

Philemon Part 4: vv17-21 – Forgive & Refresh My Heart (2016)

¹ **Paul**, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother,

To **Philemon** our beloved friend and fellow laborer,

² to the beloved^[a] **Apphia, Archippus** our fellow soldier, and to the **church in your house**:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, ⁵ [because] hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord **Jesus** **and** toward all the saints, ⁶ [and I pray] that the sharing of your faith may become effective [for the full knowledge] by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you^[b] in Christ Jesus. ⁷ For we have^[c] great joy^[d] and consolation in your love, because the **hearts of the saints have been refreshed** by you, brother.

⁸ **Therefore, though I might** be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, ⁹ **yet for love's sake** I rather appeal to you—being such a one as **Paul**, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, ¹¹ who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him back.^[e]

You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, ¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, that on **your behalf** he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. ¹⁴ But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

¹⁵ For perhaps he departed for a while for **this purpose**, that you might receive him forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. *[profitable at home and in church!]*

¹⁷ **If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.**

¹⁸ **But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.**

¹⁹ **I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.**

²⁰ **Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.**

²¹ **Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.**

²² But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Footnotes:

- a. [Philemon 1:2](#) NU-Text reads *to our sister Apphia*.
- b. [Philemon 1:6](#) NU-Text and M-Text read *us*.
- c. [Philemon 1:7](#) NU-Text reads *had*.
- d. [Philemon 1:7](#) M-Text reads *thanksgiving*.
- e. [Philemon 1:12](#) NU-Text reads *back to you in person, that is, my own heart*.

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(for the full knowledge) ~~by the acknowledgment~~ of every good thing which is in you(us) in Christ Jesus.

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¹¹ who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.
¹² I am sending him back. ~~You therefore receive him~~, that is, (sending) my (very) own heart,
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¹⁵ For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever,
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¹⁷ **If then you count me as a partner, receive (welcome) him as you would me.**
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Introduction

We have been studying the wonderful gem of a letter of Philemon.

Letter to Philemon (wife Apphia, son Archippus, church of Colosse which meets in home)

Philemon's slave named Onesimus purposed to steal fr/Philemon and run away to Rome.

Yet, God's purposed Onesimus to meet with Paul in prison in Rome to be saved by Christ
under Paul's ministry & transformed to profitable servant to Paul, Philemon, and Lord.

But Onesimus needed to be sent back to face Philemon, his family, the church.

So Paul writes the letter and sends it with Onesimus (and Tychicus) to Philemon
—Philemon, too, by the grace of God being earlier saved by Gospel under Paul—
to encourage Philemon to receive Onesimus with forgiveness/reconciliation.

In 1st sermon we used an overview of Philemon to see a picture of Christ in it.

In 2nd sermon looked at vv1-7 (basis of appeal) and saw a picture of Christ's Church.

[exp Christ together: love of Christ overflow to love of brethren: rooted, resulting, refreshing in Christ]

In 3rd sermon looked at vv8-16 (appeal) & saw a picture of the Relationships of Christ's Church.

[for love's sake; examples/lessons to be applied by loving leadership/relationships w/in church]

Today will look at vv17-21 to see a picture of Forgiveness in Relationships of Christ's Church.

Some would say the main theme to this letter is forgiveness and reconciliation.—*what Paul asks!*

Within verses 17-19 we have not only a picture of Christ (as we saw in 1st sermon)

But three helps to understand & motivate us to loving and Christ-like forgiveness

Giving a full definition of the wonderful phrase “Refresh My Heart” repeated in v20.

Outline: “Biblical, Christ-like, Forgiveness”

- I. Forgiveness includes Receiving (v17)
- II. Forgiveness includes Paying (v18)
- III. Forgiveness includes Greater Debt (v19)
- IV. Forgiveness Refreshes the Heart (vv20-21)

I. Forgiveness includes RECEIVING (v17)

A. The Text ¹⁷ If then you count (consider) me as a partner (companion, sharer), receive (welcome) him as you would me.

1. **“Partner”** (koinonos)—having in common in spiritual life. Sharer in koinonio (v6)

Reminds Philemon that he, too, is a sharer in Christ, experiencing Christ together (v6).

Brings the praise of Philemon from vv4-7 back to the crux of appeal to forgive.

Appeals to that love rooted in Christ that overflows to love of saints,
results in deeper experience together of Christ/benefits and refreshes the heart!

*“If I am a part of that love and sharing, then forgive and reconcile with Onesimus,
because forgiveness and reconciliation are part of that common life in Christ.”*

2. **“Receive”** (proslambano)—“take to oneself”, special interest on part of receiver.

