

The book of Philemon, verse 7 through verse 11, For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake, I prefer to appeal to you.

I, Paul, an old man, and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.

May the Lord add his richest blessings to the reading of his word this morning. Thank you, may be seated. Let's pray. As Nehemiah prayed, O Lord God of Heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant, in steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open. To hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night, to the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel which we have sinned against you.

Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that You commanded your servant, Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant, Moses, saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples.

But if you return to Me, and keep my commandments and do them. Though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make My Name dwell there.

They are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. O Lord, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and to the prayer of Your servants who delight to fear Your name and give success to Your servant today and grant him mercy on the side of this man.

Father, as we continue with the ministry of the Word this morning, we pray that indeed You would be glorified. But Father also that you would forgive each one of us of our sins. We all sin before You each and every day.

We live in ways, say things, do things that maybe do not always reflect the glory of God that do not always strive to live a life of holiness. And for that we ask Your forgiveness. We know that even in our nation, our nation has become a wicked nation, a nation that is apart from You and just about every way.

But as Nehemiah prayed, there was hope in his voice. There was hope in his prayer as he lifted up his voice before You seeking forgiveness. And restoration within the covenant that had been established between You and Israel.

We know that we are Your people today. Not we as Americans, but we as true believers as are all true believers who are found around the world. We think of those brothers and sisters in the countries that were mentioned this morning.

And for those who are being persecuted, particularly the struggles that are taking place, even in some of the countries in Africa right now with more civil war breaking out, even just within the last couple of weeks in places like the country of Niger and Chad.

We pray Lord that You would be with our brothers and sisters there who truly know You as Lord and Savior, and may You be glorified in their life. We know that sometimes You bring war and judgment, and You bring it as we know first of all within the house of God.

We must be careful to search within our own hearts to see if there's any wicked way within us. We ask Lord that You would restore that fellowship that we have with You and then fellowship with one another.

As we ponder Philemon's account this morning and seek to understand a little bit more on what it means to be truly forgiven and to truly forgive others. I pray that You would help us to put aside worldwide philosophies and the thoughts that press in upon us.

The world would say and we are taught to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think and therefore there are many times within churches that people do not seek forgiveness. They are not willing to ask forgiveness when they have

committed wrong or committed sin against one another or even against You.

And yet Your word tells us Lord Jesus Christ Himself sharing in the model prayer that we are to forgive others as we have been forgiven. I pray Lord that You would be glorified in what is shared this morning.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray. I set the stage for you last week as Onesimus comes back to Philemon. A long journey has taken place. Onesimus shows up at the door of Philemon's house or his villa and there he has a scroll in his hands.

And it is a message for Philemon. So Philemon opens the scroll and begins to read Paul's message, reminding him of his responsibility to please God in all things. Not just some things, but in all things.

And last week we saw that Paul is always in the spirit of prayer. He's always in the spirit of thanksgiving because Philemon exhibits as we see in verse 6. He exhibits such love for all saints based on his faith.

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing. And the question that I want you to ask yourself this morning that I need to ask myself continually is, does the full knowledge of what we have in Christ resonate in every aspect of our life?

Does it bring us to the point where our faith is truly effective in that we can seek forgiveness from others when we have wronged them? Or when others have wronged us that we are willing to extend that forgiveness back to them?

You see, it's easy to say that we have love for one another if we're not willing to do what it is that God requires from us. As Jesus Christ Himself said that we are to forgive. In fact, we look at Ephesians 4 verse 32.

This is the verse that we have for this month. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted - doing what? Forgiving one another even as God for Christ has forgiven you. The question is, how much do we think God has forgiven us for?

Do we think that God has only forgiven us for the really gross sins, for the vulgar sins, for the things maybe that took place before we got saved and we lived the life of debauchery? or whatever it was that was going on in our life, or do we believe that He truly forgives us of all of our sins?

Philemon now with Onesimus standing back in front of him, he's going to be faced with some very serious decisions, and he's either going to have to be willing to please Christ, or he is going to follow the permission of Roman law.

So will what Paul says make a difference? Maybe the question that is, as Philemon is reading this scroll, maybe the question is, has Onesimus really changed? You see, because that's something that each one of us in our own life, whether it's between husband and wife, or between children and parents, the question is, well, we just forgave you for that sin like a week ago, or sometimes with kids, like 10 minutes ago.

