

Philemon Sermon Series – Sermon 5 – The Follow Through of Forgiveness – V20-25

Intro:

1) Word Picture – Golf club swing

- a. Your follow-through can often determine what kind of shot you are going to make
 - i. Good, bad, short, long
- b. Your follow-through can determine the flight path of the ball
 - i. Direction

2) Follow-through is important

- a. Not only in golf, but in many areas of life
 - i. Work, schedule, relationships
 - ii. “Good thoughts are no better than good dreams if you don’t follow through” – Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - iii. “The smallest action is better than the biggest intention.” – John Maxwell
- b. When it comes to forgiveness, follow-through is vital

3) It’s one thing to be told you should forgive or be taught about forgiveness – it’s a whole other thing to follow-through with forgiveness and all that it entails

- a. In the closing verses of this short letter, Paul places an emphasis on following-through
 - i. He desires Philemon to be obedient and accountable with his forgiveness
- b. What we note here in these closing verses is the importance of follow-through

4) Q – What are some aspects of follow-through that impact my ability to be a forgiving person?

- a. Today we are going to learn

5) Sermon – The Follow-through of Forgiveness

- a. Text: V20-25

You need ENCOURAGEMENT to follow-through with forgiveness

- 1) I love the way Paul winds down this letter – he gives an encouragement to Philemon to follow-through with his appeals**
 - a. It's like V20 is Paul's one last push toward forgiveness
 - b. All through this letter, Paul has been appealing to Philemon to show Onesimus forgiveness
 - i. He 1) prays, 2) pleads, 3) Pays, 4) Pushes
- 2) V20 is written like a friend letting another friend know how much extending forgiveness would mean to them**
 - a. Note – Paul uses personal pronouns – “me” “my” to get personal with Philemon
 - i. Me – stated as an emphatic personal pronoun – places emphasis on Paul
 - b. In essence – Paul is encouraging Philemon in letting him know that his forgiveness would impact more than just Onesimus
 - i. Think about who Philemon's forgiveness would impact
 1. Philemon – “in the Lord” – forgiveness would be an act of obedience
 - a. It would mature his walk with Jesus
 2. The on-looking believers at Colossae (v2)
 3. Paul (V20)
 4. You and I – as we read it today
- 3) Interpret V20 – Philemon has been a great blessing to many believers around him, now Paul is asking for Philemon to be a blessing toward him**
 - a. Evidently Paul say forgiving Onesimus as a blessing shown toward him as well
 - b. Notice – Paul is actually using another play-on-words
 - i. Joy – Grk *Oninemi* – benefit
 1. Only place in NT it's used
 2. Onesimus' name is derived from this verb
 - ii. In other words – Paul was stressing that in forgiving Onesimus, Paul would be greatly benefitted
- 4) Paul took the opportunity to come along side his brother in Christ an encourage him to follow-through with forgiveness – knowing how it would be a blessing to many**

Application**1) Sometimes to follow-through with forgiving, you and I need the good, Godly counsel of a faithful friend**

- a. That's what Paul was doing here
- b. Counsel – a conversation where one party with questions, problems, and trouble seek assistance from someone they believe has answers, solutions, and help.
 - i. You and I need to seek Godly counsel
 - ii. You and I need to give Godly counsel
- c. Why is good, Godly counsel important to forgiveness follow-through?
 - i. Our flesh doesn't seek Godly counsel, it seeks willing agreement to our offense
- b. Get around Christ-followers that will give you Godly counsel and encouragement when it comes to forgiving

2) We should encourage each other to forgive Biblically because it's part of our new life in Christ

- a. Col. 3:1,2; 12,13

You need to EXERCISE forgiveness

1) What good is learning about the theology of forgiveness if you aren't going to practice it?

- a. Follow-through involves the discipline to put it into practice
- b. "It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action, and discipline that enabled us to follow through". – Zig Ziglar
- c. Let me say it this way – following through with forgiveness involves more than good intentions – it involves a godly extension

2) In V21, Paul is expressing his confidence in Philemon's obedience to his requests

- a. Confidence – persuaded, an assent to believe
 - i. Paul is confidently persuaded that Philemon will act on this
- b. Notice what Paul was confident of – “thy obedience”
 - i. Obedience – to listen to something, to hearken to, to be a willing subject
- c. In other words – Paul outlined the need to follow-through
- d. Paul knew Philemon's character, his love for the saints, and his faith in Jesus to the point where he was confident that Philemon would do what is right

3) Can I tell you where following-through with forgiveness is birthed – a fervent walk with Jesus

- a. I find it fascinating that a book whose central theme is that of forgiveness, doesn't even mention the word
 - i. Paul gives no great theological breakdown of forgiveness
 - ii. Paul doesn't give a doctrinal dissection of forgiveness
 - iii. Paul gives no grand imperative on forgiveness
 - iv. Yet – this book is all about forgiveness
- b. Why would Paul address the topic this way?
 - i. It can be assumed by the manner of Paul's appeals that he knew Philemon was well versed in the theology of forgiveness
 - 1. Paul didn't have to mention it because he knew Philemon already knew it
 - a. Philemon no doubt knew that believers should forgive
 - b. Philemon was probably taught the teachings of Jesus on forgiveness
 - c. Philemon knew forgiven people are forgiving people – Eph. 4:32
 - 2. “Because Philemon was aware of the commands to forgive, Paul does not repeat them.” – J. Mac
- c. How could Paul be so confident?
 - i. Paul knew of the active walk with Jesus Philemon had (V5)

