My name is Jim Fleming and this is Our Sunday School. Our Sunday School is part

of Stuart Heights Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. To prepare for

this lesson, please go to oursundayschool.com for a copy of today's handout.

Now, let's get to this week's lesson. Well, good morning everybody. Welcome to Our

Sunday School. Glad you guys are with us this morning. If you've got your Bibles, head

over to Philemon. Philemon.

And for those of you that have wondered but not yet asked, I'm sort of an Eagles

fan, but the greatest wide receiver that has ever come through Vanderbilt

University, which admittedly is a low bar, is Jordan Matthews. And he played a hot

minute for the Eagles, so I root for whatever team he has played for. So when

the 49ers are doing well, I'm a 49ers fan. When the Eagles are doing

well, I'm an Eagles fan. So fly Eagles fly. There we go. All right. Enough of that.

So Philemon. Let me read through Philemon and then we'll pick up on page 24. Thank

you Dave. In our blue handout with verse 17 starting with today, some would even

say we are finally getting to why Paul wrote the letter in the first place,

which is a pretty interesting study when we're on week 10, I think today is, when

we get to the point, so to speak. So let's read Philemon. I want you to listen for

one specific thing, for one specific thing, as I read through Philemon this

morning. I want you to listen for what Paul explicitly says Philemon, Anasimus,

the slave, for what Paul explicitly says Anasimus has done wrong. So listen for

explicitly what Anasimus has done wrong. I want to ask a question and I don't

think the answer is intuitive. So let's read. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and

Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Aphia our

sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your

home. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I

always thank my God when I mention you in my prayers because I hear of your

love for all the saints and the faith that you have in the Lord Jesus. I pray

that your participation in the faith may become effective through knowing every

good thing that is in us for the glory of Christ. For I have great joy and

encouragement from your love because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed

through you brother. For this reason, although I have great boldness in Christ

to command you to do what is right, I appeal to you instead on the basis of

love. I, Paul, as an elderly man and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus,

appeal to you for my son Anasimus. I became his father while I was in chains.

Once he was useless to you but now he is useful both to you and to me. I'm sending

him back to you. I'm sending my very own heart. I wanted to keep him with me so

that in my imprisonment for the gospel he might serve me in your place but I

didn't want to do anything without your consent so that your good deed might not

be out of obligation but of your own free will. For perhaps this is why he was

separated from you for a brief time so that you might get him back permanently

no longer as a slave but more than a slave as a dearly loved brother. He is

especially so to me but how much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord. So

if you consider me a partner welcome him as you would me and if he has wronged you

in any way or owes you anything charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this

with my own hand I will repay it not to mention that you owe me even your very

self. Yes brother may I benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

Since I am confident of your obedience I am writing to you knowing that you will

do even more than I say. Meanwhile also prepare a guest room for me since I hope

that through your prayers I will be restored to you. Epaphras my fellow

prisoner in Christ Jesus sends you greetings and so do Mark, Aristarchus,

Demas, and Luke my co-workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your

spirit. So were you listening? So before I will kind of stab at that answer let's

take a look at what we're looking at today. So verses 17 through 20 and these

are four of the shortest verses in Philemon so that's why I felt comfortable we could

do four verses today. So if you consider me a partner welcome him as you would me

and if he's wronged you in any way or owes you anything charge that to my

account. I Paul write this with my own hand I will repay it not to mention that

you owe me your even your very self. Yes brother may I benefit from you in the

Lord refresh my heart in Christ. So what does this section begin with? What word?

So now you've heard it here at Stuart Heights whenever you see therefore you

should ask what it's there for right? I would say comma and the same for an and

comma and the same for a so. There's like a half a dozen different

words that connect ideas all throughout and Paul uses basically all of them

because if you break the structure of what he is saying down it is beautiful

and it is cohesive and it seems like rabbit trails but they're not really

rabbit trails. They're connecting back and giving evidence or examples or what

he's doing. So what has recently happened in the verses above? What is what is the

news that Philemon finds out that he didn't know before? That Onesimus is a

believer right? Like thank you so much like that is the headline of verses 9

through 16 or 8 through 16 like it's just like bam this is did you know this?