What is it gonna take for you to change? What is it gonna take for me to change? And so I'm sure Philemon must have been asking did Onesimus really change? Why is he even here? And although Paul is writing from prison and Because there was no email I'm sure that it would have taken many months for this scroll to even get out and in fact We're not told when it was written But we do know that Paul was in prison when he wrote Philemon and if you consider that it would have taken anywhere from two to three months just to make the trip back from Rome to Colossae, We also don't know how long Philemon or Onesimus spend in jail with Paul. It very well it could could have been a year two years three years until a Philemon finally receives this scroll.

But it's while he is in prison that Paul intercedes and obviously encourages Onesimus to return to Philemon. Furthermore, Onesimus has had to make a decision knowing full well that a brutal beating or even the amputation of a hand might occur. In fact under Roman law Philemon could choose to end the life of his slave if he chose to do so. When messages took several months to get back and forth Paul has to trust the Lord that the results of his message are going to be kept in the safekeeping of the Holy Spirit. You see it wasn't Paul's responsibility to be the Holy Spirit in the life of Philemon or in the life of Onesimus, his was simply the responsibility to be able to share the truth of God's word and let God do his work. Paul's advantage though is that he does know Philemon's faith and how it has worked out before others. What a testimony.

To know somebody who you probably haven't seen in years, but to know that their faith is so strong that you could write a letter. Let's say that Brother Mike decided to move away to some foreign country like Colorado or something.

And so he's down there in Colorado and we haven't seen him for a number of years. So we write this letter and we say, Dear Brother Mike, I am thankful and I am encouraged that your faith is effective in the full knowledge of every good thing that you do for the sake of Christ.

What a testimony that would be. Confrontation is necessary in our lives at times. We don't like confrontation from the time that we're born. We face confrontation. Mom and Dad say, No. I mean, what parent has the audacity to do that?

I mean, no. No, you can't have a cookie. No, you can't touch the hot stove. No, you can't walk in the road. No, you can't. And we learn this week after week after week. No, don't do this. No, don't do that.

And of course, then you ask the child, and the child goes, no. It's one of the first words they learn. And there's confrontation, obviously, that comes within that. This is the exact same thing. I mean, can you imagine what it must have been like for Paul as he meets Onesimus for the first time and being the kind of person that Paul is?

I mean, he just cuts right to the chase, and he probably would have asked Onesimus, well, where are you coming from, Onesimus? Well, eventually he gets around to saying, well, I come from the city of Colossi.

I know Colossi. I started a church there one time. Really? That's amazing. Do you know who the pastor of that church is? Yeah, a guy by the name of Philemon. You ever heard of him, Onesimus? Yeah, it's actually my master.

You don't say. Paul would have had to confront Onesimus just as he is seeking to confront Biblically, Philemon in this passage. We are to love in ways just as Philemon, or Paul does with Philemon, and he does with Onesimus.

We are to love in ways that help bring restoration. Listen to Proverbs 27, verse 5. Better is open, rebuke than secret love. And while love covers a multitude of sins, Biblical love deals with offenses when they bring disunity to the body of Christ.

We've all gone through this. We all have to deal with this within our lives, because none of us are perfect. And it's no different than a marriage. I remember hearing somebody say, and in fact, I think it was in the disciplines of a godly man book that we went through with Gabe in the Friday morning meetings that we used to have. and the illustration of a man who is a president of a Bible College and for 42 years his wife took care of him and then she began to get Alzheimer's and went through dementia and he said that it was his privilege to be able to then take care of her.

But one of the comments that was made in many of you if you've been married for a great number of years you will know that it's not just falling in love one time it's falling in love with the same person over and over and over.

Sadly instead of dealing with things from a Biblical perspective sometimes we like taking verses out of context. I know the need for a discipline arises. then the most misquoted verse in all of scripture is, judge not, so you won't be judged.

But this verse actually has nothing to do with handling offenses in a congregation of believers. In fact, Christ makes it clear in John 7 verse 24, if required, we are not to judge according to appearances, but we are to judge with right judgment.

Paul had the right to be able to judge Onesimus if he had truly become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I've had people who have asked me, well, what about this or what about that? Or am I actually truly a believer if I do this or if I do that or if I say this or I don't do that?

