

# The Opportunity in Conflict

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, if you'll turn with me to your copy of this letter in Philemon. It can be in the Bible that you brought with you, but also in the seat in front of you, there is the copy of Philemon, and on the back of it is an outline that might help you follow along with today.

From the amount of Amazon trucks that we have in our neighborhood, there is no, it's not a big deal anymore to get a package at your door, to get a letter. Mail's always coming. Not so the case. When the United Pauline Systems, that Jonathan represented earlier, when the UPS would come by and Paul would have sent a letter to a church, that would have been quite the big deal.

And what they're going to read had been a lot of excitement around him. As the letter would have been opened and they're going to read it, and they're going to consider what is the nature of the letter, what is going to be addressed in this letter.

And so as they would hear it, and because Ty and Jonathan are such nice people, you might not have felt the tension in the room that would have certainly have been there in this letter with the response that's going to be there.

Is that Onesimus? I can't believe he's back here. How's Philemon going to respond? And all those things would have been what would have been whispered throughout the house as they would have walked in.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] I'm going to read this here to you. I'm going to read the entire book. If you have a goal this year to read several books, here's one of them for you, okay? You can put this on your list of a book that is read. But I've listened to easily ten sermons over the last few weeks about Philemon, and by far my favorite part of every one of those sermons is when they read the Scriptures.

And I have no doubt that will be the case today. This story, if you will listen to it. And what I want to do to try to help you make sure you have an understanding, and hopefully I won't get confused here, I'm going to read some of the verses.

And when I'm reading, follow along the Scripture. I don't want you to get confused about what I'm saying and what Scripture is. But after I read a few verses to you, I'm going to read this as Philemon reading it, and try to help make sure you have an understanding of the context, or what would be the thought at the time that it is happening.

So here we are in Philemon, verse number one. And so the letter gets opened up, and everybody takes a deep breath as it's going to be read. And it says, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ and Timothy, our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved and fellow laborer.

And to our beloved, Athia and Archippus, our fellow soldier, to the church in thy house, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 3 0 ] I cannot believe I am receiving this letter from Paul. Where's my wife? There she is, Athia. So good to see you. Where's my youngest son, Archie? Archie, are you in here? Archie, there you are, Archie.

We got this letter from the apostle Paul. It might have been his son. We don't know, certainly. Some believe it might be his son. We got Archie and my wife are here, and we have this letter, grace and peace.

Man, we have certainly received grace and peace in this home, and our family where this church is meeting. Undeserved favor defines this home and what God has done for us.

And what does he have for us today? And he says here, dear, he says a prisoner. That's interesting because we know he's literally a prisoner, but he's entitling himself today a prisoner for a cause, and that cause is Jesus Christ.

Verse 4. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and toward all saints, that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

[ 3 : 36 ] For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. I certainly do have a love for the saints. I love every one of you in here, but that's because Christ first loved me, and my love for him is now being demonstrated, and the love that I have for you, and you show it to me.

And I can't believe all those miles away that Paul is hearing about our love and our faith together, and he's praying that what he has heard about us will continue.

No matter what comes up, he prays that it will continue here in our lives, and that his heart has been encouraged, that God has used our lives here to encourage the Apostle Paul some 1,200 miles away in the way that we've been living.

What an incredible honor it is to be like that. So then verse 8. Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ, and enjoy thee that which is convenient.

Yeah, you can say that again, Paul. You certainly have the right just to say what you want. The church was started. You led me to the Lord. Just say what you want, Paul. You have the right. Yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee.

[ 4 : 47 ] Being such as one as Paul the aged, and also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son, Onesimus. Onesimus.

I thought that's who it was. I thought that's who brought that letter in. I knew I recognized him. Paul's getting older. He has wisdom. He's a prisoner now.

He's saying something for love's sake. I feel like there's a request coming, dear. I feel like Paul's about to ask something of me. But Onesimus has been there, and he says that when he was in jail, he was able to leave Onesimus to the Lord.

You know, Paul's a smart guy, but I just wonder, maybe somebody's pulled the wool over his eyes. Because Onesimus, I know, he is not somebody that would be running around with Paul, or he would know. Does he really know the whole story?

Which whom I have begotten in my bonds. So they spent some time together. Verse 11. Which in times past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.

[ 5 : 50 ] That's funny here. You may not recognize it, but this is a play on words. Onesimus means profitable. And so Paul here is saying, at one time, this man who should have been profitable was unprofitable to you, but now he's profitable for me and to you.

