



Fighting for Peace – Part 3

When the Price Tag is High

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You may remember some time back I asked us to speculate as to why Jesus had a Judas in his inner circle. Why would he have someone who is going to just end up betraying him? I mean, he certainly could have chosen better than that. And I asked that question, I asked us to speculate about that when I was preaching through Psalm 55 to think about the reality of the human experience of betrayal. And certainly Jesus experienced that and by choice and certainly to fulfill biblical passages of prophecy in the Old Testament. But it is interesting and unique that Jesus has the experience of a close friend turning on him. As a matter of fact, he quotes one of the psalms about betrayal in Psalm 41 verse 9, he uses the very phrase in the Upper Room when he talks about like, here's how the whole verse goes, "Even my close friend, who ate bread, has lifted his heel against me. "I don't know if you think through the vivid nature of lifting the heel, that's like the donkey that picks up the hoof and kicks. And it's like I have this close friend who has betrayed me, probably was in this situation with Ahithophel, his counselor and Absalom, his son. He had all this experience of betrayal that all of us have had to some degree, a friend who stabs us in the back or someone who we've trusted and put confidence in has somehow violated that confidence. And that's a difficult thing for us. It's a real sense of injustice.

And part of that certainly has to be, we never got to this level when we were back in Psalm 55, but according to Hebrews Chapter 4 verse 15, Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Now, the idea of him being tempted, it was very important for the redemptive process of imputing his righteousness to us having been a victor in the midst of temptation. Adam fell, Jesus did not, and that was an important part of him saving us. But to have the experience, and that's how that verse begins in Hebrews Chapter 4, the idea of him being able to sympathize with our weakness. We know that Jesus knew what it was like to trust someone so much so that Judas was the one who held the money bag. He was the treasurer of the group and he was stealing, he was embezzling, he was ultimately turning Jesus in to put a few more gold coins in his pocket.

All of us know the sense of betrayal whether it's large or small. And it's something we've been studying in the book of Philemon because you'll have to agree that if you are an estate owner like Philemon, who had a big enough house for the whole church in Colossi to meet in, he had this slave, a Greco-Roman slave, as I've tried to distinguish is different than American historical ethnic slavery. But in Greco-Roman slavery, whether it was skilled labor or unskilled labor, there were people who indentured themselves to someone who was rich to take care of them and then, in exchange, gave service of their life to them. And that arrangement was one of trust. They are stewards. And as a steward, you know that Onesimus, this runaway slave who we've gotten familiar with in the book of Philemon, had this position of trust in the estate of Philemon and he decided to leave probably stealing as he left not to mention his own work that was stolen as he ran away to Rome, as many of the slaves often did, kind of the Las Vegas of the ancient world. And he goes into Rome, gets lost in the crowd and does whatever he's going to do.

But he runs into the Apostle Paul and by God's providence here is Onesimus being won to Christ and when Paul finds out that he's a runaway slave from Colossi that certainly perked Paul's, you know, ears. And now Onesimus is saying, well, I used to work for Philemon and Paul's going I know Philemon. Matter of fact, I led Philemon to Christ some time ago and the church is meeting in his house, this wealthy man from Colossi. And so now all of a sudden as we said early on when we introduced this book Paul has to now make this right. And he's got a weird situation on his hands. He's got a fugitive slave who is there as a Christian and he's going to send him back. So Paul writes a letter to the Colossian church and he writes another small letter that we know of as Philemon that he sends with his messenger to the Colossians and Onesimus himself to go back and to seek reconciliation with Philemon. So Paul writes this letter and we've been studying it. But I want you to know what a series of events would lead to Philemon rightly being indignant about the injustice of Onesimus leaving and stealing from him. I mean, as I like to say, he had the key ring to the estate and money and probably was dispensing money. Who knows what his role was? But it was one of trust and that trust was violated and Paul's going to tell him to make it right.

So we study this text knowing something of that, whether it's large or small, and whether it's happening now to you or it's going to happen in the future, or you look in the past and you've been through it, there's so much for us to learn about forgiveness, which has been our theme through this little book. I want to look at the last section of it today to find out how we're supposed to do this. Forgiveness, by the way, as you turn to the book of Philemon verses 17 through 25, I want to remind you there are two words, two primary words, that translate from the Greek New Testament into our English word "forgive." One is "Aphiēmi" and I often talk about that because it's a great word of "letting go." The injustice of forgiveness is what we feel when we think we don't want to forgive. I don't want to let it go because I need this to have a just and equitable ending. I don't want this to be left uncorrected. And if you think about the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, he writes them in First Corinthians Chapter 6, and he says you know, these suits and disputes that you have against each other, you're going to small claims court here in Corinth before non-Christians, he said "this is a defeat already" that you guys can't settle this among yourselves. You should be able to.

And he says, as a matter of fact, "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?" And I think to myself, I'm going to raise my hand to say, I know why, because it doesn't feel right. I don't want to be defrauded and I don't want to be wronged. I need to make it right. And that's why they went to court. And Paul says it would be better for you not even to go to court. You're going to have to drop it, and aphiēmi is that Greek word that gives us the sense of letting it go. As my old pastor used to say, it's the palms down letting it go. But the problem is the feeling of injustice makes us just reflexively want to grasp and clasp onto this injustice. It's like those of you who are the do-it-yourself or weekend electricians who have no business putting in an electrical outlet. But you try anyway, as I have done, or putting up a ceiling fan or whatever it is, and maybe you turned off the wrong breaker in the panel or you are so manly you don't even turn off breakers and you have the experience that all of us, you know, DIY people have and that is you touch the wrong wire with your metal needle nose pliers and you have 110V running through your body. And there's one thing you don't want to do when you're



being jolted by the electricity in the current of your house. You don't want to let go. You want to let go but you can't let go because there's one thing about being shocked. Your muscles all clench up and you hang on.