At the end of the day, I can't tell you whether you're a believer or not. What I can give you though is the commands of scripture and the principles that are found in God's word, and I can ask you questions like this.

Do you love God? Do you love His Word? Do you love His Church? Do you love your sin more than you love God? This is what 1st John is all about when he speaks and he says we can know these things, these things he has written so that we may know we have eternal life.

I don't want anybody here or within the sound of maybe this that's going out to others who may be listening online later. And I don't want you to think that a person who sins is not worthy of some kind of response from God and worthy of who they are in Jesus Christ, not because of who you are, but because of Jesus Christ.

And the reality is this, because we can be forgiven, because as we read in 1st John chapter one, verse nine, if we confess our sins, He is faithful, He is just, He forgives us of our sins, He cleanses us of all unrighteousness.

That should rejoice your heart this morning that such a God not only loves you, but He preserves you and He keeps you and

He will one day return for you. So as Paul is writing in and he's speaking to him and he says, I derive much joy and much comfort from your love, my brethren, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

But Philemon could have thought, who does Paul think he is? Does Paul think he is perfect and without his own sin? Why does he think he has to meddle in my life? We know, of course, the outcome. It was a completely different ending that took place.

Paul was... Not only dealing with forgiveness, but we find that the forgiveness was accepted. And as you and I walk in the steps of Christ as 1 Peter 2 verse 21 reminds us to do, we also must deal with forgiveness.

You have to deal with forgiveness in every aspect of your life, whether it's between you and your spouse, between you and your children, you and your parents, grandparents, colleagues, people within the church, but far too many times we can choose to revel in the bitterness.

We can revel in animosity rather than seeking to move toward a life that is filled with joy. But here's what the Bible tells us. Joy will never be a present reality if we are more concerned with harboring grudges, anger, animosity, or bitterness toward other believers.

You see, the world makes it easy to be able to do these things because we think that we're entitled, we think that we're owed things. So what does it actually take to extend forgiveness from the heart?

Is it a mere mouthing of the words to somebody that you have offended and say, oh, I'm sorry? Is that enough from a Biblical perspective? Is it enough to say, oh, I forgive you or it's okay, or don't worry about it when somebody actually asks forgiveness for their offenses?

. I believe that one of the questions that we have to ask ourselves is do we ask if an actual offense has actually taken place? You know, at some time we've probably all waited for this. with baited breath just daring others to knock off the proverbial chip on the shoulder.

Is the offense actually real, or is it a situation that calls for admonition? Is it a matter of building up into maturity a believer who always strives to find fault? You see, we all act in ways at times where we do not act as a mature Christian.

What does 1 Peter 2, 2 say? As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may do what? Grow thereby. It's one thing for Brother Mike to be upset because I'm short and bald, as he keeps continuing on with me about.

And I know it's in good humor, and I don't take offense at that. But I could take offense. You see if my focus is not on Jesus Christ every time he says something the boy could just grate on my nerves. You know like fingernails on the chalkboard. Or we can say Lord I don't believe that he means anything wrong by that and that I don't think he actually knows that he's offending me. So why don't I just go and have a talk with him and seek to be able to bear one another's burdens and help him to understand, maybe some of the struggles that I'm having. Continuing our walk through this letter with Paul and Philemon and Onesimus, My my prayer is that you and I will truly learn what it means to exhibit forgiveness from the heart. Last week we noted in the testimony that that Paul's Paul had a heart of thanks and prayer and He's being kept in constant prayer by Paul. and and again, the question that we should ask ourselves in this illustration that we have here is how much time do we spend with with others?

How much time do we pray for others? Because anybody can find fault. It's really hard to be willing to pray for them . Paul is not just keeping Philemon in prayer, but the household of Philemon. And because of Philemon's faith, Paul sees it as manifested as love for all the saints.

And we go then to 1st Corinthians chapter 13, and we talked about the love chapter. If we can do this and this and this, but we have no love, we're nothing but a clanging symbol. You see this love that we are to have here is as Paul writes this to Philemon, the point that he is making is this.

This is not just for the saints that we like. This is for all the saints who are in Christ Jesus. If you and I are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have a responsibility and a command from God to love you even on your difficult days, just as you're commanded to love me and to love one another.

And because of this, because Paul knew Philemon, he was able to pray effectively for him. There may have been times I'm sure that Paul probably made that scroll in an awful lot of prayer. Lord, help Philemon to see that I write this because I love

him.