And this means, I think he really does know Onesimus. How would he have ever known that about him if Onesimus wasn't honest with him about where he's at? Verse 12. Whom I have sinned again, thou therefore receive him, that is mine own bowels.

Whom I have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly.

I'm going to have a choice to make here about Onesimus. He's been serving with Paul. He retained. He stayed there longer than needed. And now he's come back here.

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever. What does he mean? I know he departed for a little bit, but what does he mean I'm going to have him forever?

[ 6 : 59 ] Oh, Onesimus is now a believer. Onesimus is going to now be with me forever. Onesimus has met Jesus. Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in flesh and in the Lord.

If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. Paul, you know that I see you as a partner. I have no problem with that. You've never done wrong towards me, but you want me to see this man in that same manner.

If he has wronged thee, or owe it thee ought, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it, albeit I do not say to thee how thou oughtest unto me, even thine own self besides.

Look at that. There, look at this. The apostle Paul, who is not, who writes in large letters, he has written some of this. It is that personal to him.

All right? It is that personal to him. He is making this request of this man, Onesimus. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord.

[ 8 : 10 ] Refresh my bowels in the Lord. Encourage my heart. Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do more than I say. But withal, prepare me also a lodging.

Also, who else do you think he's talking about? Dear, I think he wants us to put up Onesimus, and that eventually, when he gets out of jail, he too is going to come by here as well.

But withal, prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you. Church family, let's continue in prayer for the Apostle Paul that he will get out.

There salute the Epaphras, my fellow prisoners of Christ, Jesus, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen. That gives me a lot to consider. All right, I'm not filing anymore, all right? Don't get confused. I'm back here in 2024 and thinking about the implications of this letter because they're not just for Philemon, but they're for every one of us in here today.

[ 9 : 17 ] I want to look at two people that have a decision that they're going to move forward, and I want to look at one example of a person who helped people move forward. First one being Onesimus here, who shows up.

And this is the question that Onesimus is asking. On the back of that paper that you got, there's kind of some bullet points under each one of the decisions that they're going to ask about moving forward, and a question.

And the question is this. How can I show Jesus' work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to the conflict? How can I show the work that Jesus has done in my life by taking responsibility to my contribution in the conflict?

We're more interested, or I should say I'm more interested in a Bible study on how to forgive than a Bible study on how to ask for forgiveness. But if our math is correct, there should be an equal correlation between people who need to give forgiveness and those people who need to ask for forgiveness.

But maybe we don't take many times, often we don't take time to consider what would be in a biblical example of somebody that was asking for forgiveness. First thing that we see in Onesimus is confession means that we stop running.

[ 10 : 26 ] Verse number 13, Paul said, I would have retained with me whom I've retained with me. So it appears that Onesimus had found himself into some trouble and he made himself over there and now he's in the same jail cell as Paul is.

He's under the same house or he's in the same place and what a wonderful place it is for him to be. There he is with a person who's trying to escape captivity and feel like he's free to a person who is truly free but in captivity.

There he is and he hears the gospel. But Paul says that he retained him. So is it that Onesimus was able to go back but he stuck around a little bit longer and a discipleship happened.

Talking about what the gospel would ask. Onesimus is now going to be able to leave and he could go anywhere and where is he going to go? And so this confession, this honesty that came. How would Paul know that at one time Onesimus wasn't very profitable for the master's home that he was in?

How would he have known that the house he was going, that he was going to be sent back to was one, that he owed money because Onesimus was honest here to him in explaining where he was at in life.

[ 11 : 35 ] So confession requires honesty. First of all, it requires that we stop running. So he decided, I'm going to go back to this place where there's been a fence. I'm not going to continue running.

But it also requires honesty. Verse 11, which in time past was the unprofitable but now profitable to thee and to me. A Sunday school teacher was asking a group of kids some questions, a good way to teach and seeing what they do and the question that the Sunday school teacher asked is, what must you do before your sins can be forgiven?

Young kid raises his hand real fast and knows the answer and the teacher says, what's the answer? And he says, well you must first sin. And she says, well you're right. That's not really what we were thinking of, right?

Before you can receive forgiveness of your sins you have to first sin. And every one of you, in here are in a good place today to receive forgiveness of sins because you've already done the first step.

You've already sinned. Onesimus is honest about it. He knows. I doubt highly that he memorized their new Proverbs 28, 13 that talks about that he would have known that the most important part in reconciling, important part of reconciling his most important relationship with God started with confession.

