

Philemon

Sermon date 05/18/2025

Get To Know You

- 1) What's one relationship in your life that has grown stronger because of forgiveness?

Looking Back

The letter to Philemon was written by the Apostle Paul around A.D. 60–62 while he was imprisoned in Rome. It's addressed to Philemon, a wealthy Christian and house church leader in Colossae. The letter centers on Onesimus, a slave who had run away from Philemon and, at some point, encountered Paul—possibly in prison—where he became a Christian. Now, Paul is sending Onesimus back, not merely as a returned slave but as a “beloved brother.”

In a culture where slavery was a deeply ingrained part of the Roman social and economic system, Paul's words are radical. He doesn't directly call for abolition but instead appeals to the power of the gospel to transform relationships and social norms from the inside out. By urging Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother, Paul is modeling the way that the gospel reshapes how believers view status, justice, and community.

Unpack It

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon and why? What was a takeaway or something that left you wondering about?

Diving In

Read together: Philemon

Diving Deeper

- 1) What do you imagine Onesimus felt as he returned to Philemon with this letter in hand?
- 2) The name “Onesimus” means “useful.” How does Paul play on this meaning in verse 11, and what could that mean for us today?
- 3) What barriers to reconciliation and forgiveness are present in the story, and how does Paul address them?
- 4) Who is someone in your life that you need to forgive or be reconciled with? What might taking the first step look like?
- 5) In what ways can the church today model the kind of radical reconciliation that Paul promotes in this letter?

- 6) What does it mean to you personally that God calls us “beloved” and welcomes us as part of His family, regardless of our past?

Closing It Out

- Confession and Reflection: Invite the group to silently reflect on any broken relationships or places where forgiveness is needed.
- Confess where we have failed to seek or offer reconciliation.
- Ask God to soften hearts and open doors for grace to flow in strained relationships.