

Gospel Fellowship

Philemon

Week 3 - Gospel Fellowship for Gospel Partnership

Philemon 17-20

Call to Worship

Stand for Reading

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. **18** If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

Pray

Father, the Gospel has been given to us and we gratefully receive it. It has worked in us to change us to become more like Christ and to draw us into fellowship with you and with your people. The fellowship you created is used by You to do Gospel work together. Help us to serve together for your glory, to grow Your kingdom, as people you love and honor.

Sermon

Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)

Opening Idea

In **Romans 16**, Paul compiles an impressive list of names of people who live in fellowship with each other. Paul lists 30+ people who are to be welcomed by the church in Rome. Names like Phoebe, Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, Epaphroditus, Mary, Rufus and his mother, Hermes, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, and Olympus, to name a few. Paul isn't just listing people who are his friends. There is something more significant to the names in the list. The gospel created fellowship amongst people who previously were not connected, changed them to live in fellowship with each other, and now we see that these people are working together for something great!

Paul writes to Philemon that their fellowship is more significant than just friendship. They are partners in gospel work, and this partnership will affect Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, and the church in Philemon's house. There is great work to be done!

Let's continue reading the letter from Paul, to Philemon, for Onesimus and see how God is joining His people together for His work.

Read

Philemon 17-20 (SLIDE 2)

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. **18** If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. **19** I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. **20** Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 3)

Notes on Philemon 17-20

Partnership Exchange (v. 17)

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

In the opening of this letter to Philemon, Paul writes that Philemon has been a blessing because of God's work in Philemon and through Philemon. Philemon has caused Paul to worship God because of God's work through Philemon. Paul then writes in verse 6 that Philemon is a partner in the work of the Gospel and that this partnership is growing Philemon as God grows His kingdom.

This idea in verse 6 states that Paul thinks of Philemon as a partner, co-worker, and brother in what God is doing. Now, Paul is calling on Philemon to think of Paul as a partner. This partnership created by God through the Gospel, elicits a response. A partnership is determined by both parties supporting each partner and them working in cooperation toward a common goal. Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as if he were Paul and in similar manner that Philemon would receive Paul, in love and with genuine affection. Paul, again, writes that Philemon has shown Christlike qualities and actions that have caused Paul to worship God. This request would be another point of evidence of God's work in Philemon, God's work through Philemon, show Philemon's love for God and Paul, and that Philemon and Paul are true partners united by the Gospel in work.

Propitiation (v. 18-19)

18 If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. 19 I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

Something fantastic has been done! Paul now writes that the thing that might make it difficult for Philemon to receive Onesimus like he would receive Paul needs to be dealt with. Paul doesn't ask Philemon to act like nothing has happened to Philemon. The truth is addressed. Paul is asking Philemon to see Onesimus as someone different from who he was before this

moment and to forgive Onesimus for what he did to Philemon. Paul then resolves the debt owed by Onesimus and the offense Onesimus inflicted against Philemon. Paul evokes propitiation to assuage Philemon's appropriate anger and offense to restore a man and encourage forgiveness.

Propitiation¹ is the act of appeasing or satisfying someone's anger, particularly a higher power, in order to regain their favor. It involves turning away wrath through a sacrifice or offering.

The Core Concepts

While the term is used generally to mean "appeasement" or "conciliating", it is most commonly encountered in theological and religious contexts.

- **The Four Elements:** True propitiation requires an offense (sin), an offended party who is angry (God), an offending party (humanity), and a sacrifice/payment that resolves the anger.

Paul offers to satisfy any wrong or debt created by Onesimus toward Philemon. Paul is writing, "I will take on Onesimus' trespasses and debts, and I ask that you treat Onesimus as a man who is your brother, friend, and Gospel partner". Paul is asking Philemon to treat Paul like Onesimus (one who owes) and treat Onesimus like Paul (a beloved brother and partners for Jesus Christ). Paul then assures Philemon that this is a legitimate letter written by Paul and guaranteed by Paul. Paul assures Philemon that he (Paul) will pay it (Onesimus' offenses and debts) back and settle the account in full. Paul backs this promise with a statement of credit. The relationship between Paul and Philemon proves Paul to be a man of honor, word, truth. Whatever the history between Paul and Philemon is, it is enough for Philemon to owe a debt to Paul. Paul isn't calling in this debt, but reminds Philemon that Paul is a man of truth and honor. He will resolve Onesimus' offense and settle Onesimus' debts. Paul is not asking Philemon to treat Onesimus in a way that is similar to the way Paul treated Philemon. Paul encourages Philemon to treat Onesimus with saving love.

Partnership Benefits (v. 20)

20 Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

Paul draws again from the words of the opening greeting of this letter. Paul wrote of Philemon's work that refreshed the hearts of the saints and now Paul is asking that Philemon would receive Onesimus in a way that would refresh Paul's heart. The profitable return for both men through this gospel partnership is that both men will be rewarded. Paul will be refreshed that a brother is truly engaged in partnership and Philemon will be reconciled with a man who offended him through theft and broken agreement. Onesimus is a third party that will benefit

¹ Compiled by Google AI using information from "Got Questions" (gotquestions.org) and Dictionary.com

from this gospel partnership. Onesimus will be received as a brother and reconciled with a man to whom he offended and is indebted. Gospel partnership brings great benefits to those who are working together by God's work and connection.

We Live in Gospel Fellowship for Gospel Partnership (SLIDE 4)

Godly Purpose (SLIDE 5)

Philippians 1:27 ESV

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy[a] of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Useful to the Father

 Gifting and Opportunity

More than Friends

 Shared Purpose and Support

God's Work in Us and Through Us

 Changes Us

 Connects Us

 Commissions Us

Glorious Benefit (SLIDE 6)

John 12:26 ESV

26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Pleasing Our Father

 The More We Please Him, the More We Experience His Love

Serving Others

 Less of Me & More of Him

Growing in Knowing

God
Salvific Work
God's People

Honor from God

We Will Utilize Gospel Fellowship for Partnerships in Gospel Work (SLIDE 7)

Read

Colossians 4:7-9 ESV (SLIDE 8)

7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 9)

Scripture Reference from the Opening Idea

Romans 16:1-16 ESV

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.