

BEHIND THE BOOK

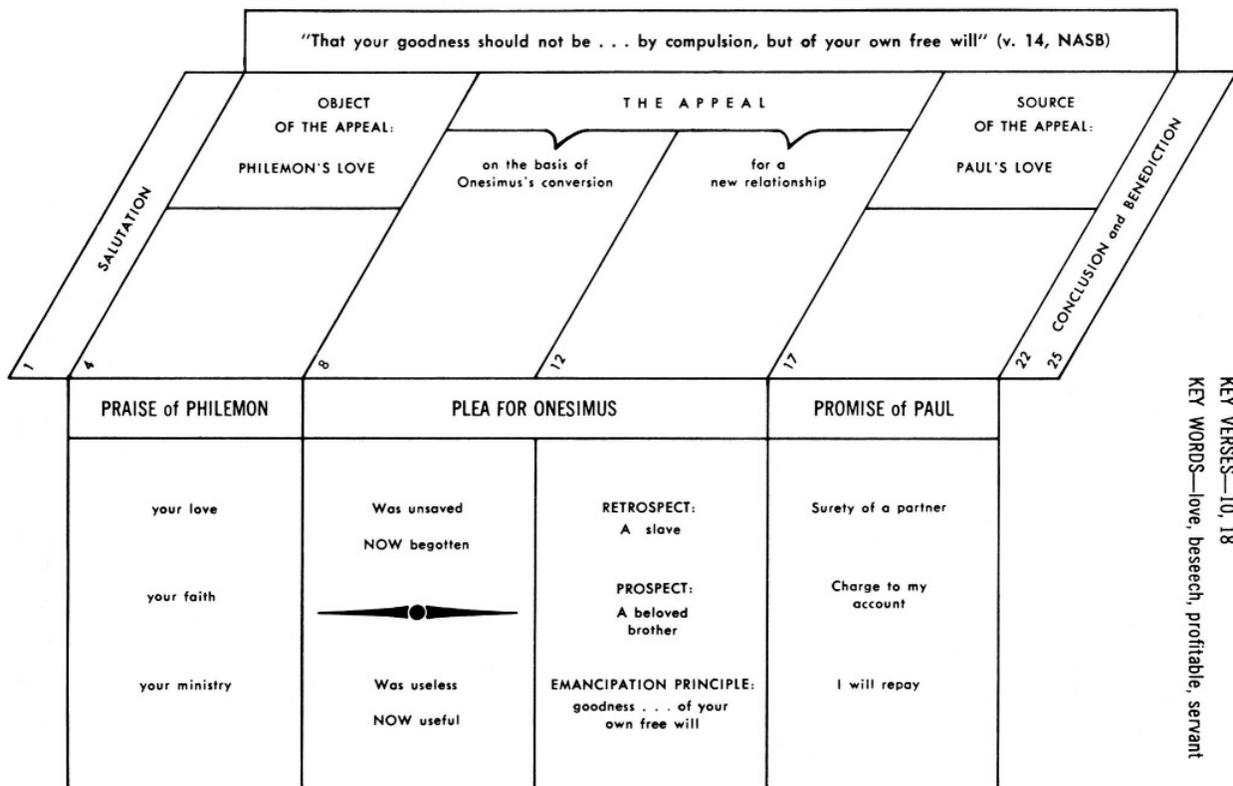
Connecting to the Bible (Observation)

PHILEMON

(READ VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS)

SEPTEMBER 13, 2017

This is a story of Philemon



(Chart from Jensen's Survey of the NT)

Forgiveness:

To surrender resentment or claim to requital

Greek = *to let go*

First: The Results of Unforgiveness

1 – An unwillingness to forgive is contrary to God’s redemptive, reconciling work in the world.

2 – An unwillingness to forgive misrepresents Christ

Ephesians 4:32 – *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Colossians 3:13 - ... *if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

3 – An unwillingness to forgive produces bitterness in the soul. Bitterness is a sin but it is also an infection

Hebrews 12:14-15 - *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;*

4 – An unwillingness to forgive traps us in the past when God is moving us and the world forward toward a new creation

5 – An unwillingness to forgive keeps alive the pain that is hurting us

6 – An unwillingness to forgive robs us of joy / life in the present

7 – An unwillingness to forgive opens a door to Satan’s work in our lives

Ephesians 4:26-27 – *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.*

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 – *Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

8 – An unwillingness to forgive lacks the love required to fulfil the law

Romans 13:8 – *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

9 – An unwillingness to forgive hinders our fellowship with God.

