

Philemon — Forgiveness

January 14, 2018

Good morning. Today, we start a short two-week study on the book of Philemon. This book is about something that is in short supply in our world. It is called forgiveness. Today forgiveness isn't seen as a virtue. It is seen as a vice.

Did you notice the heroes in our movies are not people that forgive? They are people of revenge. Do you remember the movie "Rambo" (he drew first blood)? Do you remember the movie "Braveheart," with William Wallace seeking revenge for the death of Murron, his wife?

Revenge doesn't just dominate our movies. The nightly news is also filled with revenge instead of forgiveness. The Middle East remains in turmoil because one nation insists on taking revenge against another nation. The Arabs indiscriminately shoot rockets across borders with no concern of whom they hit. It doesn't matter because they are taking revenge. Forgiveness, it isn't even considered.

Revenge crimes are also on the rise. You probably saw the 28-year-old man that was recently shot by a SWAT team. The police responded to a fraudulent call claiming that there was a killer in a Kansas home. They arrived on the scene thinking they needed deadly force. In reality, it was a hoax that led to one man losing his life. What sparked these selfish actions? It was an act of revenge after one young man lost a wager of \$1.50 while playing the game *Call*

of Duty online against his friend.¹ As an act of revenge he called in the SWAT team on his friend.

When was the last time you heard someone say on the news say, “I was wrong,” “I am sorry,” or “Would you please forgive me?”

As Christians, we are to be the exact opposite of our culture. After Jesus, we are to be people known for forgiveness. That is our calling card. As we have been lavishly forgiven by our God, we are to be lavishly forgiving of others. The lavishness of God’s forgiveness is to be tasted by others through the lavishness of the forgiveness we offer to them. Being unwilling to forgive or to seek revenge is completely unthinkable in the Christian life.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)

Forgiveness is so central to the Christian life it is part of the Lord’s prayer; it assumes we will be forgiving toward those who hurt us.

...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12 (ESV)

Forgiveness for Christians mean after we forgive we don’t without our affections. While forgiveness doesn’t necessarily mean we pick up a relationship with the same level of trust we had before someone sinned against us, forgiveness means we extend love and kindness to people after we forgive them.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

¹ <https://www.theverge.com/2017/12/29/16830626/call-of-duty-swatting-prank-kansas-man-dead-police-shooting>

Revenge is the normal way of life in the world. Forgiveness is the normal way of life for Christians. Christians will stand out in the world because we handle conflict differently.

Before we begin our study of Philemon, I want to spend a few minutes to help us personally understand the importance of forgiveness and the devastating consequences that come with holding onto our hurts.

Why is forgiveness an essential part of the Christian life?

1. **Refusing to forgive imprisons us in the past.** Unforgiveness keeps the pain alive. Unforgiveness keeps the sore open. Unforgiveness doesn't allow the wound to heal. Unforgiveness keeps us dwelling on the wrongs done to us and feeds the anger and resentment. Unforgiveness keeps us living in the past. Christ calls us to forgive others like we have been forgiven. Forgiveness sets us free from the past.
2. **Refusing to forgive leads to bitterness.** The longer we dwell on an offense committed against us, the more bitter we become. Bitterness is not just a sin, it is an infection. Bitterness refuses to stay compartmentalized in our lives. Like an infection, it spreads. Bitterness eventually takes over our whole lives, our thinking, our hopes, our words and our marriages. We become bitter people. Bitterness soon becomes the disgusting flavor that is in every part of our lives. Bitterness even spreads from us to other people.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; Hebrews 12:15 (ESV)

Bitterness moves from our hearts and it comes out in our speech as we start using cutting and sarcastic words about people rather than having words

of gratefulness, kindness and patience. Bitterness distorts our outlook on the future so we don't see hope for tomorrow. Bitterness infects our thought lives as we become consumed with thoughts of revenge and evil. Bitterness is especially devastating to a marriage. It shuts off affection between a couple. The root of bitterness all too often leads to the weed of divorce. When bitterness has taken over our lives, it spreads to others in our lives. This is why bitter people are not good to be around because they make you bitter!

3. **Unforgiveness gives Satan an open door in our lives.** When we hold on to bitterness, it gives Satan an open door into our lives.

