

## Tested Fellowship-Forgiveness

### Philemon pt 1

Old Hymns have great stories behind them as to the inspiration for writing them.

Such as John Newton's *'Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see*

Before conversion he was a cruel slave trader, drunkard, wicked debauchery marked his life until Jesus changed him from the inside out & he became a **famed preacher**. *'My chains are gone I've been set free, my God my savior has ransomed me'*

Pastor John Faucett received a call to a larger church in London. After much heart searching & consideration he decided to take the new position. As he & his wife loaded their few possessions on their wagon, church people were bidding them goodbye w/ lots of crying, hugging & pleading to reconsider their decision.

John's wife thru tears said *'John, I can't bear it, they need us here so badly.'* He said *'God is dealing w/ me too.'* They unloaded the wagon, decided to stay, saying *'We cannot break the ties of fellowship that bind our hearts together in Christian love.'* Later from that incident John wrote the hymn *'Blest be the ties that bind'*.

This morn we draw your attention to Philemon :6 Apostle Paul addresses the theme of forgiveness & fellowship that keeps us one. *Reconciliation 2Cor 5:18*

Speaking of hymns, I heard of a pastor & music director who weren't getting along. It began to spill over into the song service.

First week—pastor preached on commitment & taking steps to get involved in serving at the church. Music director led the congregation in the hymn *'I shall not be moved'*.

Second week—pastor preached on tithing & the importance of giving. Music director lead the congregation in the hymn *'Jesus paid it all'*.

Third week—pastor preached on the tongue & how gossip is a horrible thing and can ruin a ministry. Music director led out in the hymn *'I love to tell the story'*.

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Fourth week the pastor being fed up declared to the congregation he was considering resigning. Music minister lead the singing w/ the hymn '*Oh why not tonight*'.

Finally the pastor had, had it & the next Sunday he told the Church he was leaving. He said '*it was Jesus who led him there to the church & Jesus who was taking him away*'. At that point the music director broke in w/ a rousing rendition of the hymn '*What a friend we have in Jesus.*'

Paul writes to Philemon concerning his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul **praises** before he **appeals** for O to be forgiven & brought back into fellowship. One outstanding work God was doing w/ church in Philemon's home in Colosseae was fellowship the saints were experiencing.

*Phile 1:6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective thru the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.*

Paul prays that the **fellowship of their faith** might be effective or **accomplish its goal**. In this case forgiving & receiving back Philemon's runaway slave O who likely was guilty of fraud & embezzlement. We don't know what he stole or how much he took but Onesimus was an unbeliever when he ran away & did his dirty deeds & damage. But now he's a believer, contrite wanting to do what's right.

The test of our Christianity for fellowship & forgiveness is **reconciliation**. If not we fail the test. Until testing we don't know if our Churches are more social than spiritual more friendship than discipleship, more party than piety

The reality of their Christianity was about to be put on trial & scrutinized. Onesimus is ready & willing to be reconciled but is Philemon & the church?

Fellowship is **koinonia**—a sharing in common—mutual participation in the life of Christ & the unity He has provided between believers.

OT the sin offering was made first then the **peace** offering--part for the Lord & part for me--a sharing together—expression of fellowship, binding of hearts, eating a common meal was a sign of friendship & faith. **Me in Vanuatu—Busie Island Uganda Lake Victoria**

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Jesus often ate w/ people-**Zaccheus** *'hurry down I must be a guest at your house'* Lk 19. Result: *'Half possession give poor, defrauded give four times'*. Contrite & do what's right

Church began w/...continually devoting themselves to fellowship...kept feeling a sense of awe...were all together...had all things in common...day by day continuing w/ one mind...from house to house...taking their meals together w/ gladness & sincerity...having favor w/ all people. Acts 2:42-47

When we truly love God from the heart it gives birth to loving one another. The Greeks used the word *koinonia* to describe the ideal society, Utopia

Paul uses the word **15 times** in his letters. God calls us 1<sup>st</sup> into fellowship w/ His son Jesus Christ, after that our whole life becomes an expression of God's love thru us in a mystical yet real fellowship w/ each other.

We are told to *'walk in the same manner as He walked..'* 1 Jn 2:6 *If we walk in the light even as He is in the light we have fellowship w/ one another and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin* 1 Jn 1:7

So, true fellowship is experienced as we walk close to the Lord, in honesty & sincerity. Walking otherwise is to walk in darkness & be deceived, out of fellowship, living a lie. Fellowship is miles apart from friendship.

**Tommy—stealing-built his boards-caught-not come around-no reconciliation or forgiveness only shame.**

Paul put Phile & church to the test to see if the fellowship of their faith was genuine. Onesimus was contrite wanting to do right, what about us? Paul's praise for Phile turns to appeal. Does their fellowship have a **redemptive quality**, can Phile & Church forgive a repentant Onesimus.

The Romans inherited an ancient Grk law stating that any escaped slave could seek sanctuary at an altar. The altar could be the hearth of a private family home making head of the family obligated to give the slave protection while he tried to persuade him to return to his master. If the slave refused, the head of the family would put the slave up for auction & give the price for the slave to the former master. Paul protected O & now appeals to Phile

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Paul stands in the gap for O. I imagine when Phile got the letter, scanned it, and O name stuck out---his heart raced---thinking his trusted slave who betrayed & stole from him, now w/ Paul---telling of woes. One sided stories about his experience w/ his master. *Pr 18:17 The first to plead his case seems just, Until another comes and examines him.*

But as he reads he sees O is saved, the sinner that ripped him off is now a brother in the Lord. Now the balls in Phile court.

***The Lord never sleeps nor does he slumber.*** He's always working in every situation, even worse case scenarios-when things seem to be going so wrong God is doing right.

Phile wondering *why God allowed O to rip him off after all he's done for him?* Sometimes the worst circumstances are transformed by God into great blessings. Many a child who strayed from the Lord in their youth only to come back in greater zeal & usefulness later on. Or husband or wife gets mad & leaves only to come back contrite & ready to do right.

When it seems all is going against you, remember God is for you. Jacob cried '***all is against me***' and yet God was about to work a great thing in his life. God's best plans are for those who trust him the most. ***Commit your ways unto the Lord, trust in Him and He will do it.***