

Reconciling Relationships (part two): Our Responsibilities in Reconciliation

Philemon 8-25

- Understanding reconciliation is understanding how to repair relationships when we hurt one another.
- Pursuing reconciliation is how we effectively display the gospel when relationships are broken.

Reconciliation requires both parties to do their part.

You are not responsible for the responses of others, and you cannot control the outcome.

You are responsible for your heart attitude, for your desires, and for your actions. You are always responsible for being willing to reconcile, and for being active in your part of working toward reconciliation.

Philemon (NASB 1995)

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

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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.

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.

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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.

Main Idea

Participation in the Christian faith results in shared responsibilities to work toward reconciliation with and for one another.

Our Responsibilities in Reconciliation

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 - a) With words – because you have to use words to *appeal*
 - b) With confidence – because it is consistent with Christianity

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- Because you are bound to Christ and to his gospel message
- Because you are bound to each other in a covenant relationship
- Because of the grace and peace you have received from God
- Because active & effective faith is made visible by reconciliation
- Because I have already seen the Lord at work in you to encourage the saints

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A willingness to reconcile is the only option that is consistent with your Christian faith

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 - a) With words – because you have to use words to *appeal*
 - b) With confidence – because it is consistent with Christianity
 - c) For the sake of love – because Christ's love for us is the strongest motivation

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1 John 4:10-11; 19-21

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another...

¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

We are to pursue reconciliation out of the overflow of love that we have received from God when He reconciled us to Himself.

This is the strongest and purest motivation for reconciliation with one another.

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The Lord gives new life to all who trust in Christ, and He redeems that which was useless, making it useful...

Onesimus' conversion holds out the hope that reconciliation is possible, and it strengthens the appeal for Philemon to forgive him and regard him as a brother who is useful in Christ.

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 - a. When it's hard

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 - c. When we're vulnerable

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¹⁷ If then you regard me a partner, **accept him** as you would me.

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 - b) As a highly regarded brother

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4. To cancel the debt owed to you (18-19)

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).

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 - a) By forgetting theirs (a promise to no longer remember it against them)

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 - b) By remembering yours

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5. To consider the impact on others (20)

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

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 - a) Refreshment for each other's hearts

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 - a) Refreshment for each other's hearts
 - b) Benefit ("use") in the Lord for each other

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

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6. To obey in dependence on the grace of God (21-25)

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.

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 - a) Obedience is expected for Christians
 - b) A confidence rooted in God who is already at work

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 - c) A work we do in dependence on the grace of God and His provision to us

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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?

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