

**“The Grand Reception”**  
**Philemon 15-17**

**Introduction:**

1. **IE:** Weddings Are Special! Think Back To The Last Wedding You Were Invited To! Perhaps Even To One Here!
  - Weddings Are Special - Because The Couple To Be Married Is Special To You! And Since They Invited You, You Must Be Special To Them!
    - But - Unfortunately - That’s Not *Always* The Feeling Between Those Who Attend!
      - A Wedding Can Also Be One Of The Most Awkward And Tension-Filled Events Because It Often Brings Together A Lot Of People & Even A Lot Of Family:
        - Who May *Not Be* All That Great Of *Friends!*
  - But - In The End:
    - All Are Welcome!
      - And All Try To Be On Their Best Behavior!
        - Because Weddings Are Special!
          - And So - At The Reception, Everyone Is All Smiles - In Honor Of The Bride & The Groom!
2. Unfortunately - Many Events In The Church:
  - Look Like The Wedding Reception:
    - I’ve Just Described! Where - On Sunday:
      - Everyone Who Comes Tries To:
        - Dress Their Best, Look Their Best, And Be Their Best!
          - Because Church Is Supposed To Be Special!
            - And All Are Welcome!
  - But - Underneath The Surface:
    - Their May Be Trying Circumstances:
      - Hurt Feelings & Even Bitterness!
        - And Though We May Be A Christian *Family:*
          - We May *Not Be* All That Great Of *Friends!*
3. As We’ve Seen - For The Last Couple Of Weeks:
  - In The Relationship Between Three Christian Men:
    - Paul & Philemon & Onesimus:
      - *This Is Not How It’s Meant To Be!*
        - So - If You’re Not There Already, Please Head Back To The Brief Letter Of Philemon With Me!
  - Because - In Paul’s Appeal *To* Philemon *For* Onesimus:
    - That Fugitive & Likely Criminal Runaway Slave:
      - We Can See The Kind Of Reception:
        - That There *Should* Be Within The Church!
  - So - This Morning - Let’s Begin:
    - By Looking At Just 3 Verses:
      - 1:15-17 - “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; / Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? / If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself!”
    - At The End Of 1:17 - Paul Makes His Appeal:
      - To Philemon - *“Receive Him”* - He Says!
        - “Receive Onesimus!”
4. Up Until Those Words:
  - I’m Sure That The Brief Reunion That Took Place:
    - Between Philemon & Onesimus:
      - In Their Master & Slave Relationship:
        - Was Filled With An Awkward Tension!
  - But - Paul Finally Breaks The Ice:
    - And Asks Philemon:
      - “Receive Him!” - Remember - Paul Is Asking, Not Commanding! So That - 1:14 - “Thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly!”
        - But - What Was The Basis For Paul’s Appeal? How Could He Possibly Expect Philemon To Respond The Way He Wanted Him To? After All Onesimus Had Done To & Taken

From Philemon?

5. The Basis Of His Reception:
  - Was The Gospel!
    - Which Paul Reminded Them About:
      - Back In Colossians 3:11-13 - Where Paul Describes The Church As A Place - “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all!” – So – “If any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye!”
  - Paul Wanted There To Be:
    - Reconciliation Between Philemon & Onesimus!
      - “As Christ **Forgave** You – Paul Wrote – So Also Do Ye!”
    - But Paul Also Wanted There To Be:
      - A **Grand Reception** Between Philemon & Onesimus!
        - In A Sense - Paul Is Also Saying - “As Christ **Received** You, So Also Do Ye!”
6. **This** Is The Kind Of Reception:
  - There Is To Be Within The Church Of Jesus Christ!
    - The Church Is Meant To Be A Taste Of Heaven Here On Earth!
      - And - It **Can** Be & **Will** Be:
        - When You **Receive** One Another:
          - As Christ Himself Received You!
  - But - What Does This Kind Of Reception:
    - Look Like?
      - From The Verses We Just Read - We Will Look At Three Key Features Of What A Christian Reception Ought To Be Like!