Now should that change everything? Yes a hundred percent that should change

everything. So I just want to as we kind of orient into this section that's the

big aha that Philemon has just realized because would Philemon have known that

by looking at Onesimus standing in front of him because remember Onesimus is

standing in front of him at this point but when you glance at somebody do you

go oh that's a Christian depends on your church background maybe right but can we

see a regenerated heart? No you can't. Now you hang around somebody a long time you

see consistent evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives well I think

we can build some confidence of this person as a believer but you you can't

see regeneration right so it's just you have to be told this. So this is Dr. Mu

here the central development in verses 8 through 16 that prepares for verses 17

through 22 is that Onesimus has become a believer like he is now a Christian so

before we go to the next slide what did you hear when I read the entire letter

what did you hear that Paul explicitly says this is what Philemon has done I

keep saying it this is what Onesimus there's three characters right I mean

this is not complicated this is what Onesimus has done wrong say it louder

darling nothing nothing Paul is very very careful to position this in a very

specific way and I want to show you a quote from yeah so this this impacts the

way that Paul and more importantly Philemon will respond to him so let's

keep going so let me show you the structure here so if you consider me a

partner welcome him as you would me so this is the request like this is this is

what Paul is fundamentally asking Philemon to do for Onesimus I mean this

is the point of the letter right and then we get into the reality which is

and if he's wronged you in any way or owes you anything charge that to my

account because if Philemon thinks he's owed something Paul needs to deal with

that and then Paul deals with that so I Paul write this with my own hand I'll

repay it not to mention that you owe me your very self so reminding him what's

happened in the past and that don't go the next one if you think the next

section begins with an R you don't know me

ok so we had the request the reality and now the hope right there we go

yes brother may I benefit from you in the Lord refresh my heart in Christ so

let's go two more forward so it's not clear that an SMS has done anything

wrong

Paul assumes the reality of the situation for the sake of the argument

and done makes this really beautiful quote right here he says there we go it

neatly serves the purpose what Paul does it neatly serves the purpose of taking

for granted Philemon's view that Onesimus was guilty of some serious

misdemeanor without wholly conceding that Philemon's judgment was entirely

correct now I'll give you a second to read that again if you want but Paul

doesn't come out swinging saying you're right or you're wrong he just positions

it in a way that may be true and it may not be true but it leaves wiggle room on

both sides now who speaks this way what category of people speak this way say

it louder

lawyers yes and diplomats I think those are two fantastic I was gonna take

ambassador or lawyer or like but what is Paul's objective Paul's objective here

is reconciliation positive objective is to see and to show through the

relationship of these two men how beautiful the gospel is and sometimes

you do that by walking a little gingerly right so there was some type of a party

in this room yesterday I don't I don't know exactly what it was but there's

little pieces of stuff on the floor and when we came in this morning I walked

across this section and my feet went like what have I I didn't I didn't know

it was there and I stepped in it and so guess guess what we did guess what guess

what Julie did we got a rag and we want to keep saying we like I was this is not

the day of important that French numbers in my pocket Julie like clean that area

so did you hear anything when I'm walking it like no I can walk over here

with confidence Paul's not a thousand percent sure

Philemon's state of mind when the letter shows up so he treads a little gently

because the last thing you want to do in somebody's house that's where we are

like the setting is in Philemon's home the last thing we want to do is come

barreling in and throw and punch I mean he just does this masterfully so so I

would like us to tread maybe gently when we talk about an essence and what he may