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and **give no opportunity to the devil**. Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV)

Most of the ground Satan gains in our lives is through a lack of forgiveness. Not being willing to forgive others of their sins ends up hurting us more than we hurt the people we don't want to forgive. God was at his best when he forgave us with Jesus. We are at our best when we forgive others like Jesus forgave us. Refusing to forgive lets Satan into our lives to try and destroy us.

Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, **if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs**. 2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (ESV)

Paul said a lack of forgiveness is one of Satan's greatest strategies against us.

4. **Unforgiveness hinders our fellowship with God.**

For **if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**. Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)

Forgiving other people is so central to the Christian life that to not forgive others is evidence that maybe you haven't been forgiven. Forgiven people can't help but be forgiving.

Forgiveness is so important the Holy Spirit devoted an entire book of the Bible to it. It is called the book of Philemon. In this book, forgiveness is not taught just as a principle or parable but it is seen through a real-life situation involving two people close to Paul. A slave named Onesimus and his master Philemon.

What is the background of the letter to Philemon?

Paul was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote the books of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. While under house arrest, Paul met a man named Onesimus. We don't know how the two crossed paths. Onesimus had an interesting history. He was a runaway slave. It turns out Onesimus was a slave that ran away from a master named Philemon. Philemon was a wealthy businessman from the city of Colossae. Philemon was also a Christian. He most likely heard the gospel while traveling through the city of Ephesus while Paul was in the city preaching for three years. After becoming a Christian, Philemon returned to his home city of Colossae with his friend Epaphras. Epaphras most likely served as the pastor the the new church. The church met in Philemon's large home.

Instead of being a useful slave that enjoyed the benefits of a Christian master, Onesimus was a useless slave that rebelled against his godly master. He eventually ran from master Philemon and headed for Rome. Who knows how

many headaches existed between Philemon and Onesimus before Onesimus decided to run away.

This is one of those small-world moments when a runaway slave from Philemon's house in Colossae ran across the apostle Paul in the city of Rome. Rome was a city of 800,000 people that was 1,800 miles away from Colossae, yet in God's providence, Onesimus and Paul's paths crossed.

In addition, there are parts of the letter to Philemon that imply Onesimus stole money from Philemon when he ran from his home. He most likely stole a lot of money. In the ancient world, travel was expensive, just like today. For Onesimus to travel almost 2,000 miles required a lot of cash. He no doubt stole enough money to not just supply his journey to Rome but he probably stole enough money to set himself up with a comfortable living in Rome.

If you want to imagine this today, imagine the maid that cleans your house took a check from the back of your checkbook. She cashed it for \$20,000 dollars. Then she skipped town with your money. You were left paying that bill. How would you feel about the maid? That is how Philemon felt toward Onesimus.

In our study of Colossians, we looked at slavery in the ancient world. We saw brutal slavery was on the decline in Rome. At this time, slaves were emancipated in record numbers. Rome even enacted laws to slow down the rate of slave emancipation in the empire.

While slaves were gaining their freedom, the Romans still dealt very harshly with slave revolt. The last slave revolt in Rome was 100 years prior to this time. It was led by Spartacus. At one point Spartacus' rebellion consisted of

70,000 slaves that challenged, and at times defeated, the mighty Roman legions. Eventually the Romans crushed Spartacus and his slave army. When the Romans won the final battle against Spartacus and his slaves, they crucified all 6,000 slaves that surrounded them. The Roman approach to slave revolt was complete intolerance because the stability of Roman society depended on the submission of slaves.

Slaves were crucified for far lighter offenses than what Onesimus had done when he stole from Philemon and ran from his master. When runaway slaves were captured, if they were not crucified, they were branded on their heads with a big letter “F” for fugitive. If they stole money when they escaped, like Onesimus had done, they were branded with an “FC” for fugitive-criminal. That was the standard treatment for slaves that stole or ran from their masters.

In this time of history there were also slave catchers. In “Star Wars,” they called them the bounty hunters. They hunted runaway slaves for a fee. Onesimus expected Philemon had a contract on his life with bounty hunters.

Legally, Philemon held Onesimus’ life in his hands because of what he had done.

Now let’s return to our story.

Through circumstances unknown to us, Onesimus — Philemon’s runaway slave — ran across Paul in Rome. He spent time with Paul and became a Christian. Onesimus didn’t just become a Christian but his life completely changed. Onesimus gave his time to helping Paul in prison and was a transformed person.

