

- This morning, we will pick back up with our journey through Philemon. Today will be in our 3rd teaching in this letter and so far, we only managed to get through roughly 9 verses, and then of course of those 9 verses, I have only taught 6 of them.
 - So, this morning we will pick back up where we left off last week.
 - And as I always do, I want to bring you up to speed as it relates to where we are
 - And so, where are we?
 - Well Paul (as you know by now) wrote the letter of Philemon – on behalf of a man named Onesimus.
 - And as we have learned, Onesimus was a runaway slave – who belonged to a man named Philemon.
- Now what we know about Philemon is this:
 - First – he was a wealthy man.
 - Second – he lived in Colossae.
 - And third – he was a man who came to faith under Paul’s teaching while Paul was in Ephesus.
- Onesimus on the other hand:
 - He was a runaway slave who not only ran away from his Master, but (apparently) as he was fleeing he stole some money from Philemon as well.
 - Which – as you could imagine – was not a good thing.
 - Given the punishment Onesimus would face if he were caught now – when Onesimus left, he headed for Rome.
 - Which was some 1300 miles away!
 - And while he was in Rome, he “coincidentally” ran into the Apostle Paul.
 - Where Paul had the honor and privilege of leading him to Christ as well.
- Now we don’t know for sure, but it doesn’t appear that Paul (at first) knew that Onesimus was Philemon’s slave.
 - But at some point he made that discovery, and upon that discovery Paul knows he must talk Onesimus into returning to Philemon.
 - And by the way there were at least two reasons for that.
 - 1st – it was the law, and it was the right thing to do.
 - 2nd – Philemon was a person who was near and dear to his heart.
- So Paul convinces Onesimus to return to his Master. And in an effort to “soften the blow” upon his return, Paul decides to write the letter of Philemon.
 - And to be honest with you – who better to write a letter to a Master about his slave than a man who knew what it meant to be slave/prisoner himself.
 - Our man the Apostle Paul.
 - The reason that he was God's perfect choice was simple.
 - Paul (as we know) was in prison himself when he wrote Philemon.

- So, who better to craft this letter!
- So that's a little background on the letter, and as always – if you want the full introduction, you can also find this on the [Verse by Verse Ministry International website](#), and begin with our first teaching on this letter.
 - Anyways, so back to our teaching of Philemon, where I will pick back up to verse 1 – and bring us forward to verse 9 and then begin today's teaching with verse 7. Follow with me if you will – [Philemon 1:1-9](#)

[Philemon 1:1](#) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker,

[Philemon 1:2](#) and to Apphia (Aaa -fee- uh) our sister, and to Archippus (ahh-key-pus) our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

[Philemon 1:3](#) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Philemon 1:4](#) I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers,

[Philemon 1:5](#) because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;

[Philemon 1:6](#) *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 1:7](#) 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 1:8](#) Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper,

[Philemon 1:9](#) 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—

- Picking up – Paul says in verse 7:

[Philemon 1:7](#) 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.

- I won't spend a lot of time on this verse, only to say that isn't it interesting – what brought Paul joy and comfort.
 - It was Philemon's love for the people.
 - Specifically, how it refreshed the hearts of the saints.
 - In other words, Philemon's love towards the saints refreshed them.
 - It wasn't a motivational speech that refreshed them.
 - It wasn't his giving or generosity that refreshed them, even though he was a wealthy man.
 - It was the love he showed toward them.
- Now this word "refreshed" got me thinking – what does it mean to be refreshed by the love of another believer?