Help Philemon to see that I'm not just trying to find fault with him, but that I'm desiring him to grow to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ in what I share. Part of the testimony that he had again in verse 7 is, this heart of joy and comfort from the love of Philemon.

You see, Paul wasn't the leader of the Colossi Church, but Philemon chose to love the person and the role that Paul played in the lives of other people. You know, I'm afraid that too many times in evangelical churches today that if Paul were alive today, most letters would probably be lost or thrown in the trash because people don't wanna hear the truth.

Can you imagine how First Corinthians would have been received today in the 21st century? Philemon, I don't believe, considered this in any way to be a direct violation of his rights. You see, our society and our culture demands our rights be met.

When we don't get our way, life can become unbearable for everybody that we come in contact with. Do you wanna know what rights you and I have? Being a servant of Christ means giving up our rights for what is right before God.

Are we permitted by the Bible to exercise those rights anytime we want to? Romans chapter 12, verse 10 says this, "Love one another with brotherly affection. "Out do one another in showing honor." And showing honor and loving one another with brotherly affection is not just allowing anybody to do whatever they want whenever they want.

That's not Biblical. But secondly, because of Philemon's service toward others, this is a military term that refers to an army taking a rest after a long march. Paul is saying to Philemon that others find it restful just to be around Philemon.

What an amazing perception that is. that Paul has a Philemon that he knows him so well that he could say, Philemon, just being in your presence, people walk away being refreshed. You know, there are times and anybody here, if you come in the evening, you're welcome.

There are there are several times that several of the folks here and we've gone as well and we go for ice cream. I won't tell you where it's at, but it's on the west side. You can ask us afterwards, but it's only 75 cents for all as much as Sister Zamora can put on one ice cream cone.

But as you, as we sit there, you know, it doesn't always have to be about the sermon or whatever. There are times when it's just getting together and to be refreshed knowing that sometimes people are coming up and they're putting their arm around you and saying, I love you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Doesn't mean we always agree. I mean, I've shared this with you before. My dad and I were probably 98% on the same page. There are things that my dad and I don't agree on. There are things my wife and I there.

I'm sure things I'm sure that you don't agree with other members in your family about. But when we get together, is there a refreshment that is there? Can we say because we love the Lord Jesus Christ, there are things that sometimes we may just have to put them aside.

I mean, some of you follow one particular team versus another. That's not what brings us together in the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter who you support. I mean, you can be wrong, but it doesn't matter who you support.

It doesn't matter what kind of job you have. It doesn't matter what you like doing in your off time. What matters is do you know Jesus Christ? You know, we're going to be together for all of eternity and I wonder sometimes why we can't get along more down here.

I don't think anybody here goes into a marriage thinking on the very first day. Well, I wonder if I'll make it to two days. I wonder if I'll make it to a week. I wonder if I'll make it to a month. I wonder if we'll make it to our first anniversary.

And if we don't make it to our first anniversary, well, then we'll just go our separate ways and all. Wish them the best. No, we don't do that. We go into marriage with the desire that it will be as we say our vows until death us do part.

We have all probably heard the saying some cause happiness wherever they go and others whenever they go. Philemon was definitely a blessing. definitely the first kind of a person. People enjoy being around this type of an individual and our concern should be if, do we find ourselves refreshed with other believers or are we striving to cause damage?

Having covered their special relationship because of Christ, Paul makes his request fronesimus and wow, what a request. Especially considering that he chose not to use any of his apostolic authority.

And I believe that this personal letter shows that love can be used to do what is right. And here's the plea that he gives. Number one, accordingly though I am bold enough in Christ verse eight to command you to do what is required.

This is a very difficult phrase, but Paul essentially is choosing not to throw his weight around. Too many want to assume a role whereby they have power instead of desired to be a disciple. They want to be more of an attack dog than a sheep dog, and to be like one who has the preeminence like Deotrophies did in the New Testament.

Paul says, no, I'm not going to do that. You see, Paul's loving spirit brought gentle reminders of what is to be expected as a true believer. And such should be the testimony of all, not just those who desire leadership, but anybody who is within or who is part of church life.

We should all have that kind of a desire. So he says, secondly, he couches his request with a personal reflection. Verse nine. The Greek here shows a parenthetical pause. It's almost like Paul is shifting to another gear.