or may not in fact have done your honor because I don't know that the evidence

is totally conclusive so all right does that make sense y'all with me on that

all right so let's look at page 24 in your in your handout so we just dealt

with that if and boy do we skip past that if or what if you consider me a

partner would Philemon consider himself a partner to Paul yes okay

picture this we've somehow cloned Paul he's walking around with us right now

and Doug he sends you a letter if you consider me a partner which way you

rounding that I'm rounding that up right yes okay so Paul does this a lot he

asked these rhetorical questions where the obvious answer is either yes or no

depending upon the context in the city so if if you consider and this is a

present active so like right now in the in the reading or the hearing of this

letter me a partner now look at the look at the Greek word there what does it

look really close to the Greek word for partner was it look really close to it

looks really close to Koinonia right yeah guess what it's really close to

Koinonia yeah it's the root word for verse six is Koinonia and this is where

I will tell you this is one of the definitively sad shortcomings of the

handout like the handout has several very specific shortcomings this is one

because in the the first century reader the first century hearer listens to this

in Greek and they're connecting verse six which really wasn't verse six it was

just the earlier part of the letter to here in verse 17 we when we do like

statistical analysis on the frequency of word distribution and selection in the

New Testament these two things are not connected because they're not the exact

same word so if you look how many times does this show up in Philemon once

because that particular noun only shows up once but there's a pattern of this

family of nouns that shows up more often so there will always be room for don't

just assume everything like oh that's the only that that's the only time this

concept shows up no no no no no no no no this just counts individual words I have

not figured out how to have Excel do that yet so and if I do I will bake it

into the handout but it's not for today so if you consider me a partner a

rhetorical question with the obvious answer of yes welcome finally so how

many of you are imperative loving Christians like just tell me what to do

give me a thing to do Dave why is your hand not up thank you very much like

yes just just just point me in the direction and give me some some a

command like go do this awesome so this is Paul's first command if you were to

go back and look in if you did a word search on part one of our handout the

word imperative shows up one time and it shows up on page nine where the word

imperative is defined in the cheat sheet for Greek verbs okay the word imperative

actually shows up four times in part two it shows up here it shows up on page nine

again where we define it on page 24 here on page 26 page 30 and page 33 so

there's four imperatives in the letter to Philemon but notice how much

relational scaffolding Paul puts in place before he starts dictating and

commanding and I would argue there's a really beautiful example here that I

don't know is the point of Philemon but it's just a really nice way to talk to

brothers and sisters that we focus on the gospel and the significance of the

gospel and who our Lord Jesus Christ is and how we are connected and related

because and through of that and then we get to hey I need you to do something

and it's welcome him and this might not sound like a really like that seems like

a weak start well it's not so much a weak start in Romans chapter 15 in

Romans chapter 15 so Paul's walked through you know the Magna Carta of the

New Testament theology extraordinaire but we sometimes forget I sometimes

forget that there were actual individual believers at the church in Rome who were

having problems at the church in Rome and one of the problems was their

theology was pretty jacked up because if it wasn't Paul wouldn't have gone to all

those great lengths of explaining exactly what was going on and then he

ends the thing in verse 15 in chapters 15 and 16 he's landing the plane right

he ends the thing with welcome one another and who does he tie the

welcoming attitude and behavior to just as Christ also welcomed you see the

welcome isn't just I'm just saying hey because I want to be friendly and polite

and a good southern gentleman the welcome is I'm going to welcome you

because I am emulating my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when I do this we I

believe we have devalued the significance of a welcome like a

welcomes a really big deal when was the last time you walked into a room and

didn't feel welcome you remember those things when was the last time you walked

into room and you felt welcomed like oh this is great to be here wow this is

wonderful these things are significant and in these moments of you know put

your anesthetist hat on for a second he's standing in front of his I wouldn't

even say former master it still is master right the separation occurred he

was master the entire time what would an estimates feel maybe a little angst

cannot can I go halfway out of the pulpit and say maybe a little angst would

would you feel a little angst coming back remember what was within the

lemons domain to be able to do anything you wanted an estimates was property so

you can do anything you want so what is the first thing start Paul starts with

welcome and if you're wondering like without know how Christ Jesus welcome

you are at so Matthew 25 Matthew 25 this concept actually shows up in the New

Testament elsewhere Jesus is telling a parable of the sheep and the goats I'll

start at verse 31 when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels

with him then he will sit on his glorious throne all the nations will be

gathered before him and he will separate them one from another just as a shepherd