Here's the problem. Injustice feels like that, I have to hang onto it. It's why you go and buy popcorn and a soda and you sit there and you watch a movie and you want the bad guys to get it and you want it all to be resolved. The good guys to walk away from the explosion in the background as the bad guys get what's coming to them. And you think, well, that's how I feel. It has to be resolved. We don't like letting it go. We don't want to be defrauded. And that feeling is part of us being made in the image of God and I get it. But Paul is saying that the exercise of forgiveness is *aphiēmi*, it's letting it go. It's dropping the matter. That's hard, hard to do. But there's another Greek word, the second Greek word that is translated into the English word "forgive" in the New Testament, there are a few others, but mostly it's one of two words, and the other word is "Charidzomai" and *charidzomai*, if you've been around church very long and you've studied the Greek New Testament vocabulary, you might hear the word "Charis" in the front of that and that's the word for "grace." And *charidzomai* is offering favor, offering grace. It's more than just dropping it. It's the hard, hard task now of reaching out my hands to give you my favor.

So if you want to symbolize this, the natural reflex is to stay clenched with the wrong. And it's certainly not to hold out my hands with some kind of favor to accept and embrace and reconcile with you. But that is the image. I just want to tell you at the outset this is very, very hard to do. And I know we need these three weeks in Philemon to work harder to make sure that we do this by the grace of God. And this whole book starts with "grace to you" and ends with you need God's grace. May God's grace allow you his favor that he extends to us allowing us to drop the matter and extend grace to others. Because here's the problem, Philemon is going to feel ripped off if he does what Paul says. But Paul appeals to him in this last section, he's already told him that it's required, you have to do it and it would be better if you are willing to do it, you have to do it. And now he appeals to him beginning in verse 17. I want to read through verse 25, and if you see our worksheet, you'll see the first point is just all about the appeal that is made here, the rhetorical literary laying out of what is his appeal. What is he saying? Well, let's gather that as we read through it with a little bit of commentary. I'll read from the English Standard Version. But the answers are here for us, and this will help us as we look at it from three different directions.

Philemon verse 17. "For if you," Philemon, "consider me," Paul, "your partner." Now, remember how this letter started and we had that real struggle with what are we going to make of this phrase that we're "sharing together"? Do you remember that whole thing? And I said at the beginning of this letter what do we make of this? And I said the word that we're looking at at the beginning of the book of Philemon is the word "Koinōnia." And if you've been around church you know that's the word for "fellowship" or "sharing in." And it's not about him sharing his faith. Right? It's about him sharing in this participation in Christ. And he talks about that and he and Philemon are together in Christ fellowshiping now from a distance. He's in Rome and Philemon is in Colossi. But he says, "If you consider me your," fellow fellowship'er,

"then receive him," who's that? Onesimus, "as you would receive me." Now there's the injustice, right?

If some guy's out keying my car in the parking lot and I'm approaching him with my frustration and fleshly anger, and you step in and say, "Hey, no, no, no, no, no. You know what? I just want you to treat him like you treat me and I'm your favorite parishioner here at Compass Bible Church." I'm going to say, "Well, my issue isn't with you. Why don't you just stay out of this?" That's what I'm going to say to you, because I don't want you to butt into my complaint with this guy. We have got a problem. He's keying my car and I'm mad at him. I've got a grievance. He's going to fix this. We got to settle the score. And so I'm approaching him to do that. And you've stepped in now and said, "Hey, just treat him like you treat me." Now nobody feels right about that. It doesn't work. And Paul goes further, verse 18, "If he's wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge it to my account." Now, of course Onesimus did owe. And you can take out a calculator if you're Philemon and you could figure out how much Onesimus took because he probably took plenty for the road. But then how many hours have I lost, right? Because he's my indentured person here working on my estate. And you could calculate a number. And Paul is saying, hey, you know what? Charge it to me.

And again, that is still not quite right. When I want to go and in my flesh punch someone in the face for keying my car and you say whatever it costs, I'll take care of it. I'm still like, okay, but I'd rather punch him. That's kind of how the flesh works. I rather solve this myself. And so this still doesn't feel quite right. Then he picks up the quill, "I, Paul, write this with my own hand." And if you look up at the beginning of this book, the first verse, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother." Timothy is probably serving as his amanuensis in this. If you're not familiar with that word, that just means he's taking the dictation for Paul. But at this point, Paul picks up the quill and he says, "I write this with my own hand," and in his own handwriting, it's like calling in the notary public, right? He's saying, I'm showing this is from me, like he does to the Galatians. Philemon knew Paul well. He'd been in his house teaching many times, and so he knew his handwriting. And as Paul tells the Galatians, he had some visual problems, some eye problems and so he'd write with big letters and so they knew his handwriting. And he's saying, I just want to tell you, this is what I'm telling you "with my own hand: I will repay it -- to say nothing of you owing me even your own self."

See, in other words, I've already done so much for you. I won you to Christ. You should look at me as the one who because of the human instrumentality of my evangelism you're not going to hell. I know that you feel indebted to me just for the ministry I've done in your life. And if you feel any indebtedness to me, I just want you to charge it to my account. And I don't think Philemon, the rich man, is going to say, well, Paul, you owe me, you know, 315 denarii. I don't think you're going to say that. He's going to go, well, you know, if Paul needed 350 denarii I'd give it to him. And so he says just count it against me. "Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ." In other words, he's saying do me the favor, do it for me. Make the benefit here for me. Charge it to me. Do it for me. You owe me your life. Do me a favor here. Philemon, forgive Onesimus. "Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say." Well, that's good. I mean, he's got confidence that Philemon is going to do the right thing. And I think the reason we have



this canonical letter in the corpus of New Testament writings is because, in fact, Philemon did that.

"At the same time, prepare a guest room for me." Remember, this is all written in the last couple of verses of the book of Acts, Acts 28. He's in Rome for 24 months, two years under house arrest and he says, I hope to get out of this. And if you know biblical New Testament history he does get out and he goes on another trip and he does ministry and then he gets reimprisoned, comes back to Rome, writes his last letter, the letter of Second Timothy and he knows it's over then. He gets beheaded in Rome, or so we think in the extra-biblical history of the Bible. And so he dies as a martyr in Rome. But he says, I'm hoping to get out and, "I am hoping that through your prayers I'll graciously be given to you." Then he closes with his buddies there in Rome. And we know about these people "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ," and maybe they had some counts against Epaphras or maybe he's just voluntarily there in prison with him, "sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers."