[ 12 : 50 ] Proverbs 28, 13, he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesses and forsaketh them shall have mercy. And his confession and repentance unto Jesus Christ that led to reconciled relationship, he would see that.

Also, I know for certain that he did not read the book The Peacemaker, A Biblical Guide for Resolving Personal Conflicts, but I did. And I would like to share with you seven things that start with the letter A that have to do with confession.

And I think you're going to see these already lived out by Onesimus. One here is, address everyone involved, all those whom you've affected. Avoid if, but, and maybe.

Do not try to excuse your wrongs. Admit specifically both attitudes and actions. A, acknowledge the hurt. Express sorrow for hurting someone.

Accept the consequences, such as making restitution. Alter your behavior. Change your attitudes and your actions. And then lastly, ask for forgiveness.

[ 13 : 59 ] In discipleship here, Onesimus with Paul, at a time of confession, saying, before I came here, I stole from a family. I don't know if it was material goods, if it was simply time, but he said, for me to move forward, I'm going to need to go backwards.

I'm going to need to go, and I'm going to need to resolve this conflicted relationship that we have. So confession means you stop running. It means that you become honest.

But confession is more than a feeling. Verse 12, whom I've sent, again, there's an action. You see, repentance is the first step of gaining freedom from sin and conflict. That means to change your way of thinking.

Isaiah 55, verse 7, gives us a wonderful picture of people renouncing sin and turning to God. Isaiah 55, 7, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and we will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he abundantly pardoned, turning unto the Lord and away from sin.

Onesimus is in a situation here where his view of what was right and wrong and what he had done in the past has now changed, and he becomes honest at his life, and he is going to forsake that old way and those ways of thinking.

[ 15 : 15 ] As Paul would have shared the gospel with Onesimus, he may have, and he could have, shared with him something like we get in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 9 and 10, where it talks about how we could sorrow, but where the sorrow toward repentance, which you've made sorrow after a godly manner.

That godly sorrow means feeling bad because you've offended God and repenting. That Onesimus had a responsibility here. Not just towards Philemon, but in turning to the Lord towards the God of heaven.

And then lastly here, as Onesimus is being honest and he's not running anymore and he's going back to the scene of the crime and he's going to that relationship and he's not just feeling sorrow, but he's really, he's changed his way of thinking and now he's asked for, he's going to ask for forgiveness, acknowledging the consequences of sin.

Verse 18, he that is wrongly or oweth the ought, put that on mine account. David said it so clearly the other day. This wasn't Paul's responsibility. This belonged to Onesimus.

There is a response here that was there. And you may say, well, that doesn't seem like the gospel. You know, the gospel says that there's no longer, I no longer have an eternal consequence for my sin.

[ 16 : 30 ] So why are we talking about consequences? Well, let me remind you in the gospel that we asked Jesus for grace and mercy. We did not ask him to ignore his justice.

My eternal consequences were placed upon Jesus Christ at the cross. They did not disappear, but they were taken by him to that cross. And so Onesimus, not running anymore and confessing, he knew that there was a consequence built in to what he had done.

And so going forward means going nearer to the place that you want to be in life. This can require going backwards to address some unresolved conflict in your life.

Onesimus was looking for grace, not for anybody to ignore justice. And so there we have an Onesimus, though not primarily what we think about Philemon as we look at the response now of Philemon, but I think here we see an example of a person who does what he should do in that relationship regarding Philemon.

So now, how does Philemon move forward? How does Philemon Pepperdine respond to this letter that he has been brought to him today? And this is the question that you ask when you hold this.

[ 17 : 44 ] How can I please and honor God in this situation? That is the most clarifying question that Philemon could ask himself in that moment. How do I respond in a way that is honoring to God?

People think that maybe preaching, I wouldn't say that the offering devotion is easy, but maybe you think preaching about money is the hardest thing that a pastor would do. And I would tell you that's not the case because it would be easier for me to get some of you to give all the money that you have than it is to have you give forgiveness to somebody.

If an offering plate was passed at the end of the service today, and I would say I want you to hand over that offense that you have and have the spirit of forgiveness and prepare your heart for an opportunity to have a reconciled relationship, would you say how much money do you want?

Alright? What can I buy around here? What is needed? Because that holds onto our hearts so very tightly. Forgiveness, it requires love. Verse 5, hearing of thy love and which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and toward all saints.