While Onesimus' life turned around, there was one outstanding problem that remained. Onesimus needed to make things right with his master. There was a broken relationship to restore. There was forgiveness to be sought. This wasn't an ordinary attempt at restoration. Trying to make things right with Philemon would be risky business, and Onesimus could easily lose his life.

Last week, we saw that after Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians, he planned to have Tychicus carry the letter to the church that met in Philemon's home. This was a special opportunity. Paul sent Onesimus with Tychicus to Philemon in the city of Colossae. Paul also sent this little postcard called the book of Philemon with Tychicus. After Tychicus read the letter to the Colossians to the church that met in Philemon's home, he then read this little follow-up note to Philemon that addressed the strained relationship between Onesimus, the runaway slave and Philemon, his wealthy master.

I imagine Philemon's emotions were all over the place when Onesimus showed up at his front door. His anger was probably kept in check by the church. I imagine Onesimus hiding behind Tychicus as he used him as a human shield to separate him from his master.

In your mind, picture Philemon on one side of the room with Onesimus shaking like a leaf hiding behind Tychicus on the other side. Tychicus clears his throat and begins to read.

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become

effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. 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.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Philemon (ESV)

To whom was the letter written?

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philemon 1–3 (ESV)

Philemon - He was a wealthy businessman. Epaphras and Philemon most likely became Christians when traveling through the city of Ephesus on business. They heard Paul preaching in the city when he was there for three years. When Epaphras and Philemon returned to their home city of Colossae, Philemon hosted the church in his home while Epaphras pastored the church in Philemon's home.

Apphia - This was most likely Philemon's wife; she was also a Christian.

Archippus — This was most likely Philemon and Apphia's son. He wasn't sitting at home watching YouTube. Paul called him a fellow soldier. This means Archippus was involved in spreading the gospel. He was likely one of the pastors in the church of Colossae or was a pastor in the church of Laodicea, the neighboring town.

That gives us a profile of Philemon and his family. Philemon was a godly man with a wonderful wife and a son that was a pastor. Philemon was a good guy that all of us would admire.

The goal of this brief letter was to encourage Philemon to forgive Onesimus, accept him as a brother in Christ, and then treat him with the same kind of forgiveness and lavish love Christ has shown to each of us.

Since forgiveness is the goal of the letter, as we work through the first 15 verses, let's develop all of our points around the topic of forgiveness to see what we can learn.

Why should we forgive?

Forgiveness is essential for Christian fellowship.

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints... Philemon 4–5 (ESV)

In this first verse, Paul complimented Philemon because in his life he had not separated loving Christ from loving people. Philemon knew that we can't claim to love God and not love God's people, even the hard to love people.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. John 13:34 (ESV)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7 (ESV)

Usually when we think of God's commands for us to love one another, we think about the easy-to-love people. The point of these commands is that as Christians, we love even the hard-to-love people. We even love people that hurt us, like Onesimus had done to Philemon.

This is one of the distinctions of the church. People of all different backgrounds and all different outlooks on life love one another. To keep loving one another, we must have a supernatural ability to forgive one another.

Are some people harder to love than others? Of course! Some people are shaped differently than we are. Christ gives us a supernatural love for one another that makes us a family. This includes forgiving Christians that sin against us. We forgive them and we love them because that is the character of Christ living in us.

Unforgiveness toward another Christian is a sign of an unhealthy spiritual life.

Offering forgiveness is essential to Christian growth.

...and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. Philemon 6 (ESV)

While Paul thanked God for Philemon's faith, and that it was a genuine faith that shows itself in genuine love for people, Paul prayed that Philemon's faith would become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us. The word *effective literally means experienced*. Paul's prayer for Philemon was that he wouldn't talk about the complete forgiveness we have through Christ but that Philemon would experience what it means to offer complete forgiveness. In moving from talking about forgiveness intellectually to understanding it

experientially, Philemon's faith would grow because he would have a firsthand understanding of what it means to forgive.

It is one thing to talk about forgiveness on Sunday morning but it is another thing to actually forgive somebody on Monday morning. It is one thing to talk about climbing Mt. Everest, but it is another thing to actually climb Mt. Everest. Paul's prayer was that Philemon would move from talking about God's forgiveness to experiencing what it means to forgive. In a moment, Paul will provide a perfect opportunity for Philemon to experience forgiveness firsthand with Onesimus.