Now we know those people. Let's just skip over Demas because it's not going to work out too well for him if you know your New Testament. Luke is his traveling physician. Aristarchus we picked up on the journey across the Mediterranean during the whole shipwreck and all of that. And John Mark we know about from Chapter 15 and all that went on there. And then he ends with what he started with when he said "grace to you" in verse 3, he says now, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit," because you're going to need it if you're going to really forgive. Your spirit, your heart, the core of who you are, is going to have to work hard to do the unnatural work of exercising the muscles of dropping something that the sense of injustice makes you want to clasp. And then I want you to receive him, right? He's repented, right? He knows he's done wrong. I'm sending him back to you. And I want you to reach out and embrace him. I want you to show favor. That charidzomai means you freely give him your favor. Okay?

This whole argument, this is why the first point has next to it verses 17 through 25, is Paul, as I said, stepping in and he's not directly involved in the problem and he's stepping in and saying hey, I want to involve myself in this. I want to let you know this would, I mean, if you want to look at the core of it, it's right there in verse 20. "It would be a benefit to me. It would refresh my heart" if you would do this. Now, because it's obedience, as he says there in verse 21, it would be good to see Philemon be obedient because if you're a Christian you have to obey. And we dealt with that. And he says, I think you're going to do more than just obey. You're going to do it willingly and you probably receive him in a gracious and magnanimous way. It's going to be good. So all of this is about Paul getting in the middle of it all. Someone on the outside saying, I would really, really appreciate it if you would forgive.

Now I just want to think about it that way as a human being looking at someone who's got an issue with someone else and they are going to be at odds with one another and it doesn't make any sense in the world they would just be at war. But instead of taking each other to small claims court or whatever, and certainly Onesimus wouldn't have a case as a runaway slave, but instead of you sending him to debtor's prison, would you forgive him and be



reconciled? I want you to think about whatever conflict you may have, whatever is difficult for you to let go, whatever it is that because of injustice you want to hang on to. And I want you because all of us need to *aphiēmi* the problem and that is we need to drop it even if they're not repentant. Right? We need to know to turn it over to God. We learn this from Romans 12 back earlier in the series, we need to know that God is the one who takes revenge. So it's not about a Hollywood movie. This is about letting it go. And then if there is repentance, we certainly bestow, freely we bestow favor and embrace and reconcile.

Okay. I want you to think about the people who are not involved in the case who would be positively benefited, let's just start with positive benefit, because of your reconciliation. Jot that down. Number one, let's just start with the whole argument. "Forgive for Others' Sake," just like Philemon was supposed to forgive for Paul's sake. I want us to think about forgiving for other people's sake. And if you're a parent or you were a parent raising kids in your home, I just think you understand it's good when you care about your children if they get along, that would be good. And if there's a grievance that they forgive one another and be reconciled. There's no joy in being the parent of Cain and Abel. Would you agree with that? You know that's not a good day. You don't like that. You want there to be harmony. You want there to be peace. And I will say, just like Paul is an ecclesiastical authority, he's an apostle and he's looking at as the preacher there who's preached many times in Colossi. He says, you know what Philemon? I'm kind of over you in the Lord, not kind of, I am over you in the Lord in terms of my authority, apostolic authority and it would be good for me as a leader to see this happen in your life. I just want you to know that there are people watching you in your conflicts who would be very much blessed by you forgiving.

Now I'm going to quote a verse. You don't like it. You don't like it when I quote it. You think I'm trying to, you know, look down my long nose at you. And, you know, flex a little bit. This is not a flex. But let me quote this passage for you. I'll do it as sweetly as I can. Jot it down Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 17. Hebrews 13:17. What it says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Why? What's the rationale? "For they are keeping watch over your souls," they're trying and do the right thing, "as those who will have to give an account." The one of the reasons they care about how you live the Christian life is because they're going have to answer for how you live your Christian life because their whole job is to try and disciple you and equip you and train you. And then it says this. And every time I bring up a new pastor who joins our pastoral team, I usually quote Hebrews 13 verse 17b, the second half. And here's the second half. "Let them do this with joy and not with groaning."

And I can say there are lots of reasons a pastor might groan in his pastoral ministry. But let me be super clear. One of the things that absolutely is near the top, if not the top of the list, is you being at odds with people in the church who you will not forgive, people who you're bitter toward, people who you feel wronged by, and you won't make it right. Factions. Division. Argument. Bitterness. Aversion. Anger. Malice. Slander. Gossip. All of that certainly makes pastors groan. And I would say this. Let's just go further through the whole ministry structure. Sub-congregational staff pastors would certainly be refreshed if you could forgive. Small group leaders, just volunteer lay leaders would be certainly blessed and refreshed if when there's a conflict and there always will be conflicts that you forgive and you *aphiēmi*, you let it



go, you drop it and you charidzomai and you're willing to reconcile. That would be super, super good for all the leaders.

Just like parents, right? They're blessed when there's joy in their heart as it says in Third John Chapter 4. Right? "There's no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth," particularly when they're walking together in agreement, that's a good thing. Paul says that often as he talks about his apostolic authority. Think about, jot this one down, Philippians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 3. He first starts with how great it is to be in fellowship in unity with one another. Let me summarize, paraphrase. It's great when the church is all unified and there are no divisions between you. And then he says, so make my joy complete. Remember that line? "Make my joy complete by," and then he goes, "just be of the same mind," right? Be the same heart. Just get it together. There's no greater joy for a pastor and a leader, a ministry leader, a small group host, to see everyone getting along. Now, we know people are imperfect. We know that they're going to sin against each other. Right? But there's forgiveness. There's reconciliation. That's a great, great thing. And it's going to make others outside of your conflict are really going to be blessed by that. And you don't think about that often. But that's what the whole book of Philemon is about, some third party injecting himself into your conflict with someone else, saying I would really be refreshed if you'd get this, right? That is an argument, that is a motivation and it should be in your mind. People will be blessed if you will get along with each other, that's a good thing.

And then I could go just to anybody. It's not just the leaders who are particularly blessed, but, you know, the group itself. And I think that's where the very last phrase of Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 17 goes. Do you remember the rest of it? "For this would be of no advantage to you." Well, to you, plural. How is it that it wouldn't be of no advantage if you're an unforgiving, bitter grudge-holding group? Well, it wouldn't be a very good church to go to. That wouldn't be a great place to be. So just think about, I've quoted this one early in the series, Psalm 133 verse 1. Do you remember that verse? "How good," and blessed, "it is," how happy it is "when the brothers dwell together in unity!" It's a great thing. Everyone enjoys that. Everyone likes going to a church that's unified. Everyone likes going to a small group where everyone is friends and when they wrong each other they forgive. That's a good place to be.