To receive is not merely to accept, but to welcome and embrace. Truly forgive/reconcile.

So Paul is appealing to Philemon to “take to yourself Onesimus as you would me.”

--because Onesimus is now also a sharer with you and me!

Paul identifies w/Onesimus in the heart/splanchna (v12), so asks to receive Onesimus in same way

--as a fellow sharer in Christ, to be received in the splanchna-heart (inmost being).

Onesimus has repented and been changed, so put the past behind and from the heart
forgive and reconcile with him, and receive him as another sharer in Christ.

NOTE: *Per each point on forgiveness will look to a Parable of Christ to drive home that point
--using a parable that references this heart/splanchna compassion at the center of it. (theme of heart in letter)*

B. The Parable (Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-31—receiving forgiveness fr/heart)

Context: Pharisee/Scribes complain Jesus receives sinners & eats w/them. So parables of Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, now Lost Son...

¹¹ Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ **“But when he came to himself,** he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”

²⁰ **“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion (splanchna), and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’**

²² **“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.**

²⁵ **“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and **because he has received him safe and sound,** your father has killed the fatted calf.’**

²⁸ **“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’**

³¹ **“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”**

“came to...arose” is
symbolic of
spiritual awaking!
See sin as against God!
Repent: Hate sin & turn
Service > Sin
Splanchna heart of comp

Now a covering for sin!

Receive = welcome
This is true forgiveness
And from heart.

Much like Onesimus, lost&found, repented&returned. So Philemon asked to forgive and receive... fr/the heart.

This is true Christ-like receiving forgiveness that should be part of our common life in church, too.

Biblical, Christ-like, forgiveness/reconciliation receives the brother as a sharer and fr/heart.

II. Forgiveness includes PAYING (v18)

A. The Text ¹⁸But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

1. “wronged...owes”—perhaps corresponding with “run away” and “steal”

2. “put than on my account” (proslambano)—saying “I will repay” (v19)

Reminds of a father for a son “underwriting a loan”. Acting as Surety.

Does not want any financial or emotional debt to get in the way of forgiveness/reconciliation.

“I give you my word for Onesimus—consider it paid in me.”

[fr/sermon one: Gospel is here—Justification!—receive as me and put sins on my account!]

Biblical, Christ-like, forgiveness is willing to pay or absorb a loss...and from the heart.

B. The Parable (Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37—sacrificial (paying) forgiveness fr/heart)

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, **what shall I do** to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”

²⁷ So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; **do this and you will live.**”

²⁹ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. **And when he saw him, he had compassion (splanchna).** ³⁴ So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ ³⁶ So which of these three do you think **was neighbor to him** who fell among the thieves?”

³⁷ And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Lawyer = scribe *s’posed to know Law*

What DO to have life?!

Jesus sends to Law...and answers rightly.

Love God/Love Neighbor—*two tablets*.

Jesus clever! No one **can** do this “and live”!

Even lawyer knows he cannot do this!

Law demands “*do this, and live*”. But sinner cannot.

So flee to Christ who can and did!

Who sends to Law, saying “live, and do this”

Justify self (can’t do it!): *Who is my neighbor?*

Samaritan like a slave—worthless & hated.

Splanchna heart of comp

Went, bandaged, poured, own animal, brought, took care, left money, will repay.

Sacrificial, proactive, paying compassion fr/heart.

[2 denarii about 2 days pay]

Not “who is your neighbor”,

but “who **was** a neighbor **to**”

--a proactive, paying, sacrificial compassion.

Know from rest of Jesus/Scripture teaching

Not saying if show mercy will get eternal life

But such mercy commanded by God

--and is only possible once granted life.

Forgiveness and compassion from the heart are commanded, aren’t they.

Even as part of the Law—6th command “do not kill” includes “do no harm” and “DO good”

To show compassion like this is to be Christ-like in love to even enemies, those w/whom have problems.

Should our expression of forgiveness and reconciliation in the body of Christ be anything less?

Biblical, Christ-like, forgiveness in church is willing to pay or absorb a loss...and from the heart.

III. Forgiveness includes GREATER DEBT (v19)

A. The Text ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing w/my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.

1. **"I will repay"**—like Paul's personal IOU to Philemon—I will be personally responsible.

2. **"you owe me"**—Owed spiritual life to Paul—far greater debt than Onesimus incurred!

Reminds Philemon that this debt is far greater debt than Onesimus incurred.

Philemon to understand that Onesimus had experienced same grace/mercy of God when converted.

--should then forgive and receive him as a brother, w/o anger, willing to absorb cost, fr/heart

Biblical, Christ-like, forgiveness is rooted in greater forgiveness fr/Christ...and is thus fr/the heart.

