

10-4-26 message

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SPEAKERS

Pastor Dow Boyer

But what's really great is what we're going to be talking about for the next three weeks, and it is the Book of Philemon. We're going to be talking about forgiveness and three acts. So hopefully you guys will enjoy this over the next three weeks. There are three main people in the Book of Philemon, and first of all, yes, it is pronounced Philemon. I know I've heard so many things. Filet mignon. No, that'll just make everybody hungry. But it is Philemon. But yeah, Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul, and they each in this letter, you have a situation where one who was offended, one who is the offender, and one who is the facilitator. But boy, the theme around the book is forgiveness. So I'm excited over these next few weeks to be able to unpack that from a different perspective each week. But let's start by just talking about what does it mean to forgive. There's a lot of misconceptions about what forgiveness looks like and what it means, and what it requires, and then what it looks like after you've actually said the words, right? Or or that moment in your heart when you're like, I think I've forgiven someone, or I have forgiven someone. What does it really mean? Well, the definition means to pardon or to remit as an offense or debt, to overlook an offense and treat the offender as Not guilty, and that is it. Because some people like, if you really forgive me, you would do this, this, this, and this. It's like, wait a second, what does the definition say? To pardon, to treat the offender as not guilty, because people tried to tie into this a couple of things. One, that somebody saying sorry is their way of seeking forgiveness, and two, the other part of this is that we seem to think that forgiving someone implies that we keep the same level of intimacy with the person, and that is false. You can forgive someone and still say, "I've been wounded so many times that there will be arms linked. But I hold nothing against them; they have been fully forgiven here. But there's not a requirement for me to be in the same relationship with them. You say the marriage relationship is a is a different situation because that is a permanence that is involved with that-that-that is essentially a covenant separated only by death-is-is the intent behind marriage. But friendships and relationships are not that. And there's sometimes you can leave an employer and hold nothing against that person and just say, "But I don't want to work for them anymore. I've forgiven them, but I don't want to be in that environment. So there seems to be for a lot of people. They think if you've truly forgiven me, we would still be best friends. And I would say that is not true. If I'm no longer holding the debt over your head, I have released you of what you have done to me. Then there is not a require for me requirement for me to be your best friend. And I think that's an important part that we think about. We're thinking about what the word forgive really entails, right? There's a lot of people beat themselves up over that. They feel like I'm not fully forgiven because this person's not fully back into my life, or or vice versa, right? And I want to make sure we just say, what does the Bible say? What is the definition of forgiveness? It means to pardon, to remit as an offense or debt, overlook an offense, treat the offender as not guilty. Then we think, well, the big movement today is forgiving self, and that is a lot of psycho babble. I mean, it really is. Now, that's really not going to be the point of this series here, but but I and I know we've all been through a lot of stuff. I mean, there's times Rachel and I we've looked back at all the times that we have been hurt and wounded, and there's a lot. I think about all the things that I've done in my life, and I remember telling Rachel one time, I was like, at some point, you just have to