As people that are maybe prone to manipulate one another and people that use our words and maybe sometimes at work you have to send an email to a co-worker and you remember say a bunch of nice stuff at the top, say what you want in the middle and say some nice things at the end because that's how you see this.

[ 19 : 06 ] Don't project that upon this letter. Don't project that Paul was making something up about Philemon just to handle him and put him in a situation where he will receive Onesimus.

He is speaking sincerely. Philemon had a testimony of being a person that was loving. Who? The Lord, but it also was being shown as his love for the saints which is true for us.

There's no loving the saints unless we receive the love of the Lord. He first loved us and because of that we're now able to demonstrate our love for other people. It also requires character.

Verse 6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in Christ Jesus. I can say it like this. Praying that the faith that we share will keep showing up in your life.

My mom would say it like this and my wife always gets excited when she gets a quote from her mother-in-law here but say it like this and maybe you still say it like this is you are testing me.

[ 20 : 07 ] Do you ever tell that to anybody? Do you ever tell that to your husband or to your wife or to your kids? You are testing me and that's a more honest way to talk about it than saying you made me mad or you did this because what's really happening is you are testing me.

Paul said in life when you are tested your character shows and it's demonstrated in the life of good works that you've been living. It's been effectual. It shows itself in your response in these situations and I pray that that continues in your life that your walk with the Lord continues to show itself as it's tested reflecting not just good American values not just hard work ethic but the character of God.

When we as Christians talk about having character we're not talking about something that you could have just picked up anywhere. We're talking about living a life that reflects the character of our God.

The God who in Exodus when he went before them said I am a God of mercy and forgiving. The God in the New Testament when he tells the story of a prodigal son he's standing out on the edge of the property looking out waiting for his son to come to offer forgiveness and embrace him.

That's the character that you must have in forgiveness reflecting the character of the Lord. And then forgiveness leads to an embrace. At the end of the service I'm going to have Jonathan come back up here and Ty Pepperdine is going to greet him with a holy kiss.

[ 21 : 35 ] No I'm just kidding alright? And so there is an embrace there just practically because in verse 12 he said I sent him to you and you need to receive him. That word receive him it has some practical implications.

When he's in that church that day it wasn't okay Onesimus you're here you stand outside of the church I'll stay over here you're received. No there's some practical implications of what was going to happen.

In the culture there a warm greeting they would have embraced very likely and a greeting of a holy kiss one to another there was no running from it you're there I'm here the whole church is watching to see how we're going to respond and so this forgiveness leads to a receiving it leads to an embrace of that person who has come to us here and so imagining here also in verse 22 he says Paul is confident he's going to get out of jail and he says prepare me a bed also who else are you wanting me to make a bed for?

Oh you want me to go make a bed now for Onesimus who robbed me last time he was here you want me to go do that and give that type of forgiveness to him and how do I view him as a brother not as a servant but above a servant as a brother beloved it's changing the identity here and forgiveness requires allowing grace into the equation put that upon my account charge that to me I will take that you see Paul knows that the debt must be paid but he's asking that somebody else be allowed to pay it notice the emphasis here in Paul's words they're not about the details but they're not dismissive it wasn't about the money or what was taken but it was about how the fence broke a relationship between the two that's what really hurts it's the broken relationship it's not the thing that was taken but it was the relationship that was broken between them and so what needs to be in the equation here is grace the reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus is an image of the reconciliation between God and man it's a picture of the gospel

I think you know that about Philemon well let me take it a step farther every story of forgiveness has the opportunity to be a reflection of the gospel that's why we say that there's an opportunity in the conflict here how is Philemon going to respond what is the church that day going to learn about the gospel from seeing this lived out see forgiveness is an opportunity to display the gospel when God empowers you to treat others as he treats you there's not a single part of your life that escapes the transformation of the gospel I'm going to read four things quickly for you and I pray that your hearts just rejoice in this what the gospel has been able to do because of the gospel you can love your enemies because I was once an enemy of Christ but he died for me while I was still an enemy you can take the initiative of resolving a conflict you were still a sinner when Christ died for you so you can make the first move to seek reconciliation with anyone who offends you or something against you you can admit your own faults because Jesus has already seen your sins and he knows all about your story