- And so – as I often do, I wanted to study it a little more in depth. So, I went and researched this verse (this phrase) in the Greek, and specifically, homed in on the word “refreshed”.
- I just thought to myself you know, in the world we live in, in a world full of stress and anxiety, it would be interesting to see how we as believers might help give a little reprieve to our brothers and sisters in the faith.
 - Give them a little relief from all the hustle and bustle of life.
 - And apparently, one method of relief – or refreshing – comes by way of one believer showing love to another.
- Which let me say, sounds simple enough – but really, is it?
- Well, I would say it's simple enough for those receiving the love – but what about those who are giving it? Maybe not so much?
- The word “refreshed” in Greek here, isn't a stand-alone word. At least not here in verse 7
 - Instead, it reads this way, “have been refreshed”
 - So, what does this tells us is?
- We as believers – need refreshing. And why?
- Because as my former secretary once said, “There is something always taking the joy out of living”.
- Now, one might think that we as believers would spend most of our time riding high on the mountain, but the reality is nothing could be further from the truth.
 - Primarily because once you surrender your life to Christ, your life is no longer your own.
 - And because that is the case, the enemy immediately begins working diligently, steady, constant, working overtime, trying to dishearten us, make us question and confuse us.
 - Doing his dead level best to slowly drag us off track and divert our attention away from the things of God.
 - And in its place – cause us to focus our attention on “the things” of this world.
 - Which in turn causes us to be stressed out and full of anxiety.
- And what's interesting is that in today's society, where things (economically speaking) are as good as they have ever been – it's kind of odd that we would be living in what is arguably the most stressed-out society that our planet has ever seen.
 - And so, because that is the world we live in – it means, we all need refreshing from time to time.
 - And the love you all have for one another is “Key” in refreshing your Christian brothers and sisters.
 - But what does it mean to love one another – and furthermore – what does that look like?
 - Well, if you study it in the Greek, it is a verb – an action.

- And it means “to give rest”.
 - And then this is my favorite descriptor – it says “To give intermission from labor”.
- Isn’t that interesting – do you need an intermission from your labor?
 - Are you exhausted – wore down?
 - Have you been trampled by the trials and tribulations of this life?
 - If so, one way to become refreshed is through the love of the brotherhood.
- Which is another reason we should listen to [Heb. 10:25](#) which says:
 - “To not forsake the assembling of believers”
- Guys, I am not sure if you have ever thought about it, but there is power when God's people assemble.
 - Which means – there is power in this room today.
 - And that power has many purposes.
 - And one of those purposes is to refresh the assembly.
 - And if you have been in church very long – you should know what that feels like.
 - Don’t you feel so much better when you leave on Sunday.
 - Do you ever say man – I wasn’t going to attend today, but I am sure glad I did.
 - That is just a little bit of God's power – that is available from the assembly.
 - Which means watching church on Television won’t do it.
 - Reading a devotional won’t do it.
 - Chatting online won’t do it.
 - We must gather together!
 - On a side note, the usage of this phrase in the Greek says “I make to rest or give rest to”.
- So essentially – your love, your kindness, your care and concern for fellow believers is what activates a refreshing in the individual or individuals you show or are showing love, kindness or concern for.
 - I won’t belabor this point but just remember that each one of us has a responsibility to do this for other believers.
 - And by the way we should do this even if we don’t feel like it.
 - Also, one more side bar on this topic – our fellowship does (I believe) a decent job of this, and I feel like this is the case because we have had (little to no disagreements) in our church.
 - And trust me when I tell you that this is very rare.
 - Especially for a church who has been in existence for over 10 plus years.
 - And we should thank God for it!
- Moving on, next – in verses 8&9 Paul writes the following

[Philemon 1:8](#) Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper,

[Philemon 1:9](#) 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—

- When Paul says “therefore” or when anyone in scripture says “therefore.”
 - What they’re saying is, because of, or based on my previous statement – I am now making this next statement.
 - In other words, because of Philemon’s love for the saints, the love he displayed for other believers – it yielded great joy and comfort for Paul.
 - “And remember” – Paul is in prison at this time; therefore, joy and comfort are at a premium in his life.
 - Paul says, because of your love – which refreshes the saints – I am making this next statement, which is what?