embrace your mistakes. And what happened next was the longest hug I've ever received in my life. For some of you guys, it went right over your head. Me being her biggest mistake. Anyway, so, gosh, you guys are gonna be tough on me today. Lord have mercy. All right. So let's make sure that we understand some things about forgiveness, right? And because that's gonna help you unpack this little letter, which is chock full of forgiveness, if you will, and so I think about a game we used to use with the youth quite a bit called "Two Truths and a Lie. And I'm not going to say these are two truths and a lie, but let's say two things that are to us and one thing that is just for us. Let me list these three things here. One is that sin is not being imputed to us today because we are forgiven. Two, we have been forgiven by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and the third one: if we don't forgive, then God will not forgive us. Two of those are directly to us, but only one. But the. Other one is just for us because it's part of the Bible, and so I want to talk about that today because I think the crux of understanding the Book of Philemon is whether or not that verse in Matthew 6:14 and 15 is to you today, and it often impacts our choices in life as well. I remember being talking to a young girl one time at Emmanuel, and she said, "What if you are on your deathbed one day, and you didn't remember somebody that you needed to forgive? Would God forgive you? And I was like, "Man, that is. I thought at the time it was pretty silly question, but she was being governed by the Lord's Prayer and the verses that come directly after the Lord's Prayer, and the Bible does talk about this. So Matthew 6:14 and 15 says, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses, and so there's a lot of pressure to try to remember everybody who has wronged you and make sure that you've forgiven everybody. Kind of with this, and then there is a conditional piece to this. It says, if you don't do this, then your father won't forgive your trespasses, and you get hung up on this verse, especially if you think forgiveness means something more than what it means, and then you think God will not forgive me if I don't forgive others. And I think it's important, Ty, to bring the chart back up just so you guys understand about having Scripture organized in the right way. Right there is time passed, there is the but now, and then there is the ages to come. And when we are looking at Scripture, we see that forgiveness has not been the same through every dispensation. Not everything was with the full revelation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's why certain things were said the way they were. Some of the guys pull the chart up, so we'll pull this up a couple times just so we have a visual of being able to see. When we look to the left of this screen, we look at the promise and law periods, right? As this is kind of all kind of lumped together here. This really is your first four dispensations, if you will. This is Israel's program on this side of things, I think it's important to see this because Matthew chapter six verses 14-15 was written in time past, for time past. So when you take things just just because maybe they preach well, when you just jank things all throughout Scripture and you lump them all together, you're going to have a really confusing doctrine, and there's a lot of people today who have been manipulated by these two verses. And I'm not going to say intentionally, but it does preach very well. These will fill an altar, but are they for you today? What was the context? Those are things you should always ask. If you understand Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Matthew 10:5 and 6 is talking about how Jesus came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There was a whole lot of things going on in the world in the first century, and Jesus basically hung out in 90 miles, not addressing anything that was going on in Rome, not addressing anything that was going on in Ethiopia, nowhere else in the world, except for in Israel. In fact, in Matthew 15:24, you've got the situation where the Canaanite woman is coming, and Jesus ignored her. So did the 12, and then finally, once he starts interacting with her, the 12 say, "What are you doing talking to this woman? And he's talking to this woman, and even the woman understood, being a Gentile, that Jesus came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and she was a Gentile. She was a dog, and she would say, "We will take the crumbs that fall off the table. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was written to Israel as they were preparing to go through tribulation, and then they would have their millennial kingdom, and that goes clear back to Genesis. That is the context of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. That is what is being set up. So a lot of things are being said in there that are specifically to the Jews for a specific purpose, and to get through these seven years of

tribulation, there was a lot of things were going to have to happen. It's like we don't, we're not going to have needs of all of our goods, so we should sell all that we have. Right? You're going to need miraculous provision through there, so you ask and you receive as God is going to be dealing in the miraculous through them. I mean, He literally is going to take them to the wilderness and He's going to supernaturally feed them with manna, just like in the Book of Exodus, so that they won't have to take the mark of the beast. This is the preparation for that. When you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we apply all of it to the church today. And it gives us a lot of confusion because in other places it says something very different about forgiveness, and either the Bible contradicts itself, or it really is an organizational issue. Even in Acts, we say, "Okay, yeah, but what about when Acts happens? Well, let's look at Acts. Right, Paul doesn't get saved until Acts chapter nine, and Peter, in his early portion, at least in Acts chapter two, he's saying, "Repent, be baptized. He's offering up the kingdom in Acts chapter three, and then he is telling Israel in Acts chapter three that if they will repent, they will have forgiveness of sins, and he gives them a time period. He says, "When the times of refreshing comes, in a future sense, he was telling the nation of Israel when they would have this permanent forgiveness. So the question is, would that be for us today? And then the verse in First John one nine, which I think there's a lot of stuff in in First John that seems like he understood some of the things, but some of this still I think is very much Israel. When you read that first verse, you understand who he was writing to. But in First John one nine, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And again, this one preaches really well too, but it gives the idea here that if we, what happens if we do not, or what happens if we forgot to confess a sin, then would he forgive us? In fact, chapter one is filled with the if thens. First John chapter five or one verse five says, "This then is the message which you have heard of him and declare unto you that God is light; in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. And again, and even in verse 10, there's another if sandwiched around the if in First John one nine. I think it's also important to realize in Galatians two seven through nine, Paul says contrariwise when they who is they this would be the pillars that he's talking about. This would be James John Peter right this would be the apostles he says when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter, and then we had a parenthetical statement that says, He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles. Now listen to this next group, and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave John, being one of them, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the heathen, they unto the circumcision. So you understand that when you're looking at the chart. However, we'll pull the chart back up. Forgiveness is talked about during this middle section, but now. And here is what is said about forgiveness in Ephesians one seven: In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. Colossians one says it this way: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Pretty similar, right? Colossians 2:13: You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, as long as you forgive others. Wait, it doesn't say that. I think it's important that we see this. Romans 3:25, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God, and of course Ephesians 4:32, which we will come back to today, it says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Here is the difference: It's not that Paul is speaking contrary to Jesus. Everything that Paul is saying is specifically from Jesus. But Paul is revealing, and it says this several times in Scripture, a mystery that was kept secret before the world began. Part of that mystery that was kept secret before the world began was what the finished work of Jesus Christ was going to accomplish to all who believe, not just Israel, and not everyone else having to go through Israel to get to God. The sacrifice was so complete that forgiveness has been distributed for

