

The Reconciliation Epistle

Requesting Reconciliation

24 March 2024 AM – Text: Philemon 1:17-25 – Topic: Reconciliation

Introduction: Dale Carnegie [an American writer] visited Yellowstone Park where he saw a **grizzly bear**. The huge animal was in the center of a clearing, feeding on some discarded camp food. For several minutes he feasted alone—no other creature dared draw near. After a few moments a **skunk** walked through the meadow toward the food and took his place next to the grizzly. The bear didn't object and Carnegie knew why—It would cost the bear too much to get even.

You may be able to get even with your enemies, but it does not pay. Why don't you forgive instead? The skunk and the bear, Ministry127.com

Transition: After approaching reconciliation in a kind and gentle manner, and motivating reconciliation with psychological, circumstantial, and spiritual motivation, Paul then made a threefold request for Philemon's reconciliation. These requests are helpful for us whether we are seeking reconciliation ourselves, or counselling friends to reconcile.

1. Paul's 1st request was, "**Receive Onesimus**" (v.17).

a. Trust me as your partner.

- 1) Here Paul appealed to his personal friendship with Philemon, saying, "If you hold me to be your partner."
- 2) To get a better feel for the word "**partner**", note how it is used elsewhere in Scripture. It is used to describe Peter, James, and John's partnership as fishermen (Luke 5:10). Paul used it to describe the Gentile's sacrifices as fellowship with devils (1 Corinthians 10:20). The Corinthian believers were partakers of the sufferings of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:7). It is translated "companions" in Hebrews 10:33. Peter says that because of God's promises, believers can be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- 3) Paul had used several tactics to motivate Philemon to reconcile, but now he reminds him of their partnership. They, as friends and companions, had enjoyed fellowship

may not forgive and reconcile with Onesimus.

- 2) If you have counselled your child or a friend to reconcile with someone they have offended, you know how emotionally stressful that can be.
- 3) If you are in need of reconciling with someone, that too causes emotional stress.
- 4) Paul (v.20) requested that Philemon let him have joy of him in the Lord and to refresh his bowels (inward feelings) in the Lord. What was he saying? He was saying, "Philemon, if you reconcile with Onesimus, you will cause my heart to joy in the Lord again and my inmost emotions will be at rest again in the Lord."
- 5) He concluded with a compliment, v.21 (read).
- 6) True reconciliation always results in joy and emotional peace. If you are struggling to reconcile, remember this. Do not listen to the devil's lies.

b. Paul asked him to pray for his own release.

- 1) Paul believed in his heart that he would be released from prison soon. He asked Philemon to pray to that end.
- 2) Confident of this, he asked him to prepare him a lodging or a guest room.
- 3) He then sent greetings from various friends who were with him there in Rome, and closed the letter in a typical first century Christian manner.

Conclusion: Paul's three requests to receive him, forgive him, and relieve me are reminders to us of duties associated with reconciliation. To reconcile, we must replace rejection with reception. We must forgive by resolving bitterness and letting go of wrongs or debts. We must respond obediently to God's Word so that we can relieve stress in our own heart as well as in the other person.

If you are having conflicts with someone, follow this advice today. Yes, it is humbling, but it is relieving. Do it today.

If you have not yet repented of your sins and trusted Christ as your Saviour, your greatest need is to reconcile with God. Receive His payment. Seek His forgiveness. Obey His Word.

Song: I Surrender All - 394

together. Their friendship centred around Jesus Christ. They were spiritual brothers. This is key to a wholesome friendship. God clearly warns us in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**"

- 4) If you and I choose our friends carefully and build our friendships on the Lord, those friendships can last a lifetime and be very helpful. The book of Proverbs has much to say about friendships. For example:
 - a) (Proverbs 13:20) "**He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.**"
 - b) (Proverbs 18:24) "**A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.**"
 - c) (Proverbs 27:17) "**Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.**"

b. Receive him as you would receive me.

- 1) To "**receive**" is to take to oneself. For reconciliation, rejection must end, and reception must resume.
- 2) As a spiritual friend, Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus just as he would receive himself. Paul was asking a lot. We must not forget that Onesimus' offence was very serious. He deserved severe punishment.
- 3) As a true friend and faithful Christian, Paul was able to ask Philemon to receive him and reconcile.

2. Paul's 2nd request was, "Forgive Onesimus" (v.18-19).

a. Anything he owes you, I will repay myself.

- 1) To "**forgive**" is to let go of a debt.
- 2) To help ease the difficult request to forgive this runaway slave, Paul offered to repay any wrong or property that Onesimus damaged or stole.
- 3) This offer removed any financial setback Philemon may have experienced in the ordeal. Paul was certainly not a man of wealth, but as a hard worker, he knew that he could repay the damage.

- 4) Paul's willingness to repay is a reminder to us that righting wrongs done is part of the reconciliation process. If a son took his dad's new car without permission and wrecked it, reconciliation is going to require more than just an apology. Someone must replace the ruined car.
- 5) In Onesimus' case, Paul offered to pay the bill. In our case, as sinners before Almighty God, Jesus Christ paid our debt in full. We, like Onesimus, need forgiveness.

b. Remember that you owe me your own self.

- 1) Once Paul assured his friend Philemon that the debt would be paid in full, he then reminded him of his own debt.
- 2) Was Paul speaking of a time when he had rescued Philemon's physical life? Probably not! It is more likely that God had used Paul's preaching and witness to lead Philemon to faith in Jesus Christ. If Paul had not shared the Gospel with him, Philemon would still be without hope and on his way to hell.
- 3) Was there a particular person who was influential in leading you to Christ? Have you thanked them for their part in your salvation? Where would you be today if they had not shared Christ with you?
- 4) Paul hoped that because of Philemon's spiritual debt to him, that he would be willing to eat the loss and forgive Onesimus.
- 5) Many losses caused by others are emotional or physical rather than financial. The person seeking reconciliation must own up to his sin and seek forgiveness.
- 6) Jesus said that if someone has offended you, it is YOUR duty to speak to that person and seek reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17). You must be willing to forgive that person. Bitter unwillingness to forgive in your heart will prevent God from forgiving you and will block your effectiveness for God (Matthew 6:14-15).

3. Paul's 3rd request was, "Relieve me!" (v.20-25)

a. Paul asked him to relieve his emotional stress.

- 1) Paul was carrying a heavy burden, knowing that Philemon