And he wants to show more compassion than maybe Philemon has seen in a long time or maybe ever. So he pauses long enough here and he says, yet for love sake, I prefer to appeal to you. And then he pauses.

And this is what he shares. I am, I am Paul, an old man. I am a prisoner. But he has one here. Some of your versions may have a Philadelphia or a lover of the brethren. Paul is one who loves another, not just as a brother, but as a close friend.

This isn't any ordinary friendship. Do you remember, for those of you who can remember back to your school days, do you remember being on the playground and today, Johnny was your friend and tomorrow he wasn't.

And then the next day he was your friend and the day after that, maybe he was your friend. he wasn't. Why? Because you fell out over things that really were inconsequential. Things that really didn't matter.

Johnny came to school with a new pair of tennis shoes and you did it. So you weren't his friend today. You had a new best friend. Paul says, no, I am a Philadelphia. I am a friend, one who loves as a brother.

Beyond this, not just a plain friend, but a real friend. You know, sometimes the hardest friendships that we can have sometimes are within a local church. It's not easy. Because we get the lust of the flesh, the lust of the world and the pride of life and all those things work against us and the evil one and his minions and then we don't always keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and so things go pear shaped and we don't like it.

Friendships are hard. I'm sure you've read and some of you who have been in ministry or you've read books on ministry, you will know being a pastor is it's lonely at the top. It's not easy. It's not easy being in any aspect of church life or church service.

But Paul here reminds Philemon, he says, I am a friend, I am here, I am sticking closer to you than just a plain brother or just a plain friend. He says I'm also an old man. This would be a double reference of his age.

He was approximately 60 years old at this point. But also a direct reflection of all that he has gone through. Paul is completely exhausted at this point. I mean read 2nd Corinthians and look at all the things that Paul went through and mean shipwrecked, beaten and left for dead, stone several times, beaten with a rod 30 with 39 stripes save one.

Now he's writing in prison. He's written four epistles from prison. This being one of the last ones and yet he has learned to depend on the strength of Christ in his weakness. Not just in any kind of weakness but in extreme weakness.

And there may be times that you and I maybe in the struggles that you've had in your life, it's amazing that out of all of the counseling that I have done in 30 years of ministry now, in July was 30 years of ministry and I'm thankful for that.

But you know, probably 90, 85, 90% of the counseling that I do boils down to this. One person refusing to forgive another. Whether it's between in a marriage, whether it's friends, whether it's in church, whether it's whatever it may be.

And it is at those times when you struggle and maybe you have struggles even this morning, we don't know you, you don't know my heart and I don't know yours and yet there are times that you may be struggling to the point where you feel like you're an extreme weakness in your life.

Maybe you're not sure what tomorrow holds, maybe you're not sure how you're going to answer the next questions or the next whatever part of life it is that is going on. And it is in those times of extreme weaknesses as David himself said, I cry at night and my pillow is wet with my tears, there may be times in your life maybe even now that you're at that point.

And it is at those points that you must remember like Job had to that God is your strength. Paul is also a prisoner for Jesus Christ. We've spoken about this in the first verse last week. Yes, he's in chains provided by Rome, but his primary concern was to be in submission to the Lord no matter what.

In other words, Lord, if this is where You have me and You want me to be in these chains that Caesar has put on me, then I would be willing to do that for your sake in your glory. For we must remember that the servant is not above his master.

Christ suffered because of the Father's will and if we are called upon to serve Him, ultimately it will entail suffering and pain. For the last two and a half, almost three years now, every Sunday we have been praying for countries around the world.

The first year we prayed for every persecuted country, 50 countries. And then we began praying for every country around the world and every week we prayed for two new countries or two new territories.

We're not the only ones in the world. There are other brothers and sisters, some of whom may die today for the sake and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tradition doesn't even tell us whether Paul even got to hear the result of Philemon's forgiveness.

It's quite possible that when Paul wrote this letter, it was quite possible that within the next few months he actually gets put to death by Nero. Lord, is this what you want? Dealing with the suffering and the pain of life?

My child, if you were called to serve me, then you will do what I ask of you. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus Christ says in Luke chapter 14 and Matthew chapter 10? If you love father or mother or brothers or sisters more than Me, you are not worthy to be My disciples.