[Philemon 1:8](#) Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper,

[Philemon 1:9](#) 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—

- Now, do you wonder where Paul is going with this statement?
 - He says – therefore Philemon, since you have shown such love for the saints, I appeal to you.
 - And instead of asking God, to make you do it.
 - Which is an interesting statement because I see two forces at play.
 - Man's will versus God's Sovereignty.
 - And both are highlighted here.
 - It’s kind of like your father or mother saying, “I could make you do this or that – but instead, I am going to ask you to do it on your own.”
 - “I am going to ask and believe – that you will do the right thing.”
 - But if you don’t, well then Paul says I have enough confidence in Christ to ask him to force you to do it.
- So, here we clearly see where man is given the opportunity to do the right thing.
 - But if he doesn’t, well then God can step in and force him to do it.
 - I also feel there may be a little manipulation being used here by Paul.
- Now – let me be clear, it doesn’t say Paul is being a little manipulative.
 - So, don’t leave here today and say, “Pastor Greg said that Paul was a manipulator” – because that’s not what I am saying.

- I am just saying Paul is human – just like you and I, and therefore, it kind of feels like Paul is saying – Hey, I am so proud of you Philemon.
- You have shown such love for the saints.
 - So much love that it brings me joy and comfort.
- Therefore, based on the love you have shown the believers, “I know you will do the right thing.”
 - The text doesn’t specifically say that, but when we read on later in the chapter we will see more of the same language.
- When he speaks specifically about the money Onesimus stole from Philemon, and I believe I am right in what I’m saying, as it relates to how Paul uses his words as a motivator for Philemon.
 - I also believe there is a deep application for all of us sitting here today as well:
 - Just like Philemon, we too have freewill – and God expects us to use it to do the right thing.
 - But just in case we don’t – God will step in to ensure that His will ultimately prevails.
 - And so, just remember that when struggling with any decision.
 - When you don’t know what to do, just simply revert to this question:
 - Is what I am doing glorifying God or crucifying Him?
 - Or would God be pleased with this decision or that decision?
 - Or is my decision simply satisfying my flesh or someone else’s flesh?
 - Meaning, is it easier to go along with whatever – just so I don’t have to deal with it?
 - And just on a side note – let me say, you may be going along with some wrong decision (just for the sake of peace) but eventually you will have to deal with it.
 - Maybe not in the moment – but you will in the long run!
- So, what is it that Paul is asking Philemon to do?
 - Maybe better said, what is it that Paul is highly encouraging Philemon to do?
 - Well, because we know how this story ends, or because we know the purpose and intent of this letter, it’s a real easy question to answer.
 - Remember – Paul is writing this letter to Philemon on behalf of his runaway slave Onesimus, and he is not only asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus for running away and stealing money.
 - Paul takes it a step further and asks Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ.
 - Basically – he wants Philemon to see Onesimus as an equal.
- Now folks – I want you to think about this for just a minute because I feel like if we don’t home in on this then we will miss it.
 - Onesimus was Philemon’s slave – which meant he was Philemon’s property – and I assure you that regardless of salvation, for either he or Onesimus, the culture in

Philemon's time was much like gravity as it pertained to slaves.

- Meaning, it had a strong pull in the way people viewed slaves, because slavery was normal.
- Slaves were intrinsically looked at as second-class, or maybe even third and or fourth-class citizens.
 - Really I shouldn't say citizens, because they weren't citizens.
 - They were property.
- Therefore it would be hard for any master (even a Christian slave owner) to forgive – much less look upon a runaway “slave/thief” as an equal.
- It's easy for us to read Paul's words and say – Oh, no big deal! Philemon just needs to forgive, forget and accept.
 - We don't understand just how tough that would be.
 - Matter a fact, I would tell you it would almost be impossible.
 - Especially as related to your internal feelings toward the slave.
- And Paul knows that.
- He also knows that what Onesimus did was punishable by death under Roman Law.
- So think about it, Paul made the statement that Onesimus had become a very valuable helper to him, but then he discovers Onesimus is a runaway slave.
 - He belongs to a man that Paul himself led to Christ, and now he has no choice but to encourage Onesimus to return to his master.
 - Even though he knows the penalty for what Onesimus has done could potentially cause him to be put to death.
 - He still must do the God honoring thing by encouraging Onesimus to return to Philemon.
 - But why?
 - Why can't he just let sleeping dogs lie?
 - I mean after all, who is going to know right?
 - Seriously – who is going to know?
- Onesimus's hometown is 1300 miles away. So – why not just ignore it?
 - Well there are two reasons he can't ignore it, and we will close with this.
- First – it is the right thing to do. If he doesn't do it then Paul would be breaking the law.
 - But hold on Pastor, that law sounds dumb. It's inhumane to have slaves.
 - It doesn't matter because the law is the law.
 - The rule is the rule.
 - And in our society today we have forgotten this.
 - I want you to remember that laws (good, bad, or indifferent) were established for a reason.