Matter of fact, I often quote, if you hear me talking about some of the good days of the early church, because did they have bad days? They had some bad days. But in the early days, I often go to the end of Chapter 2 and the end of Chapter 4. Do you hear me talk about that? Like Acts 2, Acts 4? These are two great little parenthetical statements, summary statements that Luke makes about the early church. Let's look at Chapter 4 real quick, the end of Chapter 4. And I just want to show you both sides of *aphiēmi* and *charidzomai*, dropping matters and reaching out with full free favor to one another. Look at this great text, Acts Chapter 4 verse 32, "Now the full number of those who believed." Okay, so that's all the Christians. It's not part of them or the cool cats or you know Click A and Click B. No, "The full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul," one heart and one soul, "and no one said that any of the things that belong to him was his own, but they had everything in common." Do you need something? I'm there for you. Do you need somebody to help you move? I'm there for you. Do you need someone to borrow? You can borrow my car. What do you need? Do you want to



test whether or not you've dropped the matter and you have full favor? When you reach out your hands look at what's in them. Right? Are you willing to give, are you willing to be generous to others?

And I'm just telling you, the early church here, I love the way it says the full number. There was no one at odds with each other. Now, there were going to be problems in Chapter 5 if you know the flow of Acts. But man, right now everyone is firing on all cylinders and everybody's on the same page. That's just a beautiful statement. And that not only is a joy for leaders, that's a joy for congregants. So would you forgive for others' sake?

Now, on your worksheet, you'll see if you're going to a small group this week, I throw you a curveball and a little bit of speculation I ask you to do from Second Corinthians. If you go to Second Corinthians Chapter 2, I'm going to add one more person. I want you to forgive for one other person's sake. Let's read this little paragraph here starting in verse 5. Second Corinthians Chapter 2 verse 5. Let's start there. "Now if anyone has caused pain, he's caused it not to me, but in some measure -- not to put it too severely -- to all of you." Now, here's the context. Paul had called out someone for sin in the church. They were to discipline him. And what we know from reading this paragraph is he is repentant. Right? And they had shunned this guy. They had kicked him out of the church, but he repented. And so Paul says, yeah, there was some pain in all this. And I get that. And it hurt me in a sense but really what mattered is it hurt you. So this is a little bit of the inverse of everything I just said, right? It pains leaders, it pains congregants when we don't get through things, we don't reconcile.

Verse 6, "For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough." Right? The church said you're not welcome here until you repent. So you would rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow." The guy's repented and you're not going to receive him back, of course you should. "So I beg you," I love this, talk about the charidzomai part of open-handed free favor. He says, "Re-affirm your love for him. This is why I wrote, that I might test you," right? Are you going to deal with this matter biblically? Well, the first side is can you deal with the person who is sinning and then can you reconcile whether "you're obedient in everything." For "anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive." I'm not sitting here across the channel of the Adriatic saying I don't forgive. No, no. If this guy repented and you heard it and you saw it, I forgive him too, of course. "Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I've forgiven anything, has been," for the sake, "for your sake," the congregation's sake, "in the presence of Christ."

So far, now here's the person. Here it comes, verse 11. "So that we would not be outwitted by," here's a new person in the middle of all this outside of the conflict, "Satan; for we're not ignorant of his schemes." This may sound weird but I'd like you to forgive for Satan's sake. Does that sound weird? Right? I'm not Anton LaVey. It's not for Satan's good, it's for his bad. I want you to forgive so that Satan would not be a winner in our church, in your small groups. And by the way, do you think Satan only cares about the church? He cares paramount about the church. But he also cares about families. He cares about workplaces. He cares about offices. Does all this apply even in a secular context? Wouldn't it be great for bosses, managers, supervisors if all your employees got along? I mean, if you're a manager, I don't



know. You're at Best Buy with the blue shirts, right? Wouldn't it be great if you were leading those employees and they all got along? They all high-fived each other and walked by and everything was good. You would appreciate that.

And here's the thing. Satan loves to destroy. He loves to tear up. He loves to steal and kill and destroy, it says in John 10. And he'd love to do that in your family, in your workplace, and certainly paramount importance in the church. But we will win if we can forgive. We drop the matter which we must do even in church discipline, right? We turn them over. God's going to have to deal with this person. But you're not welcome here. But then there's repentance. And then hands of charidzomai, favor goes out and we embrace and we reconcile. That's a great, great, you know, analogy of charidzomai and ap̄hiēmi. But here's what we need to realize, Satan is working against that. So we get to shut the doors to Satan. And again, Satan, I hope we're not on his radar. God, please. I hope we're not on the stage here. But he's got demons dispatched. And clearly all you have to do is look at James Chapter 3. The demonic wisdom always wants its pound of flesh. Demonic wisdom is not open to biblical reason. It's earthly and demonic, James says. And in the church, the conflicts, the kinds of things that go on that result in bitterness, harboring grudges and all the rest, Satan would love to smile at all that and the demons at work at Compass Bible Church would love to see the division and unforgiveness settle into your heart. So I want, for Satan's sake, for his demise against our church, I want to forgive in here. And I'd love for that to happen in your workplace too, because some of these principles will work even in a non-Christian context. Some of them. We forgive for others' sake, it's a good thing. Think about leaders, think about fellow congregants, even think about the enemy who can be defeated as we forgive.

Now let's go back to the text. Start in verse 17. We'll take the first half of it. And I want to read this as some of you probably read it just intuitively. When you read the first few verses, 17 through 20, you probably thought about something that stands behind the godly leader and you probably looked right over his shoulder and said this sounds like God. And certainly there are a lot of parallels there. So let's telescope beyond Paul's shoulder and let's look over his shoulder and look at these concepts. Verse 17, "If you consider me your partner," if you're in fellowship with me then "receive him as you would receive me." Is there anything in Scripture that might remind you of that principle as it relates to God himself? It's all over the Bible. Think about Matthew Chapter 10 verse 40. Matthew 10:40 says if you're linked with me and I send you into these villages and they receive you, guess what? They're receiving me. The whole concept of the body image which is an analogy in First Corinthians and Ephesians in particular. And if we're part of the body and he's the head, when the body members, when the parts of the body, when they work together it's like we're receiving part of Christ. When I'm right with other people then there's a sense in which I'm right with God.