What is important for us to understand is the way we grow in understanding God's forgiveness is we must go through the experience of extending forgiveness to others. The way we grow in understanding what it means to be forgiven is we experience forgiveness from others.

The ability to extend complete forgiveness is something unique to Christians. It is only those who have experienced complete forgiveness that can extend complete forgiveness.

This should reframe our understanding of the hurts many of us face. We wonder why God allows people into our lives that hurt us, especially Christian people that hurt us. The way we grow in understanding Christ's forgiveness for us is we need to go through the process of learning what it is like to extend forgiveness to other people, even Christian people that hurt us.

God may have you in a situation where you have to forgive so you can grow in your faith, not so you can lose your faith. How we choose to respond in

that situation makes all the difference. If we choose to withhold forgiveness, that hurt becomes a foothold for Satan in our lives. It becomes a source of bitterness and a temptation to sin. If we choose to extend forgiveness, that hurt becomes a trial that God uses to build our faith.

Offering forgiveness is a powerful encouragement to the church.

For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. Philemon 7 (ESV)

Paul told us he derived much joy and comfort from Philemon's love.

Philemon's care for other people in the church was an encouragement not just to the people he encouraged but his love for other Christians has encouraged the entire church. Paul made the point that the church is not a bunch of individual relationships, but like a body, we are interconnected. How we treat one person in the church affects other people in the church. Philemon's love and care for people in the church makes the whole church a positive refreshing place to be.

Now the issue at hand was the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. How Philemon treated Onesimus, his new Christian brother, was an opportunity to either encourage the church body or discourage the church body. If Philemon treated Onesimus according to Roman law and tradition and branded Philemon's forehead, it would have discouraged the entire church. If Philemon lavishly forgave Onesimus, like Jesus lavishly forgave him, that would encourage the entire church to extend lavish grace.

How can I encourage forgiveness?

Don't command someone to forgive. Encourage it to come voluntarily from their heart.

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... Philemon 8–9 (ESV)

Paul encouraged Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother rather than to crucify him, whip him or brand him with an “F.” Rather than telling Philemon what to do, he appealed to him. True forgiveness must be a choice we make, not a command we obey.

Maybe you grew up in a home where you fought with your brother and sister. Mother would break up the fight then tell you to say you are sorry. The problem is that never works, does it? You may say you are sorry in words, but unless you are sorry in your heart, the problem hasn't gone away. In the same way, true forgiveness cannot be demanded. You can only appeal for it. You cannot force it to happen. Paul understood this.

Commanding Philemon to forgive would have humiliated him. It would have demeaned him. Paul had just commended Philemon for his great faith and amazing family. Then Paul appealed to Philemon and encouraged him to live out the great faith he already had.

This is something we can apply to all our conflicts and relationships. Let's use a silly but important example. How many of you take out the garbage at home because your wife asks you to take it to the curb? There are two ways your wife can ask you to take out the garbage. The first way is she can command you to do it. Most men will take out the garbage when their wives command them to

do it but they will do it grumbling under their breath because they were bossed into completing that chore.

The other way a wife can tell her husband to take out the garbage is she can appeal to him. She can tell her husband how loved and appreciated she feels because of the way he helps around the home. She can let her husband know she feels very loved and appreciated when he is willing to walk in the cold to take the garbage to the end of the driveway. She hasn't commanded him to take out the trash. She complimented him and his character then she appealed to his good character as a way of making her feel loved. The result is her husband will not just take out the trash because he has to, he will take out the trash because he wants to!

Repentance encourages forgiveness.

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.) Philemon 10–11 (ESV)

What we see is Onesimus became a Christian. He experienced Christ's forgiveness. He was a changed person. He went from being useless to being useful. When Onesimus became a Christian, he repented of his sin. One of the ways we can encourage others to forgive us is to own our sin and repent of our sin. Confession of sin and ownership of sin helps heal a broken relationship. The moment someone says, "I handled that wrong," or "I was over the top, I want to apologize," or "I was wrong," most people find their anger subsiding and wounds healing.

While it doesn't say it directly in the text, it is implied that Onesimus was repentant for his thievery and for running from his master. If he wasn't repentant,

he wouldn't have agreed to travel all the way back to Colossae to show up on Philemon's doorstep to try and set the broken relationship right and risk his life.