all sins today. If you are a child of God. When words like this were written in Matthew six, Christ had not even been to the cross yet, so of course forgiveness is going to look different there, or the 70 times seven. He had not gone to the cross. It's all about timing when you're looking through Scripture, and there also is a reason why, even through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they're still doing animal sacrifices for sin. But today you'll get arrested. It's a bad idea, and you have to realize that. Why is that? Why aren't we doing everything in the Bible? Because you can't, and it wasn't all to you? We're not stoning rebellious children. We're allowed to eat pork. We're not keeping all the religious holy days. Why aren't we? Those people who are just strict biblicists say we do it all in the Bible. You do not. Most of our clothing in here would not even meet the requirements of the law. You'd say, "Yeah, look at your shirt. I get it. You have to be able to rightly divide Scripture to understand what is for you today. Now that we have the full revelation of the mystery that was kept secret before the world began, we know how we are to respond in this church age, and there is differences. Now, other dispensation. There's a lot of stuff that's just normal. Loving God, right? Wanting to please and bring Him honor and glory, absolutely. But there are things about the promises of God that were made specifically to Israel. That no matter how hard you try to work, no matter how religious you try to be, you will not get today, and then you're going to be really frustrated. And this area of forgiveness needs to be rightly divided, because if not, you will be confused and you will be paranoid every day in your life. Is there someone I did not forgive? Because I want to make sure God forgives me, and then you'll feel like there's certain things you have not been forgiven because you've not asked to be forgiven and you've not confessed what you've done. And I would say that we have to be very careful that we don't undo the finished work of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that we have today. So it's a huge introduction. I apologize. So the book of Philemon. Today we're going to look at Philemon. He was the one who was sinned against. So the question becomes: After everything we just said there, what is his obligation to forgive Onesimus? But I think we need to figure out a little bit about who Philemon was, so quickly we know this that in Colossians four seven, there is a realization that we'll come back to in just a couple minutes, and that is standing right in front of Philemon is a runaway slave who apparently had stolen something from him, and a man by the name of Tychicus, holding probably two letters: one, the book of Colossians, and the other a private letter to Philemon. Here's what we know about Philemon, though, in verse one one of the book of Philemon, Paul, prisoner of Lord Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved brother and our dearly beloved and fellow laborer, so he's beloved and he's a fellow laborer. In verse two, some more observations about him, and to our beloved Philemon, which is his wife, and Archippus, which is his son, our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house. Now I think it's interesting because his son's called a fellow soldier. Timothy is called a good soldier of Jesus Christ in Second Timothy two three he says thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. So here Philemon has a faithful wife. He has raised his son up to be called a fellow soldier. We're going to see more about his son here in a moment. The church is literally meeting in his house, right? He is the pillar of the church in Colossae. In Colossians 4:17, Paul says, "Say to Archippus, which is Philemon's son, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it. So it's probably could very well be some wealth with him. There's a church in his house. His wife is a faithful wife. His son is faithfully in the ministry. You can look at the qualifications of First Timothy three. He meets leadership requirements, probably to be either a deacon or an elder. Most likely the elder of the church of Colossians. There's more about Philemon, though. In verse five, it says, "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints. So this was his reputation that he was very loving and that he had he was very indiscriminate in his love toward all the saints. In verse seven it says, "We have great joy and consolation." In thy love, because the bowels of thy saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Listen to all that Paul is saying. This was a faithful man of God. He was living a godly life. He was raising his family in a godly way, and the question may be, if I'm doing all the right things, why do bad things happen to me? Why do people harm me? Why do people do wrong against me? I'm doing all the right things. It seems like Philemon would have had that reaction, could have had that reaction, and I guess the question for you is: Have you ever felt that way? Like, hey,