The Bible says I'm just to welcome others, welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you. So all of this is very biblical. It all relates to God. And then even further, look at verse 18, "If he's wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write with my own hand: I will repay it -- to say nothing of your owing me even your own self." If you didn't look over his shoulder at God in that statement because, you know, Paul didn't do anything for you. I mean, yes, he did indirectly, but... Right? We know Christ did everything for



us. So in that sense we realize, wait a minute, that goes right back to the beginning illustration we gave of Jesus talking about the forgiveness of the master to the servant, and the servant can't forgive his fellow servant? No, that's bad, right? I need to remember what Christ has done for us in forgiving us.

So all of this reminds us of this simple principle. Let's look over the shoulder of the Apostle Paul, not just the godly leader, but God himself. Number two, you need to "Forgive for God's Sake," for God's sake. You need to forgive because all of these principles are triply true, infinitely true if we apply them to God. Do you owe God everything? Yes, you do. And what does he ask you to do? Forgive. Right? Is there a sense in which Christ says this? Now, here's the real challenge that Christ says this that I will pay for the loss to you. Well, in two senses it's true, because the Bible's really clear, we turn over a matter to God, then God will deal with us. And if there's a wrong he can certainly fix it. Right? If somebody keys my car and I don't get money out of the guy who keys my car, here's the thing that a real Christian understands, God can take care of the repair bill and I know that God can do that and I'm okay, I think that God will... He'll be compensating.

But more than that, I know something much more profound. And it's the cornerstone of evangelical Orthodox Christian theology. Go to Isaiah 53 and let's just revisit this because if you have been influenced by the skinny jean goatee preachers, sorry, not all of them, some of them, they have taught consistently in the 21st century that the concept and doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ suffering on your behalf is nothing more, as they like to say, than cosmic child abuse. They've taken the core doctrine of substitutionary atonement that the Father treated the Son as an enemy so that he could see you as his friend. They say that's just egregious. Right? In this real sentimental kind of theology of the modern era people have dismissed the core of our theology. There's no salvation, by the way, outside of the concept of substitutionary atonement. And it's all over the Bible, starting in the Mosaic Law.

In Leviticus Chapter 1 verse 4, if you're going to go to worship and you bring your animal there, it's a whole reminder of the "Kāḇar," the Hebrew word kāḇar, of the covering of your sins. How is it covered? Well, the illustration is I put my hand on the head of the animal and then the priest comes and takes his sharp knife out, slits the throat of the animal, the blood spills out, the animal collapses, the blood goes onto my sandals, his sandals and we take that animal and hoist it up on the altar. That animal didn't do anything morally wrong. As a matter of fact, I picked a blemishless animal, the best animal in my flock, to bring it to worship. And the picture is I get to go home in peace with God even though I'm a sinner and this animal gets consumed by the fire or depending on what kind of sacrifice it is, it gets consumed by the priest after it's burned up for lunch. So this is the core of the image of the sacrificial system.

And of course, in Isaiah 53, if you know your Bibles this is the prophetic view of the coming servant of Christ who's going to be the strong arm of the Lord to accomplish salvation for his people. And it puts it this way, in the "prophetic perfect," it puts it in the grammar of it already happening because really in God's mind from the foundation of the world, Christ has been slain, right? At least in his mind. This reality took place in space and time 2,000 years ago. But this is the whole basis for redemption and forgiveness. Take a look at this, Isaiah 53. Let's

start in verse 5, Isaiah 53 verse 5. "But he," this suffering servant, "was pierced for..." his own transgressions. Is that what it says? No, not for his own transgression. Now, that's normally what happens if you sin you get punished for your sin. You get crucified on a Roman execution rack in the first century if you're a criminal, you've done the crime then you get to be strung up on this cross. That just makes sense. But instead, here's the substitution. "He was pierced for OUR transgression." Now, wait a minute. I should be pierced. Yeah, I should be pierced, but I'm not going to be pierced. He got pierced for me. "He was crushed," his human life was crushed, "for our iniquities."

And now that we look with the advantage of time in retrospect, man, he was killed in the most tortuous way. I mean, the Romans flayed his back and put a crown of thorns and mocked him and he hung naked on a cross. All of that, crushed, because of our sins. "Upon him was the chastisement," that means whipping, the lashings, "on him was the chastisement that brought us peace." I go home in peace and he is the one who God acts like he's the criminal. The Father punishes the Son, and by his wounds, he gets wounded, my relationship with God is healed. That's crazy. "All we like sheep, have gone astray." We did the sin. We did the transgression. We did the iniquities. Right? "We've all turned -- every one -- to his own way," but, "the Lord has laid on HIM the iniquity of all of us," straying sheep. You've transgressed. You've done things that are perversions to God. You've done sin. You've done wrong. But God said, I'm going to take all of that and I'm going to place it on him. If you take this out of your theology, as so many cool cats have done these days, you've missed the whole point of forgiveness. We have nothing other than a book of morals, and we hope we kind of pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and live better and hope that God likes it and hope he's going to let us into heaven. But we don't realize God is so holy it has to be paid for.

Drop down to verse 10. "It was the will of the Lord to crush him; and to put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt." It takes us all the way back to Leviticus. This is the whole point of the sacrificial system. Look at verse 11, "Out of the anguish of his soul he," the Father, "shall see and be satisfied," propitiation, "and by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous." Now they're not righteous because they have iniquities, but "he shall bear their iniquities." Look at the very last two lines of verse 12, "He bore the sin of many, and he makes intercession for transgression." He's the holy one. He's done no wrong. He gets punished as though he is the wrongdoer. And now we walk away going hey, our sins are paid for. Now we think of Isaiah 53. I hope you think of Isaiah 53 at times like taking the Lord's Supper. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me," my blood, my body broken. And we remember Christ. We think, I'm so glad. I get to walk to my car and drive home knowing I'm forgiven. It's a good thing because I've sinned. I've sinned before I was a Christian. I've sinned since I've been a Christian. It's so good that my sin was absorbed on the cross.