One of the fastest ways to encourage forgiveness is to take the initiative and repent. Don't ignore a broken relationship. If you can repent, be the first to do it.

An advocate encourages forgiveness.

I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.
Philemon 12–14 (ESV)

Paul loved Onesimus. When Philemon heard the name Onesimus, his stomach turned. He rolled his eyes. Paul wanted Philemon to know the same Onesimus Philemon couldn't stand was deeply loved by Paul. Sometimes in a difficult relationship breakdown you need an advocate, an intermediary to help bring people together.

I see this many times in marital breakdown. One spouse loses what is called the judgment of charity to the other spouse. He or she starts assuming everything his or her spouse says or does is meant to hurt him or her. Many times that isn't true. In those times, there needs to be an intermediary that helps bring people together. There needs to be an intermediary that says, "You are hearing your spouse wrong," and "You are misreading their intent."

This was Paul for Onesimus. Paul vouched for Onesimus being a good worker and a faithful helper. Paul vouched for Onesimus changing. Paul would

have been glad to keep him because Onesimus was a trustworthy helper. When Philemon knew Onesimus, Philemon was glad to get rid of him.

From time to time relationships break down. They are too hot to touch, and it seems we can't get to the point of forgiveness and restoration. In those times, find a Christ-centered intermediary. It could be myself, one of the pastors or one of the elders. We have Christian counseling through Team Restoration Ministries in the church as well.

Getting outside help is biblical.

Understanding God's providence encourages forgiveness.

For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever... Philemon 15 (ESV)

In this little verse, Paul reached into the mystery of God's providence and the wonder of his ways. Providence is God ordering the world in ways we don't understand. It is God using even the sinful choices done to us or by us to achieve his good purposes.

One of the best examples of God's providence is the story of Joseph. We looked at that story when we studied the book of Genesis. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. They sinned against God, their father and their brother in a terrible way. Mrs. Potiphar later sinned by falsely accusing Joseph of rape. Those sinful choices moved Joseph from being the favorite son in his father's sheep-herding business to languishing in an Egyptian dungeon, even though he had done nothing to deserve it.

In the mystery of God's providence, God used that sin to put Joseph in exactly the right place and the right time to move him in only one day from

serving as a prisoner in Egypt to serving as second in command over Egypt. That is God's providence in action. The sin done to Joseph didn't thwart God's plans for Joseph. God uses even man's sinful choices as part of his good and gracious plan.

The whole point of providence is God can take the evil things done to us or by us and use them as part of his good plan to show grace to us.

Paul proposed that this may be exactly what happened to Philemon. Maybe in God's providence Onesimus' stealing and running from Philemon was used as part of God's good plan to bring Onesimus to Rome where he could hear from Paul. Also as part of God's good plan Paul would then use his relationship with a slave and his master to bring the two of them together.

Rather than hold a grudge over Onesimus and seek revenge for what he did, instead Philemon should thank God that in God's grace Onesimus' sinful choices were providentially overruled by God and used as part of his God plan to save him and make Philemon and Onesimus brothers in the Lord!

Seeing how God can overrule sin and use it for his good purposes helps us extend forgiveness. This is not just something that is true for Onesimus, but it is true for all of us.

How many of us were living good lives that deserved God's grace when God found us? None of us! All wandered far from God. All of us were completely undeserving of God's forgiveness when he found us and saved us. In God's providence, not only did he find us at our worst, just like Onesimus, but he poured grace into our lives that we didn't deserve. He changed our hearts when

Jesus Christ came into our hearts. In his grace, he also allowed us to escape the consequences of our sinful choices as part of his amazing grace.

Paul said to Philemon, “If God was gracious to save you in your sin and to allow you to escape the consequences of your sin, you need to extend that same grace to Onesimus, your slave. God used his sinful choices as part of his good plan to save him. Now you continue extending grace to this repentant man and forgive him for what he has done. Don’t brand his head for what he has done.”

Conclusion

How will this story end? Will Philemon forgive Onesimus? If he forgives him, how will he treat Onesimus after the greatness of his sin?

What happened to Onesimus? Did he return to work as a slave in Philemon’s household? Did he ever see Paul again?

Next week, we have the exciting conclusion to the story of Philemon and Onesimus. Once you know what happens, you will never look at Philemon — this little postcard from Paul — the same.



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