Matthew 6:14-15 – *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

“Forgiveness is so important the Holy Spirit devoted an entire book of the Bible to it” (JM)

Second: The Purpose of Forgiveness

1 – Experiencing God

6b - *I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ*

effective = powerful

knowledge = epignosis = full, experiential knowledge

In forgiveness, Philemon can “experience” the “power” of God in his life. In other words, forgiveness is uniquely life changing for the person who forgives

Third: Reasons to Forgive

1 – Unforgiveness is murder in the mind

Exodus 20:13 – You shall not murder

Matthew 5:21-22a – *You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment*

2 – Unforgiveness is a lack of love

Matthew 22:39 – *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*

3 – Unforgiveness offends God

Psalms 51:4 – *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight*

If God forgives a sin, who are we not to forgive a sin. We put ourselves in the place of God.

4 – Unforgiveness takes God’s authority

Romans 12:14, 19-21 - *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

“By failing to forgive, believers presume to take the sword of divine judgment out of God’s hand and wield it themselves. Such an attitude implies that God is unjust, indifferent, or unable to judge...” (JM)

5 – Unforgiveness keeps us from true worship

Matthew 5:23-24 – *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Fourth: Forgiveness and Repentance

Do we forgive someone even though they have not repented?

Luke 23:34 - *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

Acts 7:60 – *And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”*

“Though the relationship will never be restored until the offending party repents and seeks forgiveness...” (JM) we should forgive for God’s sake and our sake

The relationship between Philemon and Onesimus could not have been restored until Onesimus repented and returned to Philemon

Luke 17:1-4 - *And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. ³Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”*

- a) The harm you endure is a temptation to sin 1
- b) God will appropriately judge that person 2
- c) Don’t let hurt harm you 3a
- d) Rebuke sinners 3b
- e) Forgive repenting sinners 3c-4

Mark 11:25 - *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”*

There is no mention of repentance in this verse

Matthew 6:12 - *forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

There is no qualification for forgiveness

Example:

Mark 16:16 – *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

Does this verse require baptism for salvation? No. It states that “believe” is the minimal requirement for salvation

- Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved
- Whoever does not believe will be condemned
- Belief is the only essential for salvation which equals no condemnation
- You won’t be condemned (even) if you are not baptized

Acts 16:30-31 - *Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,*

There is no mention of baptism as a requirement for salvation.

Problem: If we forgive based on the fact that God forgives, has God forgiven everyone? If god forgives everyone, won’t all people go to heaven?

Note: The Creator and creature distinction

- a) Since we are sinners, our forgiveness isn’t redemptive
- b) God can do things differently from what he commands us to do

Exodus 20:13 - *You shall not murder*

Genesis 19:24-25 - *Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven.²⁵ And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.*

Acts 5:4b-5 - *Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”⁵ When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.*

As creatures, we can forgive and it not be redemptive. As the Creator, God cannot forgive without it being redemptive. God does not forgive without repentance but commands us to do so.

Why? God’s anger does not consume him. His unforgiveness does not make him a ‘worse’ God.

Question:

Doesn’t Jesus’ prayer for forgiveness on the cross, forgive unrepentant people

Luke 23:34 – *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

Consider that verse in the context of other verses about forgiveness in the book of Luke

Luke 5:20 – *And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”*

Luke 7:47-48 – *Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”*⁴⁸ *And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”*

In both situations, Jesus forgives sins dependent on exercised faith or love. In other words, Jesus sees evidence of a person’s faith in him and then he forgives them. When Jesus forgives in the NT, it is personal and in response to faith and love.

If Jesus was forgiving people on the cross, that same pattern would present itself:

- a) A person evidences faith for or love in Jesus
- b) Jesus speaks to the person directly and authenticates their faith/love with the words “Your sins are forgiven.”

This means, at the cross, Jesus isn’t forgiving unrepentant people. He is praying for them.

Signs of Genuine Repentance:

There are seven signs that indicate the offender is genuinely repentant:

1. Accepts full responsibility for his or her actions. (Instead of: “Since you think I’ve done something wrong . . .” or “If I have done anything to offend you . . .”)
2. Welcomes accountability from others.
3. Does not continue in the hurtful behavior or anything associated with it.
4. Does not have a defensive attitude about being in the wrong.
5. Does not dismiss or downplay the hurtful behavior.
6. Does not resent doubts about their sincerity or the need to demonstrate sincerity—especially in cases involving repeated offenses.
7. Makes restitution where necessary.

“If we can restore to full and intimate fellowship with ourselves a sinning and unrepentant brother,” John R. W. Stott wrote in *Confess Your Sins*, “we reveal not the depth of our love, but its shallowness, for we are doing what is not for his highest good. Forgiveness which by-passes the need for repentance issues not from love but from sentimentality.”

Fifth: Forgiveness and Restoration

Biblical restoration requires repentance which involves at least:

- a) Recognition of sin
- b) Confession of sin
- c) Turning from sin

Do we restore unrepentant people?

- a) The younger prodigal

The younger prodigal could not be restored until he repented and returned to his father, expressing sorrow and a willingness to live repentant

The Father's restoration was based on the son's repentance

Luke 19:20-24 - And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. ²² But the father said to his servants 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

- 20 - The Son's repentance – (a change of heart, mind and behavior)
- 21 - The Son's confession
- 22-24 - The Father's restoration

- b) John Mark

Acts 13:13-14 - Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia.

Acts 15:36-39 - And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.

2 Timothy 4:11 - Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

Paul did not restore John Mark until he had proven "useful to me for ministry."

It is possible for us to forgive and not restore someone – remain unreconciled.

We cannot enable sin.

Demanding reconciliation is not repentance but manipulation.

Sixth: Some Final Thoughts

- 1 – Forgiveness is God-like
- 2 – Forgiveness is possible because Christ has forgiven us and given us his Spirit
- 3 – Forgiveness is trusting God with justice
- 4 – Forgiveness is not enabling sin
- 5 – Forgiveness is not based on our attitude toward God, not the actions of others
- 5 – Forgiveness is not restoration
- 6 – Forgiveness is not forgetting
- 7 – Forgiveness is a process

Small Groups:

- 1 – Define forgiveness – (“to let go”)
- 2 – Talk about the reasons why we should forgive
- 3 – How do we experience the power of God in our lives when we forgive?
- 4 – How does unforgiveness negatively affect the person who refuses to forgive?
- 5 – How does unforgiveness put us in the place of God?
- 6 – How is our forgiveness different from God’s? **We do not have the power to ‘forgive’ sins as God does. This means our forgiveness is not redemptive, it does not reconcile.**
- 6 – How does forgiveness mean we are trusting God with the offence and the offender?
- 7 – We can control our forgiveness. Can we control someone’s repentance?
- 8 – How are forgiveness and restoration different?
- 9 – Why should we not restore an unrepentant person?

Behind the Book is only one aspect of Heritage's teaching ministry which seeks to employ our church's mission statement: *Connecting to God, Growing with Others and Impacting the world.* On Wednesday evenings we **connect** to Sunday morning's Bible passage and discover what it says through in-depth Bible study. Sunday morning in corporate worship (9:30am) we **grow** from the passage by learning what it means for our daily living. In Community Groups (10:45am) we practically apply the text, being impacted by it and learning to **impact** the world with it. **CGI** provides a balanced approach to life and Bible study; an upward look (Connect), an inward look (Grow) and an outward look (Impact) ensuring that our mission fulfils our vision to be a **God-centered, Great Commission** congregation. It's a well-known and beneficial way to approach the Bible – *Connect/Observation, Grow/Interpretation, Impact/Application*. It's also a Trinitarian approach to Scripture: Connecting to the Father, Growing in Christ and Impacting the world by the Spirit, so that the way we study the Bible daily reminds us about who our God is and how he is unique among all religions of the world.