But what we may not think about is this little analogy of Paul saying, you know what? If this guy has done you wrong, if Onesimus has stolen from you, I just want you to see it as though I will absorb the payment. I'll take the payment. As a matter of fact, you owe me your life so, I mean, we should really be all even at this point because I will pay for it. The whole point of the Christian faith is that Christ paid for your sin. But when you think about people who have



sinned against you, do you think of it as profoundly as you think about your own forgiveness? When David sins, he sins and he says, I know I've sinned against people, but "Against you and you only," as he says to God, "I've sinned." All sin against you is a sin against God. And God looks at someone, let's say we're talking in the church now, a Christian, God has taken their sin and he cried out on a cross 2,000 years ago, the embodiment of deity in bodily form, here's what Christ said, "It is finished," "Tetelestai," paid in full.

Here's what I'm trying to say to you. If we're forgiving for God's sake, because Christ has paid the penalty for every sin against us. Every sin against you. Let's talk first about the atonement, the substitutionary atonement, the imputing of your sin to his cross is not just your sin, but everyone who sinned against you. If they're Christians, it's been imputed to the cross. That's huge. That makes forgiveness for Christians, it should make it theologically really easy. Because as relieved as I am that Christ paid for my sin, that person's sin has been paid for by Christ. Does it feel unjust as the voltage of electricity is running through my palms and I want to hang tightly onto the injustice? Yeah, it feels unjust to let it go. But you're not letting it go into the ether, right? This is something that Christ has paid for and Christ has said that I paid the debt for that person's sin. And that's how it helps you, especially when they apologize, especially when there's repentance, to reach my hands out in charizomai and say we embrace you, reconciliation.

What about non-Christians? I'm still supposed to *aphiēmi*. I'm supposed to let it go. Why? Because it says in Romans Chapter 12 that God is to repay. Now, for Christians he's already paid for the debt of every Christian who sins against me. Every non-Christian who sins against me, God says let me deal with that. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." So I know this: God is going to settle the score with him. If he has wronged me, betrayed me, hurt me, there's injustice and I know I want popcorn and a soda and I want to cheer when they get torched. But the reality is I know that God is going to deal with that and the Bible says you should see that as a dreadful thing. Now, that's a scary thing because God is certainly going to protect me as one of his children. Trust me. There's going to be punishment for those who wrong us. So I stand back with humble trepidation because God will pay for the sin. Every sin against you is either paid for on the cross or will be paid for in the Lake of Fire. So in a sense do you need to get your pound of flesh? You don't. You don't. Is it hard to forgive for God's sake? It is hard. But you need to remember the debt was settled on the cross or the debt will be settled in the fire. Can you go to Ephesians Chapter 4? That was heavy stuff. But I'm forgiving for God's sake. I'm forgiving because when I reconcile, I'm reconciling with a child of God, if it's a Christian and even if it's a non-Christian, I'm reconciling with someone made in the image of God, which according to James Chapter 3 is also a profound thing. I treat them differently than just my enemy. I have to see them as made in God's image. And in that sense, I'm forgiving someone who God has made and I know their debt will be paid one day for all the sin against me.

Ephesians Chapter 4. I know we quote this often, but we don't often remember the context. Are you there? Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." It's amazing to even think you can. Now, I believe in the impassibility of God if you know the doctrine of impassibility. I'm a believer in that traditional doctrine of God. But there is something about

this, right? There's something about the fact that my behavior has an effect on God, right? In the sense at least speaking, if not anthropomorphically, I at least know. I read Genesis Chapter 6 and I think God is grieved to his "leb," to his heart. And I understand that. There's something about your sin and my sin that can grieve God. And here it says, don't grieve him "by whom you were sealed." I mean, he's right there and he's going to be in your life until the day of redemption and beyond. And here's the context, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Well, why would that be in the body of Christ at the church level? Why? Because there's sin against me. Because I'm mad at that person. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Now, I quoted this earlier in the series and I got to quote at the beginning of Chapter 5, "Therefore be imitators of God," be like God, "as beloved children. Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It has paid for my sins. It's paid for their sin in the church. I need to be forgiving and if I don't it grieves. God, I'm going to forgive for God's sake. And he is not going to be pleased if I don't. Go to the Psalms with me, Psalm Chapter 11. Let's transition to the last part of this, verses 21 through 25 in Philemon. Keep your finger there in Psalm 11. But would you look at the last part of Philemon, it's printed there on your worksheet. Paul says, "Confident of your obedience, I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I say." Verse 22, "At the same time, prepare a guest room for me for I'm hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you." So Paul says, I know you've got a big estate there, you got a big house. I'm going to be released here hopefully. Just pray for me that I will be. And when I get out of this, I'm going to get on a ship and go across to Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. I'm going to get to Colossi and we're going to have fellowship together. I want to stay in your house. So get a room ready for me. Okay, that's great. Can you just think how awkward it would be if he showed up and said where's Onesimus? And Philemon goes, he's in jail. What was that letter I wrote you? I tore it up and burned it in the fire. It isn't going to go well, is it? Paul said no, no, no. You got to be obedient. You got to forgive. And you know what? I want you to forgive for my sake as well. And we've talked about this now theologically, we ought to forgive for God's sake. It would not go so well for Philemon if he didn't do what he's supposed to do. I just love that. I want good fellowship with you when I get there. So be obedient. And I think you're going to do even more than I'm asking.

Now, Psalm 11, go to the last verse, a powerful verse. "The Lord is righteous," Yahweh is righteous, "he loves righteous deeds." Now, please do not confuse in your mind justification and sanctification. The imputation of God's Son's righteousness to your account does not mean he doesn't know what you're doing this week. When you do the right thing, not only is Paul pleased with this and he says we'll have great fellowship and there's going to be no awkwardness between us because I know you're going to do what I say and you're going to do the right thing and I even think you are going to do more. I think your magnanimous response to Onesimus is going to be a great example of your love for the saints. It's going to be great. And we're going to have great fellowship when I get there. Paul loves righteous deeds and here is the core of the righteous deed we've been looking at in the last three studies.