He continues with his appeal for Onesimus now in verse 10 and verse 11. His child in the faith. You know, it doesn't matter what you own, you won't take a bit of it with you when you go. As we go into this world, we leave the same way.

But there is one thing within the spiritual realm that we learn from the Apostle Paul quite often, he uses this term just as John does, you are my children in the faith. What a beautiful picture. I don't want you to raise your hand this morning, but I do want you to ask yourself this.

Has your life have your words, have your actions point others to Jesus Christ in such a way that you have a child in the faith? You know, it's it's a wonderful thing to be able to serve as a missionary to be able to go overseas. But you know, I don't believe somebody can be a true missionary overseas and seek to lead people to faith in Christ if they're not already doing that here. Parents, moms, the only people you may lead to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are your own children. What a testimony to be able to stand before God one day and that's the only thing that you have is that you shared your faith and you brought somebody to Jesus. This is what Paul does and he uses this tender term just not just to be able to identify Onesimus, but it's a term that he also uses in identifying Timothy. He calls Timothy his son in the faith. This doesn't make Paul better than Timothy or Paul better than Onesimus or Paul better than Philemon, he's simply saying God used me to show you Jesus. That's a question I want to ask you this morning. Is your life showing Jesus to others? Whatever it he did because in this 25 verses while it's one of the shortest books in the entire Bible One of the things that we don't learn is what Onesimus actually stole. Paul would have known he could have put it in the letter.

He could have been very specific, but it's just as obscure as why Onesimus even got thrown into the Mamertine prison to begin with. Again, as we shared with you last week, this wasn't just any prison.

This was where the really bad or the political prisoners went. So whatever it was that Onesimus as a slave did to be able to justify being thrown into the Mamertine prison of all prisons, it must have been a pretty big deal.

But during his incarceration, Onesimus meets a little short, half blind apostle, named Paul. And Onesimus goes from being a runaway slave to being a bond slave of Jesus Christ while he is still in chains.

And I think that Onesimus got enough faith, and I believe that the Lord saved him enough that had Onesimus remained in prison. prison for the rest of his natural life. I believe that Onesimus too would have come to be able to rejoice in the chains

and he would have identified himself as a bond slave of Jesus Christ.

He speaks of his imprisonment in Rome and here he references his bonds but again there should be no doubt that he's referring actually to the connection that he has as being a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

You see when you're a prisoner of Jesus Christ you will do what He commands you to do and you will do so with joy not with grief. And while serving and being chained by the love of Christ he has the privilege of ministering to the soul of one who is in desperate need of the gospel.

You ever found yourself having to go to the hospital? It's easy for us even as believers when we find ourselves in the emergency room we're finding ourselves in urgent care and saying oh lord I don't understand oh whoa life is so difficult.

How about instead we take time to say Lord I don't know why you have me here today. But if you have me here for your glory and for me to be able to share about Jesus Christ then help me to do so to the best of my ability.

I want to conclude with Onesimus's name and his character verse 11. Formerly he was useless to you but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. formerly useless. Paul uses a play on names here because the word Onesimus in the Greek actually means one who is useful.

That's such a name would have been a laughingstock to anybody who had maybe previously owned Onesimus. I mean this was a guy who was supposed to be a slave. Even his very name is supposed to be a reminder and yet not only does he run off of Philemon but he also takes something of great value.

I mean it would have cost something to be able to get to Rome right? To be able to live for whatever length of time it was that he has lived there and so everybody who would have heard his name probably would have laughed.

This guy isn't useful. There's nothing good about onesimus but you remember what Steve Lawson said quoting Martin Lloyd Jones this morning, thank God for the butts in the Bible. But now he is indeed useful.

What an amazing transformation in this slave. Paul is clear that Philemon should consider his runaway slave to be a completely changed person. Do you remember what happened with Paul to begin with? He's on the road to Damascus.

He's on his way to actually killing more Christians, to putting more in prison, just because they followed the way, because they they love the Lord Jesus Christ. And what happens to Paul? The light shines on him and he falls off of his horse or his donkey or whatever it was that he was riding.

And he gets up and he's a changed man. But then he goes into town and this man by the name of Ananias gets a call and he says, why don't you go talk to Paul? Go and baptize him. How would you like to have been that disciple?

No, no, no wait wait, Lord, You don't understand this this this Paul that you're talking about. I'm sure if it's the same one that we're talking about, this is the same Paul who put some of my own family in prison and who killed some of my family.