B. The Parable (Ungrateful Servant, Mt 18:21-35—because greater debt, forgiveness fr/heart)

Context: Right after discussion of dealing with sins of brother against another

--rules of reconciliation, church discipline, two or three gather together.

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"
²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷ **Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion (splanchna), released him, and forgave him the debt.**
²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ³⁰ **And he would not,** but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ **Should you not also have had compassion (splanchna) on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.**
³⁵ "So My heavenly **Father** also will do to you if each of you, **from his heart,** does not **forgive his brother** his trespasses."

Interesting: not how often do I forgive, but how often sinned against and forgive. And puts limit on it: "up to seven times" --but still seems generous! "Seventy times seven"—no limit! "10,000 talents" = unimaginable amount! --not able to pay such a thing! Hopeless.

Splanchna heart of comp moved to forgive. A debt could never pay, paid in full.

"100 denarii" = large amount, 3 mos pay. But pittance compared to what forgiven!

We are never more like God, like Christ, than when we forgive, and from the heart.

The brother who has offended you has offended God greater. If God can forgive, so can you.

If want to know how to forgive, understand how forgiven in Christ.

We should forgive, fr/heart—as Christ has forgiven us.

Do you realize that when wronged in life, given opportunity to testify to truth of Gospel?

When wronged at work, given opportunity to forgive, thereby testifying to truth of Gospel.

When wronged at home, kids, given opportunity by God to sow seeds of Gospel truth..

In church, Seed of Gospel is planted when we model & share forgiveness--*so different than world!*

Unforgiveness should not—must not—be found in church. Be quick to forgive and reconcile.

Biblical, Christ-like, forgiveness is rooted in greater forgiveness fr/Christ...and is thus fr/the heart.

IV. Forgiveness REFRESHES THE HEART (v20-21)

A. The Text

²⁰Yes, brother, let me have **joy (benefit)** from you in the Lord; **refresh my heart in the Lord**.

²¹Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

1. **“brother”**—Paul frequently uses. Brother to brother plea on behalf of new brother.

2. **“joy” (oninemi)**—to benefit or profit. Perhaps play on words with Onesimus’ name.

Unprofitable slave is now profitable brother—bring me profit by forgiving.

Since he is my heart, any benefit granted to Onesimus considered benefit given to Paul.

Forgive Onesimus, keep unity in and be benefit to the Church, bring joy to Paul

Phil 2:2—fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having same love, being of one accord, of one mind

Forgive Onesimus, and will be great witness to world, bring joy to Paul

3. **“refresh my heart”**—again, reflects back to vv4-7.

“Put into action that heart-refreshing love praised for in vv4-7

--love rooted/resulting/refreshes--that I, too, can join in, share, and have heart refreshed.”

An actual demonstration of faith working through love is forgiveness

--and forgiveness is yet another way we can refresh one another’s hearts in the Lord.

4. **“obedience” (v21) (hupakoe)**—not to Paul’s advice but to Christ’s command!

Did Paul command anything? No! So this is obedience to Christ (command forgive/compassion).

Whole letter is bathed in Christ—at least eleven references to Christ.

And many of them are “in the Lord”—as we see in v20.

It is fitting to see forgiveness as obedience to Christ and because of Christ (parables).

Paul is confident because of Philemon’s character, love for Christ will overflow to obedience and heart refreshment of the saints...which includes forgiveness.

Philemon will obey in view of Christ’s forgiveness of his great debt

to forgive Onesimus, allowing Paul to share in the heart refreshment, too.

B. The PARALLEL (Even as Christ Forgave You, Col 3:12-15)

Let us close by looking at Paul’s writing at the same time to the Colossian church as whole.

In wonderful section instructing on the corporate life of Christ in the church

--what to put to death, what to put off, what to put on—

Paul echoes Christ’s command to refresh the hearts of saints by forgiving

Based on the realization of how Christ has forgiven you.

Col 3:12 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on **tender mercies (splanchna)**, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and **forgiving one another**, if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.** ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God(Christ) rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; **and be thankful.** ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Splanchna tender mercies
Bear and forgive one another
Even as Christ forgave
--must do!

Christ-like forgiveness is a receiving forgiveness, a costly forgiveness,

a forgiveness that flows from and is commanded by the immeasurable forgiveness of Christ.

Church family, may we indeed be a body that seeks to refresh one another’s hearts in the Lord

--including a sincerity and quickness to forgive.

And may we be sincere and quick to tell others about the not just heart-refreshing

but heart-regenerating forgiveness only to be known through repentance and faith in Christ.