Right? It's forgiveness. The Lord loves forgiveness. That's a righteous deed. "The Lord is righteous." He's forgiven us. "He loves righteous deeds."

Okay, Look at this last line. Now, "The upright shall behold his face." God said that about Moses. You know, me and Moses are tight. He says to Miriam, the sister. Don't start criticizing Moses for his choice of a wife. If you do, I'm going to get involved in this. He's like my friend. I mean, that's how it was described, right? It's like I'm having face-to-face conversations. Not that God has a face, but that was the picture. There at the tent of meeting. Moses and I are tight. Is that good for Moses? It's great for Moses. It's great for family disputes, at least, I know that from Numbers 12. This is a good thing that he's tight. I want to be like Daniel. I want to be like Moses. I'd like to be like Abraham. I'd like to be a friend of God. That would be good. Well, "The Lord is righteous and he loves righteous deeds." Am I accepted in the beloved? Am I accepted because of the imputed righteousness of Christ and that my sin has been imputed as grace? Yes, of course. But you know my relationship with God has improved. And all I want to say, the second point has been all about that. But let that come back on you. What does that do for you? What is a friend of God? What advantage is there to being tight with God? All kinds. Just study Moses' life. Study Daniel's life. The whole point of God having his good hand on those people and all that he did. Think about Joseph in prison. All that he did. Why? Because God loved him. God looked at him and saw his integrity and he loved him and he poured out his blessings on him.

Number three, you need to forgive "For Your Own Sake." You need to forgive for your own sake. It is a good thing for you to do a righteous thing like completely *aphiēmi*, dropping the charge and, if there's repentance, taking your *charidzomai* free favor and flowing that favor toward the person who you're mad at. That's an amazing thing. It's a righteous thing. God loves that. You know Paul practices what he preaches. Can you go to the last two verses of this book? We could look at every one of these people. But I just want to look at one in-depth, right? Epaphras, we learn about him. He's always wrestling in prayer for the Colossians, and I'm sure he's going to be excited, just like Paul is going to be excited if Philemon does the right thing and reconciles with Onesimus. Paul says, he's "My fellow prisoner ... he sends you greetings," Philemon. And I know you know Epaphras, he's from Colossi. And I know you know these guys. These are big wheels in the church right now. "Mark," John Mark, "Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."

I just want you to know that John Mark should jump off the page when you read that. Because the last time we saw John Mark in Acts Chapter 15, Paul's going, "The guy deserted me on the last missionary journey. I'm not taking him on the next one." And Barnabas was his cousin. So Barnabas goes, no, no, no. And such a sharp disagreement arose between them they couldn't agree on who to take on this missionary trip that they split up. And we looked at that passage and we tried to look at who was right, who was wrong, you know, what happened. And God really allowed them to both divide and conquer because instead of going on the same route on the missionary journey, they split up. Paul takes the southern route, they start covering all the bases and God blesses both of these guys. We follow Luke's record and we follow Paul's fruitful missionary journey. And it was great. But Paul goes, I can't work with this guy. I think he had every right to say that. John Mark deserted. That's a strong word.



He deserted them. But here he is now and he said to be on level here with guys like Aristarchus and Luke and Demas at this point, he would later flame out, but right now he's in this top four group. My fellow workers, these are famous people. He ends up writing the gospel of Mark. If you don't know, this is John Mark.

And all I want to tell you is there has to be between this and what happened in Chapter 15 of Acts, repentance. And Paul not only drops the matter, he doesn't go, this is the deserter. The deserter showed up. No, he doesn't talk that way. He's dropped the matter. And charidzomai, he's freely flowing his favor out even in how he talks about him. Now jot this down, Second Timothy Chapter 4. Second Timothy Chapter 4 verse 11. Let me read that for you. Paul is here after the second imprisonment in Rome. He's about to have his head chopped off and he says, "Luke alone is with me." So everyone else is sent out on a trip. He's writing to Timothy and he says, "Get Mark," John Mark, the same guy, "and bring him with you," when you come to see me, "for he is very," now here's the word used, "useful to me in the ministry." Second to Timothy, he is the most useful guy that Paul can think about to bring him to Rome on his second missionary journey. The guy has gone from "zero to hero" in Paul's mind. "Bring him with you, for he is," and the word he uses is, "useful."

In Philemon, you go back up in Philemon to verse 10. I didn't point this out when I went through it, but you overachievers probably looked at all the footnotes here. And in verse 10 when Paul starts this appeal and he uses Onesimus' name, he says, "I appeal to you for my child Onesimus." Do you see a footnote there if your readers are working? What does the small print say? Onesimus means what? Useful. "Whose father I became in my imprisonment." So I led this guy to Christ and his name is Onesimus. But what does his name mean? His name means "useful." Like my name is Michael, "Mîkâ'êl." Mîkâ'êl means "one like God" or "who is like God," right? His name means "useful," "Onesimus." Look at the play on words in verse 11. "Formerly he was USELESS to you." Hey, Mr. Useful was useless to you. Why? Because he was a runaway slave. "But now he is indeed USEFUL to you and to me." I don't even want to send him back because he's so useful to me. But he needs to go back because you guys need to reconcile.

I just wanted to show the parallel between the preacher who's saying you need to reconcile and see him as useful. John Mark, who was not useful to Paul in Chapter 15, is now useful to him in this imprisonment, and he'll be even more useful to him in the second imprisonment. Do you think Paul can forgive and forget? It doesn't say, "Oh yeah, Mark, the deserter, he's here with me too, chump," right? He doesn't write that. He doesn't write that because he doesn't feel that because he's told his brain to do exactly what he's telling Onesimus and Philemon to do, reconcile. I said this and this is a human statement, but I don't think we would have the letter to Philemon in the Canon, the 27-book library of the New Testament, unless he did exactly what Paul was asking him to do.