\* First - There Is:

**I. A New And Abiding Relationship!**

- Abiding! Which Is What Paul Points Out:
  - In 1:15 - “For perhaps he [Onesimus] therefore departed for a season, that thou [Philemon] shouldest receive him for ever!”
    - When Paul Sent Onesimus Back To Philemon:
      - It Was For **Both** Their Sakes!
      - So That They Could See:
- The Lord’s Direction:
  - In Their New Relationship As:
    - Brothers In Christ!
      - When Paul Uses The Word “Perhaps” He Wants Us To **Think** About The Way God Works!
        - As William Cowper Once Wrote - “God Moves In Mysterious Ways, His Wonders To Perform!”
  - You See - Even Though Onesimus:
    - Ran Away From His Master - And Became A Fugitive Slave - Which Was A Criminal & Even A Capital Offense!
      - Paul Doesn’t See It That Way!
        - He Describes It As Onesimus Being “Departed For A Season!”
  - Now - This Is An Interesting Turn Of Phrase!
    - Because “Depart” Is A Passive Word!
      - **IE:** Kind Of Like When You Fly - As We Did On Vacation - We Say - “We Flew” - When In Fact - “We Were Flown!” - In Reality, We Had Very Little Control Over Our Departure Or Destination!
      - And This Is What Paul Is Doing Here! Paul Is Leading Us To See That **God’s** Hand Was In Their Separation!
  - It Was The Lord Who Directed Onesimus:
    - Away From Philemon - “For A Season!”
      - It Was All Part Of God’s Providential Plan!
        - Reminds Us Of The OT Story Of Joseph - Genesis 45:5 - “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life!”
  - This Is How We Need To See:

- Our New Relationships In Christ!
  - God Brought Us Together As Brothers & Sisters In Christ!
    - In Different Ways & At Different Times & From Different Pasts & Paths!
    - And We Need To **Receive** Each Other!
    - Also See:
- The Lord's Duration:
  - For Our Relationships:
    - As Christians!
      - The Master-Slave Relationship:
        - Between Philemon & Onesimus Was Worldly & Thus Temporary!
    - But - The Spiritual Relationship:
      - Between Them - Would Be Timeless!
        - 1:15 - "That Thou Shouldest Receive Him Forever!"
    - **IE:** As Our Children Were Growing Up:
      - There Came A Point When They Were Not Going To Have Any Other Siblings!
      - And So - I Would Sometimes Have To Remind Them:
        - That They Are The Only Brother Or Sister They've Got! So - Better Get Used To It!
    - When You Become A Child Of God:
      - You Become Part Of An Eternal Family!
        - And Those Around You Today:
          - Will Be With You Forever!
            - Along With A "Great Cloud Of [Other] Witnesses!"
      - And This Is Why Paul Assumes That Philemon's Reception Will Be According To:
  - The Lord's Desire:
    - In Their Relationship!
      - 1:15 - "That Thou Shouldest Receive Him!"
        - Knowing The Blessing That You Can **Give** As Well As The Blessing That You Can **Receive!**
    - You See - As A Slave - Onesimus Didn't Have A Lot To Offer His Master:
      - In Terms Of Restitution!
        - But You Don't Have To **Have** Much:
          - In Order To **Bless** Much!
            - And This Is The Kind Of Relationship God Wants Between His Children!
  - Because - This Kind Of Reception:
    - Reflects The Reception Of Christ!
      - It Is Abiding!
    - In Fact - If You Are Here Today As An Unbeliever:
      - When You Come **To** Christ:
        - This Is The Kind Of Reception You Can Expect **From** Christ!
          - One That Will Abide:
    - Because Of His Direction & His Desire:
      - In Your Life!
        - Perhaps You Are Here Today:
          - After Such A Long Time Of Separation From The One Who Created You!
      - So That - You Would Hear Of God's Love:
        - And Respond To God's Love:
          - By Receiving The One He Sent To Redeem You From Your Sin!
    - And - When You Turn To Jesus & Trust In Jesus:
      - Who Lived For You & Died For You & Arose For You!
        - You Can Experience His Grand Reception As Well!
          - He Will "Receive **[You]** Forever!"
    - And Now - You Can Extend This Grand Reception To Others!
      - "As Christ Forgave You, So Also Do Ye!" & "As Christ Received You, So Also Do Ye!"

