

Gospel Community Distinctive:  
Reconciliation (Part 1), The Reasons for Reconciliation

Philemon 1-7

Gospel community is marked by a genuine participation in our faith, which is made effective as we acknowledge every good thing we have in Christ, and is displayed through reconciliation with others.

- The Reasons for Reconciliation (vs 1-7)
  - Because of our union with Christ & with each other (vs 1-2)
  - Because of the Grace & Peace we've received from God (vs 3)
  - For the effective fellowship (sharing) of our faith (vs 4-6)
  - For the encouragement of the saints (vs 7)

Reflection:

Why is reconciliation difficult?

Is the sharing of/participation in your faith being made effective by the way you pursue reconciliation?

Think of an unreconciled relationship you have... how might the Lord use you to "Refresh the hearts of the saints" if you were to radically pursue reconciliation with that person the way the Lord pursued you?

Consider Paul... How does his role in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus challenge us?

# Gospel Community Distinctive:

Reconciliation

Philemon 1-7

The Reasons for Reconciliation

## **Gospel Community:**

- Forged and maintained by the supernatural realities brought about by the Gospel
- Exists with or without natural connections
- Notably distinct (different) from ordinary community



## **Gospel Community Distinctive:**

- A visible characteristic that is a reflection of the supernatural realities brought about by the gospel
- Something that makes a gospel community distinct from a natural community
- Notably distinct (different) from ordinary community

## Reconciliation:

- The restoration of fellowship between two parties, which is marked by the exemption of hostility and the existence of harmony
- The end of the estrangement between God and humanity that was caused by original sin
- The “substance” of the gospel
- An inevitable by-product of gospel community



## Philemon (NASB)

**1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, 2 and to Apphia our  
sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your  
house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus  
Christ.**

**4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5  
because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the  
Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; 6 and I pray that the fellowship of  
your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good  
thing which is in you for Christ's sake. 7 For I have come to have much  
joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been  
refreshed through you, brother.**

## Philemon (NASB)

8 Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

10 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, 11 who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. 12 I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; 14 but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. 15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.



## **Philemon (NASB)**

**17** If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. **18** But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; **19** I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well).

**20** Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

**21** Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

**22** At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.

**23** Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, **24** as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

**25** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



- Background of Philemon

- To Philemon, but not private

- To the church at Colossae, but also to you

- A Plea for reconciliation

- A shared love, identity, & depth of fellowship

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Gospel community is marked by a genuine *participation in our faith*, which is made effective as we acknowledge every good thing we have in Christ, and *is displayed through reconciliation* with others.

# Gospel Community Distinctive: *Reconciliation*

## The Reasons for Reconciliation (vs 1-7)

- Because of our union with Christ & with each other (vs 1-2)
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## Reasons for reconciliation:

- The fundamental reasons why we should be concerned about reconciliation with each other
- The truths, values, and realities that establish a framework for reconciliation as a distinct function of gospel community
- The convictions that would lead us to pursue reconciliation with one another, even at great cost

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To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker,**

**2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the  
church in your house:**



To be *bound to Christ* is to be *bound to the gospel message*...

If you belong to Christ, then the  
gospel message belongs to you!

*The gospel message is* inherently a message of *reconciliation*

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**2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the  
church in your house:**



Because we're bound up in Christ,

*we're bound together*

and we have a connection which is anchored

*in a reality deeper than societal norms*

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**2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the  
church in your house:**



*“You are bound together* in a life-changing way  
*and unified around the gospel* for which you  
are willing to fight and die...

now *make that bond and unity visible by*  
*being reconciled* to your brother”

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church in your house:**



“To the called out ones who assemble together  
and visibly represent the household of God,  
which is the Church of the living God”.

\*Paul takes an *unreconciled relationship*  
between two Christians and makes it a matter of public  
*concern for the entire Church*

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- **Because of the Grace & Peace we've received from God (vs 3)**

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



When we measure the debt we have had forgiven, our impulse ought to be one of mercy, with a desire to make that same forgiveness known through reconciliation.

Reconciliation between those within the church serves as a visible witness to the reality of the family relationship that was accomplished by God's grace

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Reminding Philemon of the peace, that is, the reconciliation that came from God, was also a reminder that this peace was a result of grace...

Philemon was declared not-guilty and saved from the wrath of God not because of his doing, but because Jesus endured that wrath for him. How could one in such a position refuse reconciliation with another?

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of our faith (vs 4-6)**

4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; 6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.



“Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say oh,  
thank you, God” ...

*“I thank God for you,*

because you’re the real deal, brother... and I believe that  
*because*

I see the way *you love* and show faith in *Christ*

by loving *and* showing faith in *his church*

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- **For the effective fellowship (sharing) of our faith (vs 4-6)**

6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.



“Philemon, I am praying that you would

*put your faith into action*” ...

*“through the knowledge* of every good

thing which is in you for Christ’s sake”

“Philemon, Make *the activity of your faith proportionate to* the acknowledgment of *every good thing we have in Christ...*

Forgive Onesimus, and *be reconciled* to him”.



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7 For I have come to have much **joy** and **comfort** in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been **refreshed** through you, brother.

“Brother, the Lord has used you to refresh the hearts of this church, and I know he’ll do the same as you effectively display every good thing you have in Christ by forgiving and being reconciled to Onesimus.”



# Reflection Questions

- Why is reconciliation difficult?
- Is the sharing of/participation in your faith being made effective by the way you pursue reconciliation?
- Think of an unreconciled relationship you have...  
How might the Lord use you to “Refresh the hearts of the saints” if you were to radically pursue reconciliation with that person the way the Lord pursued you?
- Consider Paul... How does his role in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus challenge us?