- Some of which revolves around our protection.
 - And the Bible tells us that we are to obey the laws of the land.
 - We are to pay our taxes etc.
- The Bible also tells us Kings and rulers (even unbelieving Kings and rulers) were either:
 - A – allowed to be there by God.
 - Or B – they were placed there by God.
- Which means, if you don't like who the President is, it makes no difference.
- You are still required to obey them
- 2 – But there is a second reason Paul did this, and honestly it might be the most important reason.
 - And that is, Paul's witness and testimony was tied to his decision.
 - You see – I was raised in the South, in the Bible Belt, where for some reason Christians became known – more by what they didn't do, or by what they refrained from – than by what they did do!
 - Meaning if you don't:
 - 1 – Cuss
 - 2 – Drink alcohol
 - 3 – Or smoke
 - 4 – Or date girls that do
 - You have reached the heights of Christianity.
 - Problem is, the only people this means anything to – is other Christians.
- Now, I know this sounds like I am painting with a broad stroke, and I am – but what I'm saying is true.
 - And in some respects – it still holds true today
 - And by the way there is nothing bad about saying as Christians we should refrain from those things.
 - But not as a way to identify Christians.
- Now – I may be losing you a bit here so let me give you an example of what I mean:
 - You ever say to someone – that person is a good person, or that person is a Christian because they don't cuss or drink, as if that is what lets us know someone is or is not a believer.
 - That's the crux of what I am saying.
 - But I have a news flash for Christians all around the world. We can refrain from those things, and we should, but if we think that the outside world cares, then we would be wrong.
 - The unbelieving world is not making decisions about Jesus Christ or the validity of His existence simply based on how we refrain from those things.

- If we think that's the case – we are clueless.
- As I said, the unbelieving world could care less.
- What they do care about is much more tangible for them:
 - They care about things like do you talk about others.
 - Because in their minds, if you talk about others you will talk about them.
 - They care about things like –
 - Do we keep our agreements do we give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.
 - Do we cheat our employer.
 - Do we keep our word.
 - Do we cheat on things like taxes, bills etc.
- These are the things that matter to unbelievers, and these are the things the world looks at when deciding what it means to be a Christ follower.
 - This whole refraining from whatever it is we think the world cares about only accomplishes one thing.
 - It makes us as Christians feel good about other Christians.
 - Specifically, as it relates to whether someone is really a Christian or not.
 - And the unfortunate part of all this is, for most Christians – we believe this is our testimony.
 - And I assure you it is not, and if you don't believe me, just ask an unbeliever!
 - And so, one of the main reasons (if not the main reason) Paul tells Onesimus to return to his master is because the outside world is watching what he does.
 - They are watching to see what Paul does.
 - Does he say – I know what the law says, and I know Onesimus belongs to Philemon, but I don't like that law.
 - And furthermore, Onesimus is saved now, and he is a big help to my work in the ministry. Therefore – God would want him to stay with me.
 - Or does he say – Onesimus, you must return.
 - God is in control
 - Don't worry, but the law is the law.
 - And we must honor God!
- I think we see the answer to that question because even though Paul had concern for this man's life – and even though that thought was weighing heavy on his mind – Paul still makes the right decision.
 - He writes the letter to Philemon.
 - And he honors God regardless of the fact that his advice to Onesimus could get him killed.

- And so, what have we learned here today?
 - It's simple – and here is where we will close.
- No matter the situation our circumstances you find yourself in – Honor God!
 - And if you do, I assure you – He will honor you!
 - Amen Amen!