

Expositional Preaching from the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible

Scriptures for Today: Philemon 12-16 – Letting go of what we love and letting God do His work.

Today's Message:

**"Letting Go"**



## INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learned how Paul made his request to Philemon for love's sake and how important it was to acknowledge the wrong that was done. Today, we will continue with the next step of reconciliation – being willing to let go of something you hold dear if it will help to move forward. We will also see the need for reconciliation to be an act of willingness, not forced. And finally, we will see how an eternal perspective can change minds and hearts to obey God. This is God's message to you...

## LEARNING TOGETHER

### ❖ The Text Philemon 12-16

#### A. *Letting Go* – Paul let go of what he loved for reconciliation.

1. Reconciliation often requires giving up something **PERSONAL** or important to you.

#### 1828 "bowels"

Deep affection;  
the seat of pity  
or kindness;  
compassion.

- **Philemon 12** – *Whom I have SENT AGAIN: thou therefore receive him, that is, MINE OWN BOWELS:*
- **Philemon 13** – *Whom I would have RETAINED WITH ME, that in thy stead he might have MINISTERED UNTO ME in the bonds of the gospel:*

"I have sent again" – Paul is letting go of Onesimus – someone who was valuable to him  
"Mine own bowels" – this is emotional language; deep affection; something deeply loved  
"Retained with me... ministered unto me" – the tension between personal rights and love

#### Comparing Scriptures

- **Philippians 2:4** – Look not every man **on his own things**, but ... *on the things of others.*
- **John 12:24** – ... Except a corn of wheat ... DIE... *but if it DIE, it bringeth forth much fruit.*
- **Romans 15:1** – We... ought to bear the infirmities of the weak... **not to please ourselves.**

#### Key Truths

- Reconciliation must not be pursued for convenience; there will be a **COST**.
- There may be a justifiable right which must be laid down to move forward.
- Sometimes doing right means you have to let go of what helps you most.

#### Practical Applications

- God sometimes asks us to release good things – things that are useful or helpful.
- Letting go tests whether we trust God's outcome – faith trusts God's resolution.

#### Important Note

Paul sacrificed  
**convenience**  
(what helped him)  
for **righteousness**  
(what helped others).

#### Letting Go examples

**Parents** releasing adult children to God.  
**Churches** letting go of gifted people & leaders.  
**Young people** letting go of friends.  
**Believers** letting go of control over outcomes.

#### A familiar saying...

"If you love something, let it go. If it comes back to you, it is yours..."  
For biblical reconciliation: "If you love something, let it go and trust God."

## B. Willing Heart – Paul refused to manipulate or force reconciliation.

### 2. Reconciliation that honors God must never short-cut personal **CONSENT**.

#### W1828 “willingly”

With free will;  
without reluctance;  
cheerfully.  
By one’s own choice.

#### Beware of “Have-to” Christianity

“I have to forgive”  
“I have to do church”  
“I have to obey”  
“I have to submit”

\* Resenting God  
\* Inwardly resisting  
\* Heart of rebellion  
When obedience  
becomes obligation  
only, joy disappears.

- **Philemon 14** – But *WITHOUT THY MIND* **would I do nothing;**  
that *THY BENEFIT* **should not be of necessity, but willingly.**

“Without thy mind” – no coercion or manipulation; a complete willingness to proceed

“Thy benefit” – advantage or profit; value added – the result would benefit Philemon

“Of necessity” – not a free agent; actions determined by causes beyond personal control

#### Comparing Scriptures

- **2 Cor 9:7** – ...let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
- **Isaiah 1:19** – If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land:

#### Key Truths

Important God cares about *your motive*.

- This speaks of God’s character: He wants willing hearts, not forced compliance.
- Love must be voluntary to be truly Christ-like: forced love is called **RAPE**.

#### Practical Applications

- Forcing decisions does not produce spiritual fruit. This truth impacts parenting!
- You may control actions, but God can change hearts: don’t short-cut God’s best.

## C. Changing Perspective – Paul invites Philemon to see the bigger picture.

### 3. Reconciliation becomes **POSSIBLE** when pain is viewed through God’s providence.

#### W1828 “providence”

In theology, the care  
and superintendence  
which God exercises  
over His creatures.  
The same power which  
caused a thing to exist  
is necessary to continue  
its existence.

#### Genesis 50:20

...but God meant it  
unto good...

#### Romans 8:28

...all things work  
together for good...

#### Ephesians 4:32

...even as God for  
Christ’s sake hath  
forgiven you.

- **Philemon 15** – For *perhaps* he therefore departed for a season,  
that thou shouldest **RECEIVE HIM FOR EVER;**
- **Philemon 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?**

“For perhaps” – Paul does not presume God’s motives; he suggests rather than asserts

“For a season... for ever” – from temporary pain to eternal gain; to accomplish God’s will

“Now now as a servant” – legal status may remain the same; but identity has changed

“Above a servant, a brother beloved” – spiritual transformation; now in God’s family

#### Comparing Scriptures

- **Galatians 3:28** – ... there is **neither bond nor free...** for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
- **Colossians 3:11** – Where there is **neither... bond nor free:** but Christ is all, and in all.

#### Key Truth

- We often see pain; God sees the purpose – we must consider in light of eternity.
- Obedience through reconciliation can result in a transformed relationship.

#### Practical Application

- Reconciliation is often harder than separation; **GRACE** costs you to extend it.

Letting go creates space for grace. God works best when hands are open.

Some of you are holding on so tightly that God cannot work freely.

Today is not about losing something – it is about trusting Someone – Jesus Christ.