Yeah, that's the Paul. Lord, I'm not really sure that he could be changed. I mean after all look how bad a person he was. Wait a minute, I saved you didn't I? Oh yeah. Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17 says, therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.

The old has passed away behold the new has come. and here's the application for us today. It doesn't matter what kind of life we have lived in our past. It doesn't matter what kind of life you may be living now.

When you take heed to the responsibility that each human has to receive, to listen and to obey the call of salvation, God takes the old life that's not worth anything and He makes something very beautiful out of it.

You see, we tend to forget though that when Christ saves us that He makes us part of His bride. We find it easy to find fault. We find it easy not to forgive others when they commit trespass against us.

But here is the metamorphosis like a butterfly. It's not reforming. It's not polishing the outside of the bottle. not even a matter of conforming to God's laws in order to be saved. This is somebody who's been completely changed.

And God takes a useless, ungodly person. And he makes him a godly man. Onesimus went from being useless and ungodly to a person who, if he later in life ends up with a family is one who is now able to lead his family in the path of wisdom and



righteousness.

He can do that for you this morning. He can take a useless, ungodly man or a useless, ungodly woman or a useless, ungodly child and transform them to a godly man, to a godly lady, to a godly child who reflects Christ to their family and to the world.

God can take a selfish, useless, rebellious person and transform them into something special because of Jesus Christ. Our worth this morning is not in ourselves. It is in Christ. Philemon is finding out that Paul has become quite close to Onesimus.

But he's actually about to find out exactly how useful Onesimus is. With first impressions often lasting ones, Paul must have known the probable response from Philemon, which is why he speaks about what a great guy Onesimus is and what he will continue to be.

So finally, what is our response when things don't go our way? They weren't going Philemon's way. They certainly weren't going Onesimus's way. Paul's still in prison. What would be your response to a personal letter in regards to a believer who may have well have proven themselves useless in the past?

You see the Bible speaks often of those who were once useless. We even sing the hymn. We sang it last Sunday. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved a great guy like me. Doesn't say that does it.

I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see. We are useful because we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. My final admonition to you is this. May the Lord find us to be special. And may we give true consideration to others just as we were accepted before God.

You see, if he has chosen to accept and to forgive us, he has chosen to accept and forgive others. Then we must willing, be willing to do the same. Otherwise, it's not forgiveness from the heart. Let's pray.

Father, this morning, I know we all have struggles from day to day, learning to forgive others as You have forgiven us. Instead, it's easier for us to lift ourselves up on a pedestal or to somehow categorize our sin as not being so bad as others.

And yet your word reminds us that we are to forgive and when we forgive, we are to choose to put those things behind us. We are to choose not to bring those things up. And as Peter himself said, when he was speaking with you, how many, and you asked him, how many times are we to forgive?

Being very magnanimous, Peter says seven times. And from your own lips, you said 70 times seven. In other words, an unfathomable amount of time, an unfathomable number of times are we are to forgive one another.

And yet Lord, how sad we are. find ourselves in the situation that each of us do in our lives or in our church or in our workplaces and instead of forgiven as we have been forgiven. We chalk it up and hold it against other people and in so doing we destroy seek to destroy the work that you're doing in our midst and in our lives.

Help us Lord to forgive, to love, to be gracious, to be kind. As we quoted in the verse earlier and it was in the announcements be kind, one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

So forgive us Father this morning. Help us to not only be willing to forgive others when they have wronged us but that we would be willing to seek forgiveness where we have been wrong ourselves. And then to cast all of our cares away.

on you because you care for us. Thank you for our time this morning in your word, and I pray that this will bring a change to those each one of us who are listening and paying attention to your word today.

We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and all God's people said. Amen. If we could have a couple of our men, maybe Brother Gabe, Brother Mike, Brother Jeff, and we're gonna play one final hymn as our conclusion and we'll also have them take up the offering.

Also, you're welcome to place it in the offering boxes that are on either side of the auditorium as you leave this morning. And as always, if you have any questions about what you have heard today or anything that's going on in your life, we would love to be able to talk with you.

Lord, thank you for the offering that is about to be received. We pray, Lord, also for the time of food and fellowship that we will have downstairs for everyone who remains and again, may you be glorified in our lives.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.