I'm going to church. I'm in the Word of God. I'm praying. I'm serving in church, and yet people keep sinning against me. Maybe, maybe that's something you've struggled with here today. Imagine Philemon going through this, and then imagine how you would respond. Here's the thing we know about Philemon: is he apparently kept going because all these things are written after the fact, and they're saying this is how Philemon continued to serve, even though he was wrong. Some of us, we have been sinned against, and it puts us on the sideline. We cannot get over it. We we don't even want to go to church anymore. All we can do is focus on how we've been sinned against, and yet here is Philemon being faithful. In fact, we're told this in Second Timothy 3:12, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Or in Philippians 1:29, unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, and these are dealing primarily with persecution, right? But then Second Timothy 4:16, Paul says, "At my first answer, no man stood with me. All men forsook me, and he was living a godly life. I pray God that it not be laid to Their charge. In this life, there is no special bubble to be placed in that will keep you from getting sinned against by somebody else on this earth. The question is, how are you going to respond? And this was a decision that Philemon had to deal with, probably one that he had forgotten about, to be honest with you. But there comes a point in time where a man who wronged him is staring at him, standing right in front of him, next to Tychicus, and now it's decision time. Do I inflict vengeance? Do I do harm? Because here's the thing: in Roman law, because Onesimus was a runaway slave, he could have been put to death. Think about what Paul was asking Onesimus to do, go back in front of the man that you stole something from, who was your master and who has the power in his voice, whether or not that you will live. So here is Philemon staring face to face with someone who had wronged him, and I'm guessing there are people in the room that have been in the same position. You've moved on from something, right? And you've been in the store, and that person who wounded you is down the same aisle. We wish we could have known in advance. We probably would have went somewhere else to shop. But here it is. There's been all this time has passed. You had forgotten. You had moved on, and now all those feelings come back of what you felt like the day when they stuck the knife in your back and they twisted it, and you thought it was dealt with, and you and now you're feeling it again, and you're struggling to have the conversation. You're trying to walk away, but they happen to be looking for the same things you are. And every aisle that you go to, they seem to be at. It's a real test of whether or not you forgave them. Are you still harboring feelings towards them? Are you still trying to collect a debt? Now, some of us can just say that made me uncomfortable. Okay, I moved back on again. And some of us, we will be in the pit for the next 30 days because we saw that person again, and so the question with this is, what is Philemon's response if he's not under the law, if it's not something to where he says, if I don't forgive, then God won't forgive me. Then why does Paul send it back? And then what is Philemon's motivation for doing anything with Onesimus? I think the answer is pretty clear in Ephesians 4:32, when it talks about being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even. As God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you, we forgive people not because they deserve it, but because Christ forgave us. Way different than under the law. It's not a pressure situation. It's not being lorded over us in order for for the magical forgiveness from God to be granted to us, we've got to do this. Instead, it's we should be motivated by the fact that Christ forgave us to forgive others. And I think there's some real points that Paul brings up in other places that says there's a danger when we don't forgive, and it's not about not being forgiven, but it's a few other things. For example, we play right into Satan's hands when we don't forgive. Yeah, it's not going to cost us our salvation, but it could cause great harm to the body of Christ. We're reminded in Second Corinthians chapter two, verses seven, and then we'll look at 10 and 11. It says, "Contrariwise, you ought rather to forgive him. He says, "You ought rather to forgive him. He doesn't say, "If you don't forgive him, God will not forgive you. He says, "You ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Now, this is an instance where a gentleman has, I believe, it's the guy from First Corinthians chapter five, if not, then it's somebody else. But at this point, they had turned things around and have repented. And he's saying, "Hey, comfort them, forgive them, bring them back in, lest they be overcome with too much sorrow.