And I think there's historical, extra-biblical non-canonical evidence of this. Do you remember the man in early church history named Ignatius? Do you remember Ignatius? There's a letter, an extant letter, that he writes to Ephesus. Now, if I asked you Sunday school grads, who was the pastor of Ephesus in the first century? Well, we've been naming him all morning. His

name is Timothy, the coauthor and the amanuensis of Paul in this little letter. So Timothy is the pastor in Ephesus. Well, when he's done with the pastorate there, apparently, believe it or not, who becomes the pastor in Ephesus? According to the letter of Ignatius, Onesimus does. Listen to what he writes about Onesimus to the Ephesians. He says, "Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love, is your pastor, your overseer." He uses the word "Episkopos," your overseer. "I ask in the name of Jesus Christ that you love him and all of you imitate him, resemble him. For blessed is the one who is graciously granted you, who are worthy, to obtain such a pastor, such an overseer." Wow. High praise for Onesimus, a former slave turned pastor of the church, if it's the same Onesimus and we have every reason to believe it is because that's the only one that people would have thought of in Ephesus is the one that Paul wrote and sent back from Rome to Colossi. Amazing.

Talk about useful, how useful does Onesimus become for the ministry of Christ. And it didn't happen without Paul embracing him, even if he was a criminal, a repentant criminal. And if Philemon, the one he sinned against, forgave him. Amazing. Forgiveness is good for you because it restores people and you're going to look back at people you've forgiven if they are repentant and you're going to say this is amazing, look what God has done. You will be enriched by that. I can't imagine what Philemon must think. My runaway slave who I forgave and publicly put my arm around in the congregation of Colossi, later went on to become the pastor in Ephesus. Crazy.

One more thing, and I hate to make this negative, but it is good for you to forgive. And one reason is Hebrews Chapter 12 verse 15. If you hang on to your bitterness, I like the way it's put here, it's a root. "Make sure that no one fails to obtain the grace of God." The last verse, in verse 25 of the book of Philemon is about the grace of God. That's the whole thing, right? He says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." And it says there in Hebrews Chapter 12, I don't want you to miss the grace of God, you need the grace of God, the favor of God, the empowerment of God to do this, "that no ... bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." Not only will you be mad at yourself for the wave of division that takes place through your unforgiveness, but the bitterness that you hang on to, it's caustic and it is contagious. That's my point. It's caustic. It's going to do bad in your heart and it's contagious. It will spread until finally you'll look like First Corinthians where they're saying, "I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas." You cannot let bitterness be held onto in your heart. Even secular pop psychologists will talk about that. There's something about *aphiēmi*, letting it go. At least it's not something you're harboring in your heart. The more aversion, the more grudges, the more anger, the more bitterness, the more slander and clamor and gossip and all that you do because you're mad at someone, it's bad for you.

If you study about Greco-Roman slavery in the first century you'll learn that Onesimus is not unique in running away. Of course, many people did it. But when the Romans caught a slave with so many of them, as many as 6 million in Rome itself, when they found a runaway slave and they determined that he was a runaway, they did a few things. One of them is to beat them publicly. They put them on a pillar or somewhere and let people see this is what happens to runaway slaves. Don't run away from your master. And then many times historians tell us they would take a brand and they would make an "F," right? This is Latin



now and make an "F" on his body somewhere where they could see it. An "F." And the "F" it stood for the Latin word "Fugitivus." Fugitivus is the word we get the English word "fugitive" from. So they would have to run around with this scar on their body that reminded everybody, kind of like Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter, if you remember that old book. Right? It's like he's branded "F" for fugitive. Sometimes then they would put a collar that they would lock around their neck and remind everybody here's a fugitive, a runaway slave.

Now, you may not think you've branded certain people in your church, in your office, in your neighborhood, in your family, but many of us do. And I love that it's an "F" because some of us feel like that's the kind of relationship I have with them. "F" for failure, right? No good. I just want to tell you there's nothing better than for you for the sake of everyone around you, including your leaders, including your boss at work, including your pastors, for God's sake most importantly, and for your own sake, we got to get rid of these kinds of brandings on our relationships. It's time for you to *aphiēmi*, let it go. And if there's repentance, *charidzomai*. Do you want a picture of what that looks like when the "F" turns into an "A?" I just want to ask you what kind of relationship did the prodigal son have with his father when he repented. Do you want to talk about holding your hands out and freely giving favor? I just want you to think about when he comes back and says, "Father, I've sinned against ... you. I'm not even worthy to be called your son." "Just make me one of your servants." Make me a slave in your household, in your estate.

Here's the thing about the father. There's no getting any of that money back. The son spent it all on prostitutes and gambling and all the stuff that he did. He lost all the inheritance that was given to him. Half of the father's estate was lost. Is he going to get that back? He's never going to get that back. How did he hold out his hands of *charidzomai*? I know that he dropped it, *aphiēmi* was done. But here's what the father says. Get a robe. Get sandals. Put a ring on his finger. Hey, get the fattened calf and slay it because we're going to have a feast. We got to celebrate. What kind of favor did the father put on the son when he repented? That is maybe easy to do if you think about a biological parent. But the relationships we have with each other they need to be as intentional and even if we can, by God's grace, reflexive and intuitive enough to be like the father who says I want to make this right, every offense we can drop. Are there consequences? Yes, we dealt with that briefly on the last one. That's a whole different sermon series. There are things that need to be done sometimes. I get that. But most of the offenses we carry around and the "F" that we put on the forehead of people walking around on this campus who we're mad at, they need to be released. Release it and extend favor and think about all the favor the Lord has bestowed on you. This is a good thing. It's good in God's heart. It's good in your church's heart. It's good in the people around you who know both of you, you and the person you're angry at. And it certainly will be good for you. Let's be a forgiving people.

Let's pray. God, help us in the midst of our fleshly battle to want our pound of flesh from our enemies. People who wrong us, people who stab us in the back, the injustice of being betrayed or whatever the issue might be, small and large. Help us for sure to not carry the bitterness, to have it defile us and other people. Let us drop it palms down, letting it go. And knowing that you are the one who will deal with that either on the cross for Christians or one



day in the judgment for those people. We trust you with settling the score. And then God, if there's repentance, we want to extend favor freely. Charidzomai, please God, let us be great at this. Let us follow the example of your love for us which we know is being illustrated there in Luke 15 and let us be forgiving people. Let us please you with our forgiveness. Thank you for this short study. The three weeks we've spent in Philemon and may you take it and apply it to our hearts. And if we're not in the middle of needing it right now, I pray we'd stored in our minds and our hearts and pull it out because there's going to be a time we need this. It could be next week, next month. But God, please prepare us ahead of time to deal with these conflicts well.

In Jesus name. Amen.