\* Another Feature Of Christian Reception - Is That There Is:

## 2. **A New And Altered Relationship!**

- Altered! Which Is What Paul Describes:

- In 1:16 - "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?"
  - Paul Wanted Philemon's Reception Of Onesimus:
    - To Be Based On:
- An Altogether Different Relationship!
  - 1:16a - "Not Now As A Servant, But Above A Servant!"
    - As Someone Once Put It: (Lightfoot)
      - "Though He [Onesimus] Might Remain A Slave, he Could No Longer Be *As* A Slave" – To Philemon!
        - Their Relationship, As Brothers In Christ, Was Forever Altered & Altogether Different!
  - Because - Not Only:
    - Was There A Change In The Condition:
      - Of Onesimus - There Was Also:
        - A Change In Character!
          - Which Paul Pointed Out For Us Last Week!
  - In 1:11 - "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me!"
    - And Now - Philemon Could Receive Him!
      - But - It Was Also Based On:
- An Altogether Delightful Relationship!
  - 1:16 - "A Brother Beloved!"
    - Back In Colossians 4:9 - Paul Also Describes Onesimus As A "*Faithful* & Beloved Brother!"
      - It Is Clear - That There Was A Tender & Loving Relationship Between Paul & That Slave!
        - We Hear This Sentiment All Throughout This Letter!
  - And Even Here - In This Verse:
    - Paul Says - That Onesimus Was Beloved & Dear:
      - "Specially To Me!"
        - His Love For Onesimus Was As High As The Sky!
  - Yet - Paul Believes That Philemon Could Experience:
    - An Even Greater Love For His Once Runaway Slave!
      - Because - He Adds - 1:16 - "How Much More Unto Thee, Both In The Flesh And In The Lord!"
    - Paul Believed Philemon's Love For Onesimus:
      - Could Go As Higher Than His! Even Higher Than The Sky! Higher Than The Stars Themselves!
- What An Amazing Transformation!
  - Onesimus Left A Sinner:
    - But Came Back A Saint! He Was Saved!
  - Onesimus Left Unprofitable:
    - But Came Back Profitable!
  - Onesimus Left A Slave:
    - But Came Back A "Brother Beloved!"
  - This Is One Of The Great Features:
    - Of Christianity - It Changes & Alters:
      - The Very Fabric Of Human Relationships!
  - And - Doesn't This Kind Of Reception:
    - Reflect The Reception Of Christ?
      - When You Believe In Him & Become A Child Of God:
        - You Become "Doubly Dear" To The Lord!
  - "Beloved" - Both In The Flesh & In The Lord!
    - Because He Created You:
      - And - Because He Redeemed You!
        - What The Lord Said To His People In Isaiah 43:1, He Says Now To You - "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine!"
  - And Now - This Is The Kind Of Reception:
    - We Need To Extend To Each Other As A Church!
      - "As Christ Forgave You, So Also Do Ye!" & "As Christ Received You, So Also Do Ye!"

\* A Third Feature Of Our Reception As Christians Is:

3. ***A New & Accepting Relationship!***

- Accepting! Which Is What We Find:
  - In 1:17 - "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself!"
    - Paul Is Not Asking Philemon To "Receive" & Accept Onesimus Back:
      - In Any Form Of Compromise!
      - But As Partners In Christ!
  - He Asks Philemon To Receive:
    - Onesimus As He Would Receive:
      - Him! Paul!
    - Not Just Because:
      - They Are Fellow-Workers!
    - Not Just Because:
      - They Have Fellowship As Christians!
    - But More - Because:
      - They Are Friends!
  - So - "Receive Him [Onesimus] As Myself [Paul]!"
    - Now - Imagine If Paul Had Unexpectedly Shown Up At The Doorstep Of Philemon's House:
      - There In Colosse!
        - How Do You Think He Would Have Received Him?
          - Likely:
- With Love!
  - With An Embrace:
    - As Friends Who Had Not Seen Each Other:
      - For A Very Long Time!
- With Interest!
  - Wanting To Hear About Paul's Travels:
    - And Experiences!
      - Not Putting Him To Work:
        - But Hearing About His Work!
- With Concern!
  - For Paul's Welfare!
    - Perhaps He Was Weary From His Journey!
      - He Would Need Refreshment:
        - From Philemon's Table!
      - And - He Would Need Rest:
        - In Philemon's Home!
- With Hospitality!
  - Making Sure Paul Did Not Feel - In Any Way:
    - That He Was An Imposition:
      - Or Putting Him Out!
- With Praise & With Prayer!
  - Because It Would Have Been:
    - A Joyful & A Happy Occasion!
- And ***This*** Is How Paul Asks Philemon:
  - To "Receive" Back His Slave - Onesimus!
    - In The Exact Same Way!
      - Back Into His Heart! And Even:
        - Back Into His Home!
      - Though A Slave Was Part Of A Roman Household:
        - Rarely Was A Slave An Honored Guest:
          - In A Roman Home!
  - And This Would Imply:
    - A Forgiveness & Pardon:
      - From All The Past Offenses!
        - And - Treatment - Not As A Slave Or As A Prodigal - But As A "Brother Beloved!"
  - Providing Him A Favored Place:
    - In His Own Home!

- And Lavish Him With All The Tenderness & Thoughtfulness & Grace He Could!
- Because - This Kind Of Reception:
  - Reflects The Reception Of Christ!
    - It Is Accepting!
  - Isn't This What Jesus Describes For Us:
    - In John 14:1-3 - "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. / In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. / And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and *receive you* unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also!"
  - So - "As Christ Forgave You, So Also Do Ye!" & "As Christ Receives You, So Also Do Ye!"
    - We Need To Accept One Another:
      - As Christian Family & More!
      - As Christian Friends!
- Now - Someone Might Say:
  - *I* Don't Experience This Kind Of Reception:
    - By The Church!
      - And - Sadly - This May Be True!
        - In Fact - Many Today Will Not Darken The Door Of A Church - Even Some Professing Believers:
          - Because Of The Kind Of Reception They Received In The Past!
  - But - This Is *Not* The Kind Of Reception:
    - Jesus Offers You! And Now:
      - Just Because *You* May Not Experience This Kind Of Reception In The Church:
        - Perhaps - The Change You Are Looking For - God May Begin With You!

#### **Conclusion:**

1. Because - One Day - *All* Of God's People:
  - Will Be Invited To Another Wedding Reception!
    - Even - The Final Wedding Reception!
      - And The Wedding To End All Weddings!
        - It Is The "Marriage Supper Of The Lamb" Which We Are Told About In Revelation 19:9!
  - But - If You Are In Christ:
    - You Will Not Be There As *A Guest!*
      - You Will Be There As *His Bride!*
2. And - *All* Of God's People:
  - Will Be There - Not As Extended Family:
    - Just Trying To Get Through It With A Pasty Smile On Your Face!
      - But - As Friends!
        - And In Fellowship & Joy Forever!
3. And - This Is Why:
  - *Today* - As A Christian:
    - "As Christ Forgave You, So Also Do Ye!" & "As Christ Receives You, So Also Do Ye!"
      - This Is The Kind Of Reception:
        - We Need To Have Toward Each Other - As Brothers & Sisters In Christ!
  - Because - We Have *In* Christ:
    - A New Kind Of Relationship!
      - One That Is Abiding, Altered, & Accepting!
        - "As Christ Receives You, So Also Do Ye!"

**Grace Baptist Church**  
**Stephen Elmer, Pastor**  
 4245 North 200 West  
 Greenfield, Indiana 46140  
 317-326-2362  
[www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace](http://www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace)  
[www.growatgrace.org](http://www.growatgrace.org)  
[pastor-elmer@hotmail.com](mailto:pastor-elmer@hotmail.com)