But then in verses 10 and 11, he says, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also. For if I forgave anything to whom I forgave it for your sakes, forgave I it. How, in the person of Christ. But then this very important verse 11 is mentioned, lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices. So that gives us the idea, the implication through this passage is one of Satan's devices is he gets in when we will not forgive one another. We're told in Hebrews 12:15, and this is another issue: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, whereby many are defiled. There's two things there. It's one: this bitterness affects you and defiles others. And there is a bitterness that happens when we refuse to forgive somebody. It's not good for your health, and it affects others. You become very negative. You become a complainer. You became so hyper focused on the wrongs that were done to you that everybody knows when they come up and ask you how's it going, they're gonna get a lifetime drama. You know, and you don't want to be that person for everybody else, where people avoid you because you're just so negative and you complain all the time, and it started because of your lack of willing to forgive somebody, and then we're still left with, well, why didn't Paul send him sooner? Why was right when Onesimus came? Why didn't Paul say you need to go back and you need to go to Philemon? But he didn't. And so the other question would be: Would it change anything if the other person is a Christian? We're told in Galatians 6:10, as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith. Here's the thing about Onesimus; he left an unbeliever. He got saved with Paul, and not only got saved, but got mentored and was serving with Paul. We think about Philemon one five. It says, "Remember, this was what Paul wrote about Philemon: hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and toward all saints. Onesimus is now a saint. You're like, "Well, what do you mean he's a saint. He's done all these wrong things. Hey, this isn't Catholicism, right? This we're not talking about the venerable saints. We are made a saint the moment we believed. We are placed into the body of Christ, and we are called saints. That's what made it. Wasn't a long list of all the rites that Philemon had done. It is what he believed about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that took him out of Adam and placed him in the body of Christ, and now he is sealed to the day of redemption. He is a believer at this point, and same with everybody in this room who is saved. You are a saint. Now, as we move through this, verses 10 and 11, Paul says, "I beseech thee, listen." So he says here, for my son Onesimus, whom I've begotten in my bonds, means while I've been in prison, this guy comes across me. I share the gospel with him. He becomes a child of God, and so he considers him now like a son that he has mentored. And he says, which in time past was to thee unprofitable. Nobody's hiding, hiding anything here. Onesimus was unprofitable to Philemon, and he acknowledges that. But he says now he's profitable, not just to me over here, but he's profitable to you. Wow. God must be a really great God if He can take the unprofitable and make them profitable. If we would just maybe get out of the way sometimes, we could see what God could do in people's lives. But said we rather kick them to the curb, keep them on the sidelines, and shoot the wounded. In verse seven, it says, "We have great joy and consolation in Thy love because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by Thee, brother. Well, there's a lot of trickery in the words here in Philemon. Trickery is not really the word, but I would say there's a lot of hidden innuendos when you read the Book of Philemon, as he's buttering him up in these first few verses, just to later send him Onesimus, who's now a saint, saying that you have shown love, your bows of mercies towards the saints, Philemon. Onesimus is now a saint. So when we kind of look at this, if it's not so that Christ will forgive us, but the motivation is because God, through Christ's sake, hath forgiven us. I think some points to kind of do and bring some of these up and bring this kind of full circle here. Why should we, much like Philemon, why should we forgive? And some of us that's tough. There is some wrongs that have been done, and the reason I say is you don't keep the same level of intimacy. That's not a part of forgiveness. There are some whose life would be in very much danger to stay in the same level of intimacy with somebody. And God's not saying, "Hey, risk your life, stay in the abusive situation that will probably cost your life in the next couple of weeks, yeah. Do that. No, you can forgive somebody and say, "I release you of all debt, but hey, that's not safe. That's not a relationship I want to have anymore. But I'm not going

to think about anymore. I'm not harboring it. And when the thought comes into my mind, I'm going to give it over to the Lord. I release you of debt. You owe me nothing. I've moved on, even if they didn't ask for it. That's a choice we can make, right? So we need to remember that it is most ideal for us, even for our health, right, to always forgive, and we do this for Christ's sake. We were forgiven much. We should forgive others for Christ's sake, and then sometimes we forgive because the small infraction and love covers a multitude of sins. Talks about that in First Peter four eight. And some of the things that really offend us maybe say more about us. The small things I'm talking about. Remember, reminded in First Corinthians four eight. Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves. Charity shall cover the multitude of sins. We're also reminded one Corinthians 13 five, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and this kind of gives the idea of keeping a list of wrongs and rights about the thinking no evil part. You know, you've not forgiven somebody of a debt if you keep coming back to receive the payment, it's not forgiveness. If you're keeping a list of wrongs and rights to hold over somebody's head because the next time they do something, then you haven't forgiven them. Now we remember things, but if you're not pardoning them, it's not forgiveness. There's a difference. There's a difference between I remember what has been done. It's another thing of like, oh well, hey, am I hanging this over your head? High, how high will you jump? Right? Will you pay for what you've done? There is a difference between that. If you have forgiven someone, you have released them of the debt, and if they're those you've not released of the debt, then you've not forgiven them. One, we need to do this because we don't want to give place to the devil. Two, we want to avoid a root of bitterness. Three, we should do whatever we can in the body of Christ to pursue peace, as much as liveth in us, live peaceably with all men. And then the last one, an important one is leave vengeance to God. Romans 12 14 through 21 says, "Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one to another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of." Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense or repay to man, no man, evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Going back to the definition, forgiving is the releasing of a debt, not a requirement to have the same level of intimacy. And I will end it by saying this: Forgiving others can be a testimony in order to see all men saved and come to the knowledge of truth. When you are a big forgiver. People notice, and a lot of times they'll ask you because, especially a lost person, does not understand how can you forgive that person. I have sat in church services where people that most people would walk in here and they'd be like, "I have no idea how those people can attend the same church. Sometimes we even had people that were married to other people, and now are married to each other. Now they're married to other people inside the church, serving God faithfully. Something happened 20 years ago, or whatever. It's because God, if it's for Christ's sake, God can do anything. But it's a testimony. People like I don't understand how that can happen. Let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you about forgiveness for a Christian. But when we don't, what does that also show an unbeliever? That we're no different. So I know this is sticky. For some of you, you've relived something today, and for that, I am sorry if something has caused you to relive something that has been painful. But that might be an opportunity for you to be praying through and see: Have you truly forgiven somebody? It might free you today to know that God's not holding over your head the fact that there might be people in your life you haven't forgiven. It might be freeing for you today to know that vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, because there has been some really horrible things that have happened to people in this church. Forgiveness literally means to release of the pardon, or to to give somebody a pardon, to release them of the debt. Don't make it more than what it is. I would say today, as the body of Christ, we should try to forgive as best we can. We should try to move forward and liveth with one another as peacefully as we can, and we need to leave vengeance in the Lord's hands. This is what Philemon is staring at when he's staring at

