I wish that there was a second Philemon not just the pursuit of peace where Paul is trying to be a mediator I would love to see the end of the story I can't wait to talk to Paul and Philemon and Onesimus about this and glory what happened did you make it did it all work out Paul did you get to go see him what was that conversation like Onesimus how did you go to Philemon what was that like I know about the story!

but! know the story but all of this can happen because of what happens this week and next weekend because of Christ because of the power of the gospel in the heart of his people a slave becomes a son a slave becomes a brother a brother becomes unified and useful and God is glorified let's pray father oh that all of our relationships would have these transforming realities in them thank you for this book thank you for recording this story for us and like all the stories in the [57:14] Bible they are not just stories they are depictions of your grace they're examples for us to follow it's hope for us to have Lord and I pray for all the relationships in this church in the home and families may we drink deeply of the well of the power that you've given to us in

salvation may you cause us to be humble and upon reflection thank you for the cross thank you for the crown of thorns thank you for being willing thank you for your love Father so help us this week help us to be changed and transformed this week as we think about all that

Christ has done for us in granting us the peace that we so desperately needed and may we use it for your glory in Jesus name amen