[ 24 : 56 ] Onesimus you can now stand before him without hiding of your sins you can confess and you can make conflict an opportunity to display the gospel by his grace you can use every conflict as an opportunity to show that you've been changed by the gospel there is an opportunity in the conflict and a great place to start answering is this how can I please God in my response to this conflict the way forward for Onesimus was confession the way forward for Philemon is going to be forgiveness and the Apostle Paul here there's some incredible things that we learn in this book about how he is used and this is the question that Paul answers is how can I lovingly serve others by helping them demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict you see this is personal Paul remember when I was reading and I said it said that Paul says I have written this with my own hand that he wrote and he normally has somebody writing for him and we believe the Apostle Paul might have had bad eyesight or something that caused him to write him he would write in big letters

I don't know if he took the pen in this part of the letter or if he wrote all of it but it's very personal to him not just because he loves Philemon and not just because he loves Onesimus but because he loves the gospel and that church I said earlier was going to see something fantastic meaning something big one way or another Philemon Pepperdine was going to hit UPS driver or he was going to embrace him but one way or another they were going to see how we should respond in that moment you see Paul helped by knowing forgiveness cannot be mandated it must be a decision of the heart he said I could command this of you as an apostle I could tell you this is what needs to be done I could make policy about this but I'm going to tell you that you should do this willingly willingly is heart language I could spend a whole sermon on this but I won't I'll just make mention of here when you think about slavery you can't impose the modern day understanding in America upon what's happening here in the Bible in America there was stealing of men there was so many things that broke God's command and moral law but what we have here is

God said I'm not going to give a policy about can a person live at your house and work all the time or can there be an indentured service or what should be set up or you have to work nine to five on Monday this Bible is going into so many different cultures but if I can go to the heart of a man then all kinds of slavery that are displeasing to me will disappear if you would just love your brother as yourself then the work conditions that you provide will be appropriate and right it was a decision of the heart he didn't give a command he didn't give a policy but he said do this willingly of your heart based upon what you know of the gospel where does conflict come from in our house we might say that it comes from Charlie the dog some of you have a Roomba that cleans up things we have a Charlie he does the opposite alright he's a little puppy here alright or they might say our little sister she is the cause of conflict but what does the Bible say is the cause of conflict in James 4 1 it's the lustful desires of my heart that all conflict in the world that you watch on the news or that you see in your family or that you're experiencing they did not start on a certain date at a certain place it started in a heart and that's where conflict is starting and so that's what

Paul is addressing with Philemon Paul helped Philemon recognize that the gospel not the offense should define the relationship that the gospel not the offense that is not the man who once stole from me that is the man that because he's accepted Christ and his confession and our forgiveness and our reconciled relationship is now my brother he started off Paul a prisoner he usually starts off a lot of times Paul a servant Paul a slave it seems to me Paul here's a great opportunity with that greeting that you often use Paul a servant of the Lord because you're talking about a servant why don't you bring why don't you use that one but a prisoner because he's bringing our mind and heart to this idea that I have been captured by the gospel that even when I get out of this jail cell I am still a prisoner of Jesus Christ because the gospel has captured me and so it seems here as he's bringing our attention to how Christ and the gospel has captured us the bible speaks here in very relational terms all through this book and others



Timothy our brother Philemon our dearly beloved Lucas our fellow helper fellow laborer these relational terms wonderful thing about why we call each other brothers and sisters because what we're saying is the gospel is the finding mine in your relationship nothing else how great is that when we say we're fellow laborers it's in the gospel all these things are defined here by the gospel so brothers sisters fellow laborer let's help one another move forward in this new year when you hear one another speak is it an echo sound of someone in a prison who's dealing with a past offense if so let's remind each other of the opportunity in the conflict let's remind each other of the power of the gospel to help us overcome and to move forward you ever had your speech sound like to the echo of a prison where you couldn't move forward in life no matter how life kept moving forward you were stuck in time in your life tonight Steve will speak about grief that's something that seems to freeze us in time unresolved conflict freezes us in time and so in closing here let me make a recognition here it is extremely difficult to forgive when you've been hurt deeply it is extremely difficult to forgive when you've been hurt deeply and where are we hurt the most

[ 30 : 47 ] Psalm 55 verse 12 and 13 says it like this hope you'll follow along here it says for if it was an enemy that reproached me then I would have borne it neither was it that hated me that did magnify himself against me then I would have hid myself from him but it was thou a man mine equal my guide my guide and mine acquaintance the deepest hurts come from those that are the closest to us the Bible teaches us and life has taught all of us that as well and so that's the recognition but here's the response forgiveness is the only response that is fitting for God's people it's the only response that is fitting for God's people we don't know how the story ends and I believe that's by God's design the Bible could have been bigger if God wanted it to be but the story ends and we don't know I imagine based on what we know how Philemon had been living out the gospel and every opportunity that show good works into that and Paul knew that in the refreshing of the heart he says you're going to be tested