somebody who has wronged him, but this would end up becoming a partnership. And so I sometimes like to think of it like this: What is on the other side of our forgiveness? What if our foe today becomes our partner in ministry tomorrow? What can God do? And we start thinking: the longer time goes on, some of the things that we get upset about, we see that they are most of the time, not all time, most of the time, pretty petty, and sometimes it just needed time to process that. So the challenge today is: Can we be like Philemon, who is staring at that person right in front of them who had done wrong, and forgive them? Can we do that if we see them in the supermarket tomorrow? Let's stay in. We're going to pray, and then certainly invite anyone who wants to come forward as from wants information about joining the church. Maybe they've been saved recently, and they want to know what do I do now? Now, now that I have placed my faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and I have full forgiveness of sins the very moment that I believe. Now I'm sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, right? What do I do now? How do I live for Him? We'd love to get you plugged into either a small group, a Sunday school class, get you partnered up with somebody if you need some just one-on-one mentoring to kind of understand next steps, we'd love to do that. If you've been praying about joining the church, we'd love to have you come forward. We got our guys up front, and we're gonna. I'm gonna go ahead and pray, but I'll give you an opportunity to step out ahead of time and beat the rush if you want to. And then afterwards, we'll sing a song and dismiss. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day, Lord. I thank you, Lord, that you have. Forgiven us fully and completely today, and Lord, we think about what we have received from you by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Why are we so apt to withhold that from other people? We are all flawed, but we all sin, and we've all sinned against other people, we have fallen short. But Lord, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. So I pray, Lord, that you give us the strength to be gracious, especially in the majority of things that are probably on the smaller side. But Lord, on those on those big things, Lord, where there is major trauma, Lord, where where there was major damage and there was major pain that was inflicted, and it's going to take more, Lord. I pray, Lord, that you be gracious to those people today, and that today didn't reopen wounds, Lord, that they didn't set some unrealistic expectations, but Lord, that they would turn to you, and Lord, even in the most wrong that's done to us, Lord, I pray that we would not repay evil for evil. Lord, that we would leave vengeance in Your hand. But Lord, we do pray for grace point in the body of Christ, Lord. That there would be healing, that there would be forgiveness, there would be grace, and that as an organism, Lord, that we could move forward together with Christ as the head, so Lord, we pray right now for your grace that it would be sufficient for your strength in the moments of our weakness, and Lord, we promise to give you all the honor and glory. Be with us these next couple weeks as next week we unpack what if we've sinned against somebody. What should we do in seeking forgiveness? Should we seek forgiveness in this dispensation of grace, Lord. What was it like in Onesimus's shoes as the one who had done the wrong and now was being tasked at setting things right? Lord, we thank you so much for the Word of God, Lord. Even when it's uncomfortable, I pray, Lord, that you would just be with us now as we move forward. We promise to give you all the honor and glory. Amen.