

THE POWER OF GRACE

Text: Philemon 1:21–25

When Grace Gets Personal

Church, grace sounds real good when we sing about it. Like, I love all of our worship songs that testify on the goodness mercy and grace God freely gives.

Grace sounds powerful when we preach about it.

Grace sounds amazing when we are the ones receiving it.

But Philemon brings us to a harder question a question that has hit all of us at some point and probably will for the rest of our lives as long as we are in relationship with others!

What happens when God asks us to give the same grace we've received to somebody else???????? Let that sink in!

Paul is writing from prison to Philemon about Onesimus—a man whose relationship with Philemon has been broken.

And Paul has already appealed to Philemon:

Receive him. Forgive him.

Don't just see him according to his past.(slave, less than, prisoner)

See him according to what Christ has done in his life.

That is where grace becomes DIFFICULT!

Because it's relatively easy to believe in grace theologically. Like when we read our Word and here of all the grace God bestowed on All People.

The challenge comes when grace has a name, a face, a history, and a debt attached to it. Like, your brother, sister, mom, dad, that brother or sis from church that may have offended you.

And as Paul closes this little letter, he shows us what the power of grace actually looks like.

So let's Recap

So.....as we wrap up our series in Philemon, we've asked one question: **What does The People Loving Place look like?**

We see that in Philemon.....

- The People Loving Place refreshes weary people.
- The People Loving Place chooses love over power.
- The People Loving Place sees people through the lens of redemption.
- The People Loving Place pursues reconciliation.
- The People Loving Place believes in the transforming power of grace.

This isn't just the message of Philemon. It's the vision of the Church. It's the work of the Gospel. It's the invitation of Jesus

PRAY

Big Idea: Grace does more in us so God can do more through us

Philemon v.21-25

“Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

1. GRACE GOES BEYOND WHAT IS REQUIRED

V.21

“Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.”

That word “obedience” is significant.

Paul isn’t merely asking Philemon:

“Can you do me a favor?”

Because in verses 8-9 he is like I can order you to do it but I rather appeal to you in love.

See Paul believes that receiving Onesimus rightly is consistent with obedience to Christ and obedience to the gospel.

Let me put it to you like this:

How we treat and receive people is connected to how seriously we take the gospel.

But notice Paul doesn’t stop at obedience.

He says:

“I know that you will do even more than I ask.”

Paul expects the gospel to produce something beyond reluctant compliance.

There is a difference between doing what is required and being transformed by grace leading to doing above the minimum

We often have a posture of:

“What’s the least I have to do?”

Grace asks:

“How far can I go in reflecting Christ?”

When we look back to Jesus says in Mathew 5:41:

“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”

That’s grace.

The first mile might fulfill the obligation.

The second mile reveals the heart.

The first mile says, "I did what was required." The second mile says, "I want them to experience Jesus through me."

Philemon could have been like, "Fine. Onesimus can come back."

But Paul believes grace can do more.

Don't just tolerate him.

Receive him.

Don't just release the offense.

Seek to Restore the relationship.

Don't just see a former slave.

See a brother.

Grace doesn't just ask, "What do I have to do?" Grace asks, "What can Jesus do through me?"

Some of us are giving people the bare minimum.

Minimum forgiveness.

Minimum patience.

Minimum compassion.

Minimum reconciliation.

But when you remember how far Jesus went for you, grace begins to ask:

"Can I go another mile? Can I go further?"

See trust and hopeful expectancy really go hand in hand here and Paul shows us that next.

2. Grace prepares for what only God can restore

V.22

“And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.”

Paul’s like, “Philemon, I believe God’s grace is working in you. I trust you to do what is right. And I’m planning on seeing you again.”

Paul is still in prison.

But he tells Philemon:

“Get the room ready.”

See Paul believes God can restore what currently looks impossible.

Paul is essentially saying:

“I’m trusting you to do what is right—and I expect that eventually I’m going to see you.”

There is both trust, hopeful expectancy and a little sprinkle of accountability.

Restoration or being restored is key in this letter. First, It’s reminding us that something has been broken, damaged, separated, or lost—and it is being brought back.

Look all that needs restoration in this letter:

Onesimus needs restoration.

Philemon and Onesimus need restoration.

Paul wants to be restored to the community.

And Paul believes God is still working on all of it.

And that faith confirms what Paul writes in Romans 8:28 ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.

Somebody needs to hear this:

Don't determine the ending while God is still writing the story. Stop trying to put a period where God is still working and still moving!

Your family may not look restored yet.

The relationship may not look restored yet.

The person you've been praying for may not look changed yet.

But grace ALWAYS(church say always) believes God can do more than we imagine.

Paul is sitting in prison talking about preparing a guest room!

His present circumstances don't match his expectation.

But grace makes room for what God might do next.