I believe Philemon he opens up his arms he embraces him and he says forgive you of course I will that's what we do that is what we do as God's people we allow the gospel to liberate us so we can liberate others quote here on the screen by Thomas Watson we need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven let us look into our hearts and see if we can forgive others if you want to know if the gospel has taken root in your heart if you've been captured look into your heart and see if you have the ability to forgive and if you don't take a good look at the gospel it might be the first time you truly saw it for what it is maybe it's the first time that you saw yourself as somebody that was an offender who needed to make confession and receive forgiveness from the Lord but very likely in here today brother and sister in Christ you just need a new look at it in your life and you just say

I can't forgive I've been saying for so long that I can't forgive and if you had everything in the Bible about right and wrong and all the things that you knew about so many religions and you didn't have the gospel then it makes sense that you don't forgive that person did wrong they'll deal with the consequences but oh because of the gospel we can't stay there because of the gospel we can look into our hearts and say forgiveness is there so we don't know how the story here ends church history tells us that Onesimus goes on and leads house churches and it seems him and Tychicus are taking a letter to Colossians I don't remember if they've been there yet but God uses them in a special way and I like to think that Onesimus ends up leading the services there in Philemon's home in just a short amount of time but how does your story end when you set this letter down and you pause how do you respond Onesimus is going to move forward in his life because of the gospel Philemon is going to move forward in the gospel

Paul will move forward in his journeys with the gospel but the gospel will take us forward how does your story end will you remain captured by the offense or by Christ you see we all live as prisoners some of us live held by cords of love and others are prisoners by painful memories but you choose what you're going to be captured by and I want to say Trent a prisoner of Jesus Christ Trent a person who has hearts been captured by the gospel I pray that for you today as well there is an opportunity in this conflict the circumstances are different but the glorious gospel always remains the same let's pray together as you begin to pray and heads are bowed eyes are closed I want to speak to you believers first of all and hear your response in light of what we have read today as you consider the conflict in your life that keeps you from moving forward would you ask this one question right now in your seat how can I please and honor God in this situation how can I please and honor God in this situation

I do not know if you need to be asking forgiveness or if you're giving forgiveness or maybe both but don't miss the opportunity in this conflict believer pray that right now and may the Holy Spirit set upon your heart an actionable step not just a feeling of sorrow and forgiveness but a desire to become honest a desire to stop running away from it a desire to go and say regardless of the consequences I want this relationship restored I pray that my brothers and sister in here you're speaking to the Lord about the matters of the heart unbelievers in here today regardless of how your relationships are here on earth you have a broken relationship with the God of heaven and that is the most important one not just in the life to come in eternity but right now there's nothing that's more defining to you than your relationship with God and so you need to become honest with yourself about how you have offended a holy God you need to confess your sins and you need to receive the grace that comes from your sins being put upon the account of Christ what a beautiful picture of the gospel we've seen today if you came in here and you've never had your relationship with the God of heaven restored by confessing the hymn and repenting of your sins and receiving that grace right now in this moment would you let yourself be set free of that would you become a prisoner of the Christ be captured by the gospel pray something like this

[ 36 : 42 ] Father I've entered these doors today and I know that I've offended you and I've never said honestly before you but right now I know that you see me completely and I Lord I don't just feel sorrow for what the sin has done in my life but I feel sorrow and remorse because I have sinned against you a perfect and a holy and a loving God and the day I repent of my sins and I turn to you accept your offer of forgiveness Heavenly Father I thank you for Philemon and this book Lord that we have here I thank you that inside of the gospel Lord we are able to overcome may Lord the gospel will be shown in every area of our lives Father I pray right now for my brothers and sisters though I don't know their stories Lord I know deep hurt and I know that some of them may be wrestling and I pray that they will ask that question Father how do we live a life that honors and pleases you Father I ask you that anew in my life how do I respond in ways Lord that would honor and be pleasing unto you

Father you know the hearts of the people Lord it would be my prayer and your desire that no one would leave here today with their sins still upon their account Lord I pray that they would receive grace in Jesus name I pray Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen