

Gospel Fellowship

Philemon

Week 4 - The Gospel Unites Us in Fellowship

Philemon 21-25

Call to Worship

Stand for Reading

Philemon 21-22

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. **22** At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

Pray

Father, You have united us in You and that unites us to each other. Change us to live in unity with you and cause us to live in unity with each other. The Gospel saves, transforms, sets apart, and is vital to the good work You have called us to do. We want to experience unity that comes to Gospel changed people.

Sermon

Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)

Opening Idea

Gospel Partnership – Paul and John Mark

We read in Acts 13 that Paul and John Mark, along with Barnabas, are on a mission journey. When traveling through Pamphylia, which became difficult, John Mark leaves the journey. We read in Acts 15 that this was a serious issue, especially for Paul. Paul and Barnabas disagree on John Mark's inclusion into the next journey. Paul and Barnabas separate and take two different journeys. Barnabas and John Mark go to Cyprus and Paul joins with Silas and they travel together toward Syria and Cilicia.

There is a shift in the fellowship between Paul and John Mark. Paul writes to the Colossian that John Mark, with a few other men, was part of a small group who brought Paul comfort and to welcome John Mark if was able to visit them. Paul also writes to Timothy that John Mark has been helpful to Paul in ministry work.

When there is spiritual conflict due to disobedience, it impacts fellowship causing partnerships to fail. But, when spiritual restoration and transformation with obedience is happening, partnerships can be restored and there is true unity, a spiritual fruit!

Let's finish studying the letter from Paul to Philemon and see what happens when the Gospel forms fellowship, shapes people for fellowship, and unites them in partnership for Gospel work.

Read

Philemon 21-25 (SLIDE 2)

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. **22** At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, **24** and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

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

Series Graphic (SLIDE 3)

Notes on Philemon 21-25

Spiritual Fellowship Produces Great Change (v. 21)

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

The things that Paul has written about Philemon and to Philemon are evidence that the Holy Spirit is working in Philemon to produce obedience. Philemon has faith to believe. He does things that are refreshing to the hearts of the saints. He is connected to believers who serve and are fellow workers for the Gospel (Aphia and Archippus), Philemon hosts the church in his home, and he demonstrates his love for the Lord and for the saints. God is giving Philemon to an opportunity to express His love for Jesus again and to love a saint who was once just a slave, but by Christ Onesimus is now a brother in Christ. Paul may have some trust or confidence in Philemon, but Paul is fully confident in the Holy Spirit working in Philemon. Paul writes that Philemon is capable of obedience and of doing more than just treating Philemon with kindness and as a brother. Paul's confidence isn't in the moral fabric and character makeup of Philemon, but in the evidence of spiritual fellowship. The Holy Spirit is continuing to transform Philemon into the image of Christ. The Spirit has been working in Philemon and He is not done. Philemon's fellowship with the Holy Spirit has, is, and will produce great change within him. The Spirit is creating and strengthening the Body of Christ.

Make Room for Fellowship (v. 22)

22 At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

While Paul is confident of the Spirit's work in Philemon to produce fellowship and unity within the Body of Christ, Paul requests that Philemon prepare a place for Paul to come and visit. Paul's visit will be to experience the benefit of this friendship and to encourage both men. Paul writes that he is confident that Philemon has been and continues praying for Paul. God will hear Philemon's prayers for Paul, honor those prayers (the prayers of a righteous man accomplishes much), and God will release Paul and send him to Philemon to encourage, build up the church in Colossae, and to praise God for His powerful work. Paul trusts God's work to foster the fellowship of these two Godly men. Paul's desire to visit Philemon communicates to Philemon, and us as the readers, that Paul is asking Philemon to do something that is impossible for anyone to do in the strength of their flesh. Paul isn't manipulating Philemon nor is Paul trying to cause Philemon harm. Paul cares deeply for Philemon's heart, soul, and mind and consequently desires for Philemon to obey and enjoy the reward and joy that comes from obedience. Paul asks Philemon to remain spiritually sensitive and to demonstrate that in preparing a room for Paul to welcome Paul as family, a brother in Christ.

United in Captivity and Freedom (v. 23-24)

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

Paul draws to conclude this letter to Philemon. There are 5 men Paul mentions in the closing of his letter to Philemon. We can believe that Philemon knows these men and that there is fellowship and friendship with these men. Along with Tychicus and Onesimus, there is a bond of unity with these men. Their unity isn't conditional upon their situation. Philemon is free. Paul is under house arrest. Tychicus is free and is a courier while Epaphras is with Paul in captivity. Their situations are different, but their unity is spiritual. Their unity is a result of being united in Christ and not simply being friends. Whether a person is free or captive, as they obey and work to build the kingdom of God, they find growing unity. The thing that will disrupt unity isn't captivity, but disobedience. The Gospel unites God's people in unity. This unity glorifies God, honors God's people, and dynamically builds the body of Christ! There is spiritual maturity that realizes that unity is not formed simply because of common interests or shared geography. Spiritual unity with people is the fruit of spiritual unity with God.

Grace Empowers Unity (v. 25)

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

Faith, salvation, forgiveness, transformation, good works, fellowship, partnership, honor, obedience, equipping, and encouragement are evidence of God's grace. We have not and cannot earn those things, nor do we deserve them. Yet, our living Father, by His favor, gives us those things. God's grace empowers God's people. Therefore, when Paul writes for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, we can see that Paul is petitioning for God's grace to work in Philemon as God empowers Philemon to forgive, welcome, and see Onesimus as a brother. Philemon is not capable, nor anyone else, of doing what is asked of him. Just as God's grace justified Philemon with God through Christ and is the cause for Philemon to believe in Christ, grieve and confess his sins, and do Godly things obediently, Paul reminds Philemon that it will be by God's grace that Philemon will be able to obey God, forgive Onesimus, and welcome him as a brother. This is a powerful work of God that is empowered by Grace. Therefore, we can see that God's grace is a unifying factor. God's grace brings us into unity with Him and with His people. God's grace empowers God's people to live in unity and to enjoy the life that comes from living in unity. Grace empowers unity!

We Are United in Gospel Fellowship (SLIDE 4)

United to God (SLIDE 5)

1 John 3:2 ESV

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Faith

Obedience

Spiritual Change (Transformation)

Set Apart for Godly Work (Sanctification)

Good Works that Glorify God

United with Each Other (SLIDE 6)

Romans 12:4-5 ESV

4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Obedience

Connection

Hospitality

Prayer

Greetings

Grace

We are The Body of Christ (Powerfully United with those Living to Proclaim the Gospel)

(SLIDE 7)

- Unity is fully experienced as we are drawn into Gospel Fellowship for Partnership
United with God and then to each other

Closing

Colossians 3:12-14 ESV (SLIDE 8)

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Series Graphic (SLIDE 9)