Faith and grace say "Prepare the room because God isn't finished yet." BE HOPEFUL AND BE READY FOR GOD TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE!

And when God restores people, He doesn't just bring them back to where they were.

Sometimes grace gives them an entirely new identity.

3. GRACE CREATES A NEW FAMILY

V.23-24

"Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."

Notice how Paul ends this letter.

Paul is reminding Philemon:

You are part of something bigger than yourself.

The gospel has created a new family. And a new family member has been added to that family! Onesimus, like we read earlier in the letter in verse 16, no longer a Slave, but better than a slave, a dear brother.

As Paul names everyone he is with, it shows with the addition of Onesimus, they everyone, with different backgrounds, different experiences, different social positions—have all been brought together in Jesus name!

And in (Galatians 3:28: and Ephesians 2:19)

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free... for you are all church say it with me ALL one in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:19 NIV

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household.” —

FAMILY The gospel changes EVERYTHING, the labels we put on people and how we view one another!

Society might have looked at Onesimus and said:

Slave.

His history might have said:

Runaway.

Philemon might have looked at him and remembered:

What he did.

But Paul says:

Brother.

That's what grace does.

Grace gives people a new name. Grace gave YOU a new name!

People may know what you used to be.

Jesus knows what you're becoming.

People may identify you by your worst moment.

Jesus identifies you according to His redemptive work.

And church, if Jesus has changed someone's identity, we cannot keep forcing them to wear an old label.

The church, we, should be the place where the businessman and the ex convict can worship together.

The person with a clean history and the person with a complicated history worship together.

Different generations.

Different cultures.

Different stories.

One family in Christ.

Grace doesn't just reconcile us to God; grace teaches us how to become family with one another.

That's the church.

Not just the people attending place.

Not just the people preaching place.

Not just the people singing place.

The People Loving Place.

But How do we actually live like this?

Paul answers with the final words of the letter.

4. GRACE GIVES US THE POWER TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

V.25

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

Paul ends where everything begins:

GRACE.

Think about everything Paul has asked Philemon to do.

Receive Onesimus.

Forgive Onesimus.

See him differently.

Restore relationship.

Treat him like family.

Possibly absorb what is owed.

Go beyond what is required.

How can Philemon possibly do that?

GRACE

(Now I want to be clear on one thing,

Extending grace does not mean pretending the wound was not real, removing every healthy boundary, or immediately restoring trust.

Forgiveness can be offered freely, but trust is rebuilt through repentance, truth, and time.)

With that being said , church "We were Onesimus. We had run from God. We carried a debt we could not pay. But Jesus did more than ask the Father to overlook our debt-He took the debt upon Himself."

Earlier in the letter in verses 17-18:

"Paul said, 'Charge it to me.' At the cross, Jesus said, 'Charge it to Me.!' That is the gospel culmination of the whole series. This church, is the source of the grace Philemon is being to extend!

Church, Paul is reminding Philemon:

The same grace Jesus gave you is the grace that will empower you to extend it to somebody else.

We don't forgive because people always deserve forgiveness.

We forgive because we have been forgiven.

We don't love because everybody is easy to love.

We love because Christ first loved us. 1 John 4:19

And Jesus stepped between us and the Father and essentially said:

"Receive them because of Me."

That's grace.

And when you realize how much grace you've received, it changes how much grace you're willing to give.

Remember, Grace always believes God can do more than we imagine.

And grace gives us the POWER to live differently and do what we cannot by our own might!

Closing: Become The People Loving Place

Church, Philemon leaves us with a question:

What will we do with the grace we've received?

Because grace was never supposed to stop with us.

It flows to us, and then it flows through us.

Because Jesus received you, forgave you, and absorbed your debt!

RESPONSE:

As we Invite the band up

Maybe there is an Onesimus in your life.

"Who is God asking you to see differently because of grace?"

Someone you need to forgive.

Someone you need to receive differently.

Someone for whom you need to prepare room, believing God is not finished.

God is asking;

"Do you believe My grace change the way you see them?"

Or maybe today you feel like

Onesimus.

You're wondering:

"Can I really come home?"

"Can God really restore me?"

"Will my past always define me?"

The GOSPEL says:

Grace has more to say about your future than your past does.

So with every head bowed and every eye closed I want to ask is there anyone who is ready to receive Jesus, His grace, and His love He freely gives and become apart of Gods family? please raise your hand! So church, let's not simply become people who talk about grace.

-Let's become people who give grace.

-Let's become people who seek to restore.

-Let's become people who forgive.

-Let's become people who make room.

-Let's truly be The People Loving Place.

Because when broken folks walk through the doors of the church, I pray they discover what Onesimus discovered:

In Jesus, your past doesn't have to be the end of your story.

There is room for you in Gods family, in JESUS NAME!

Pray for restoration

Benedicton

In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.