4) So confident was Paul's expectation of Philemon's exercise of forgiveness, he expected Philemon to go above and beyond

- a. Some say – this meant to free Onesimus – probably not
- b. Could be a call for Philemon to forgive and receive without grudging and with open arms
- c. Could be a call for a promotion
- d. Could be a call to let Onesimus minister along Philemon as he did with Paul
- e. Could be an expectation that Philemon would send Onesimus back to Rome
- f. Whatever the case – it's certain that Paul knew Philemon would be abundantly obedient

Application – Here's what exercising forgiveness really does

1) It moves you past a performance

- a. Some people approach forgiveness like a game of pretend
 - i. Go on about your days and pretend like nothing happened and move on
 - ii. That's not forgiveness
- b. Statement – its easy to resurrect what was not buried in forgiveness
- c. Exercising forgiveness is the conscience act of the will to extend grace and mercy to someone who has wronged me
 - i. Its an acknowledgement of the wrong, but an extension of God's grace

2) It allows you to experience God working in your life

- a. Biblical forgiveness is not an act of sheer willpower over hurt feelings
- b. It's not "teeth-gritting determination to keep going no matter what"
- c. Rather – it is an overflow of your personal walk with Jesus and your experience of His forgiveness
- d. Forgiveness flows from a life full of the Holy Spirit – Eph. 4:29-32

3) It allows you to move past the wrong and into reconciliation

- a. Many people confuse tolerance for forgiveness
 - i. Tolerance makes concessions and excuses
 - ii. Forgiveness resolves to release one from the guilt of a legitimate wrongdoing
 - iii. Tolerance minimizes the wrongdoing to overcome the issue
 - iv. Forgiveness maximizes God's grace and mercy to overcome the issue
 - v. Tolerance seeks to wait it out
 - vi. Forgiveness seeks the involvement of God
 - vii. Tolerance keeps you in the same place
 - viii. Forgiveness moves you to reconciliation

You need EXPRESSED Accountability to follow-through with forgiveness

1) Paul closes this letter with one final request – prepare me also a lodging”

- a. Prepare – make ready, provide
- b. Lodging – guest room, place to stay
 - i. Root – host, one who shows hospitality
- c. This little request tells us two things
 - i. Paul trusted in the provision of God to get him out of his current situation
 - 1. MacArthur argues that Paul knew the case against him was weak and he expected to be released shortly
 - 2. Maybe he stated this request in light of a court date and had the expectation of release
 - a. Luke’s record of Acts could be both historical narrative for the church and a legal record of Paul’s mission work which was interpreted as insurrection
 - 3. Whatever the case – Paul expected God to show up in His favor
 - a. Maybe even in answer to Philemon’s prayers
 - ii. It was a way to not-so-subtly say – I’ll check in on this matter

2) Further – Paul gives a list of names of people who send their greeting

- a. This list of 5 individuals also has a double emphasis
 - i. It is a list of people who Philemon must have known personally (and so did the Colossian church [Col.4:10-14])
 - ii. It was a list of respected ministry partners who are in agreement with Paul on this matter
 - 1. This list was no doubt intended to communicate that these people could vouch for Onesimus and who agree with Paul’s requests

3) In other words – in his closing verses, Paul was holding Philemon accountable

- a. Failing to forgive Onesimus would disappoint the high expectations of Paul and these men and bring Philemon under their discipline

4) This list of names also serves as a great reminder of the importance of follow-through

- a. Epaphras
 - i. Probably a convert under Paul’s ministry
 - ii. Native of Colossae
 - iii. Most likely the founder of the Colossian church
 - iv. The pastor of the Colossian church
 - v. Minister to and with Paul at Rome
 - vi. A man of fervent prayer – Col. 4:12
- b. Mark
 - i. Relative to Barnabas
 - ii. Like Onesimus, was unprofitable for a time, but was later reconciled and became profitable to Paul – 2 Tim. 4:11
 - iii. Author of the Gospel of Mark

- c. Aristarchus
 - i. A Jewish believer (Col. 4:11)
 - ii. Native to Thessalonica (Acts 20:4)
 - iii. Paul calls him both a fellow prisoner and fellow partner
 - iv. He stuck it out through tough times with Paul
 - v. According to tradition, he was martyred under Nero's persecution
- d. Luke
 - i. Called the beloved physician (Col. 4:14)
 - ii. Gentile doctor who authored the Gospel of Luke and Acts
 - iii. Travelling companion to Paul
 - iv. Faithful to the end – 2 Tim. 4:11
- e. Demas
 - i. Not much is known except – he was faithful, but didn't completely follow-through
 - ii. Mentioned here in a good light
 - iii. Mentioned in 1 Tim. 4:10 in a negative light
 - iv. A reminder of the subtly shift a lack of follow-through can have

Closing

1) Truth – this is not easy

- a. I know this and so does Paul
- b. Notice how Paul closes the book – with a prayer
 - i. He opened with a prayer knowing the difficulty of what was about to be asked
 - ii. He closes with a prayer knowing the importance of follow-through

2) What Paul requests throughout this book is impossible in the flesh

- a. Flesh seeks vengeance and grows bitter
- b. Philemon could not forgive Onesimus in his own strength
- c. Paul reveals how this all was to be accomplished
 - i. Grace in Jesus
- d. Forgiveness is letting God's grace work in you to extend to those around you