separates the sheep from the goats he will put the sheep on his right hand and

the goats on his left then the king will say to those on his right come you who

are blessed by my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

foundation of the world for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat I was

thirsty and you gave me something to drink I was a stranger you took me in I

was naked and you clothed me I was sick and you took care of me I was in prison

and you visited me and then the righteous will answer him Lord when did

we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink

when when did we see you as a stranger and take you in or without clothes and

clothe you when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you and the king

will answer them truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of

these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me so in the room where

anesthemous is standing in front of Philemon who has the social status of

least anesthemous Philemon is is in the like I'm in the authority high position

Philemon anesthemous is I did it again this is ridiculous anesthemous is in the

low position and Paul paraphrasing Jesus welcome him because that's what Jesus

would have done isn't that beautiful I think that's just absolutely beautiful

there's a lot to this and then let us not forget where were we just most

recently what book were we in just in most recently you're gonna hurt my heart

here if you miss this Oh Colossians yeah that's okay I still welcome you it's

alright Colossians 3 11 in Christ and remember what has Philemon just learned

anesthemous is in Christ in Christ oh and by the way what city do we think

that we're in right here class a in Christ there is not Greek and you

circumcision and uncircumcision barbarian and Scythian slave and free

but Christ is all and in all let us not skip past the welcomes y'all good

gracious there's a lot here so welcome him and not just welcome him but welcome

him how same way as you would me as you would me who is the most I don't know

the right word who is the most significant person who has ever come to

your home like the highest status

you're like nobody your grandson there you go awesome okay this is good this is

good this is good how do you feel about your grandson he's amazing right yeah

you actually haven't stopped smiling since you thought about him like it's

just been like yeah yeah okay cool that's awesome fantastic yes like you're

still smiling right now and I think you will be in a minute or two and that's

that's how you feel so how you feel about Augie is maybe how you welcome

everybody

that's a big ass didn't it was Paul a big deal in the church at the time that

he wrote this yeah he's very big deal he's a very very big deal so welcome him

as you would the biggest deal who was true and faithful and right in his

theology and doctrine in Christianity that was alive at that time that's a lot

that's a big ask especially Paul's just spent 16 verses you could almost say

buttering up I don't know that I'd go quite as far as buttering up but like we

are preparing the path for the ask certainly right so verse 18 and if we

skip the F again right and if he has wronged you the funny thing is this is

the last time on estimates is directly referenced in Philemon from here on out

it's just about Paul and Philemon because if I could be so bold as to say

I don't think the point is a mess of us like the parable of the prodigal son

I'm not entirely sure the point is the prodigal son I think the point is the

brother who was bitter and needed to deal with his bitterness and lack of

forgiveness and I think we have a real-life version of that with an

estimates in Philemon and it's a really beautiful picture so if he has wronged

you so at minimum how might an estimates have wronged Philemon so so let me let

me give you what I think is at minimum is true was an estimates doing some

degree of work for Philemon as a slave he was accomplishing something right

okay was it high quality work based on what we knew about an estimates it was

useless right it was he was doing something poorly but it was something he

had not yet been killed for the poor degree to which he was doing the thing

so there was some value there so if he is no longer with Philemon who is

accomplishing that work now so how would Philemon have ensured that work got

accomplished he could either give it to other slaves he could just suffer the

lack of it being done like well you know what did Anna Grace do with the house

and then she went to college and we were like dang it who does that now but there

was something that it was the garbage or it was the wiping down or the something

it I remember we went a few days and it was a why isn't that getting done oh

because she's not here anymore that's why it's not getting done and I that was

my mindset when I was thinking through the scenarios of so Philemon can either

pay somebody new he can overtax the existing slaves he can do it himself but

there's something that he's having to do to make up for the sloppy job that an

estimates was no longer doing so at some degree there is some level of wronged

ness can I say it that way that is occurring here so if he has wronged you

oh I forgot to do the applications of personalization all right so application

number one the bottom of page 25 Christians welcome Christians right this

is what we do Christians welcome Christians so what do you think our

personalization is there welcome Christians yes this is not rocket science

and the second application here I think is Christians can wrong Christians which

may be a bit of a stretch depending upon exactly when an estimates was converted

but I think the point still applies in a larger context we think the

personalization is when Christians can wrong Christians say it louder for the

people forgive forgive forgive

it's funny but Paul never actually explicitly tells Philemon to forgive him

welcome him is pretty dang close though it's pretty close so if he has wronged

you in any way page 26 or owes you anything what is the first century slave

Oh his master everything like his entire life of course he owes you something

charge that to my account come on y'all I see comments sometimes that like where

is the gospel in this book we're right there we are an essence we have wronged

the father and our Lord Jesus Christ takes our wrong and it is credited to

him and we get his righteousness and are treated as sons and daughters by the

father that's the gospel right there charge that to my account and you know

what this word is this is the second imperative it's not a like well if you

think about it no no no I take it did Paul and Philemon a line on what was

going to be charged to Paul's account this is what you call a blank check Paul

gives Philemon a blank check to charge anything he wants to Paul's account and

Paul will pay it which is incredibly odd given where Paul is right now where is

Paul right now in prison how my friends is Paul being supplied in prison now

before you answer I need the wrong answer from before Dave the Philippians

do you remember when we were going through Philippians and Paul makes the

utterly beautiful comment they said at the beginning of the ministry you and

you alone were supporting me you see what's what's going on here let's look

at this so Paul was prepared to assume financial obligations in order to teach

and live by spiritual truths which is really really crazy like really really

crazy let's go forward two more Philippi is here Colossae is here Rome is way

over there you're like that's not an errand like it it's just he's kind of

off the map at this map this is where Philemon and Anasimas are this is the

church at Philippi who's funding Paul over there what God is doing in the

gospel here is impacting what God is doing in the gospel here come on y'all

we put in our Bibles a new page and a big header when a new letter starts it's

way more interwoven than that like these people knew each other and they met each

other and they talked to each other and they supported one another and they

welcomed each other and they forgave each other and it was way more

interconnected then here's an index in a list of books at the beginning of our

Bibles this is beautiful you look at what God does through the gospel this is

this is amazing this is absolutely amazing so at the bottom of page 26

thank you Dave you go the next one the bottom page 26 Christians reflect the

gospel Christians reflect the gospel because what Paul is doing here is

reflecting the gospel and if you'll notice in the picture that Paul creates

Philemon is the father figure he doesn't put this where Philemon is the sinner he

puts Philemon in the God the Father spot you see this so even in the picture of

what's going on he is very careful not to offend his brother he's rounding up

like I would just ask that you do one thing of me if you ever have an analogy

please don't put me in the position of God the Father God the Son or God the

Holy Spirit I am the scum on the underside of the bucket in the picture

okay but this is where he puts Philemon so verse 19 I Paul write this with my

own hand there are a lot of spots in the New Testament where Paul steps into the

seat of the amanuensis picks up the pen or quill or whatever the writing object

was and writes a little something as evidence of who he actually is because

the writers of the Bible are being told what to say by the Spirit they say this

out loud to an amanuensis a person who scribes this down and they write it down

for them so that on the page you would have seen a different handwriting style

and that would have been like the author who is speaking this like the little a

author not the big a author the little a author who is speaking this so Paul

writes this with his own hand oh I've been cool to get right me kind of neat

so he writes this with his own hand I will repay it I will repay it so a

couple applications of bottom page 27 Christians take reconciliation

personally Christians take reconciliation personally Paul didn't

say the Philippians will take care of this I'll just have them redirect no no

no no like I will take care of this I will repay it now there's a great deal

of faith that Paul has in God to be able to make this statement right I mean it

there's there's a lot going on right here so Christians take the gospel

Christians take reconciliation personally because the gospel is personal

and Christians take reconciliation financially because the gospel demands

restitution like the gospel is not everybody gets off scot-free now the

gospel is our Savior gasped for breath and died on a cross because of our sin

it's terrible and we get all the goodness as a result of it it's just

it's the greatest deal in the world so Christians take reconciliation personally

because the gospel is personal Christians take reconciliation

financially because the gospel demands restitution so take the gospel

personally and financially like physically take it personally and

support it financially this is what the gospel can do and it's not just this is

what the gospel could do back in whatever year this was written 62 ad this

is what the gospel still does like yay like we're in because the gospel is

still this strong this is good so I Paul write this with my own hand I will repay

it and then the little blurb that makes a lot of people nervous about what Paul's

intent actually is not to mention that you owe me even your very self which

from this we imply and I'm gonna stand like two-thirds in the pulpit and maybe

a third out from this we imply that that Paul was directly or at least very very

close to directly responsible for Philemon's salvation so he's bringing up

the important salient parts of Philemon's history here so Christians

are indebted to Christians so remember and rejoice because somebody shared the

gospel with you and I promise you thousands and thousands and thousands of

people worked diligently over millennia for us to hold a copy of the scripture

in our hands like we we are indebted to other believers for those who have come

before those who have faithfully taught and preached and proclaimed the gospel

like this is a good thing this is a really really good thing and in the

first time ever I believe in the history of my teaching I am going to quote

a computer who helped me with some language on this so Philemon owes his

spiritual life to Paul's ministry reminding us of the interdependence of

believers that'll work that was a really good summary so I took a bunch of my

notes and threw it in there and said say this in a better way and that's what it

spit out and say cool it'll work all right not to mention you owe me your

very self and then verse 20 and we'll finish up with verse 20 yes brother

just in case there's been a flinch in Philemon's heart of I don't know about

all this Oh remember we're brothers we're brothers yes brother yes brother

may I benefit from you now I want you to look at in the middle of page 29 this I

right there is grammatically unnecessary that benefit verb is a first singular

second heiress middled opponent optative which is the most complicated verb you

will ever note in the New Testament it is absurd that benefit already carries

with it the concept of a first-person I you put that I in because it's emphatic

when you use it in the first person Paul if you were reading this out loud you

would read this and say yes brother may I benefit from you like that's actually

how you would read that and this word benefit is in the optative mood and this

is the one that I don't talk about very often but you have the indicative this

is a statement of fact you have the subjunctive this is a good probability

of something occurring and then the optative what's the example that I use

for the optative now you remember you go buy a ticket of a very specific kind

hoping that you win it's a lottery ticket

isn't that a dr. Robertson calls this a wish about the future this is the way

that you would translate this this is a this is like remote possibility that

this is actually going to occur yes brother may I benefit from you in the

Lord like why would he use the optative here like what in the world is going on

with that well my application bottom page 29 is Christians challenge

Christians Christians challenge Christians Philemon has an opportunity

to do something absolutely beautiful here so my personalization for me is

speak the truth in love I mean this this letter is baptized ten times over in

love and patience and gentleness and meekness and all the fruit of the spirit

that you can muster into it to be as kind and compassionate in the delivery

as possible and then he hits him with this optative which is pretty serious so

yes brother may I benefit from you not financially he's not saying my I may I

be paid back may you make my account whole no no no no this is in the Lord

this is in the Lord this is for the purpose of obeying what our Lord Jesus

Christ has told me to do so you're always tying it back to the gospel and

what is going on there all right so last yeah we'll stop with that oh no we've

got one more half of the verse don't we I'm sorry refresh my heart in Christ

there we go there's there's the third command the refresh sorry I thought I

was done refresh my heart in Christ who has Paul already defined is his heart

anesthetist his heart I'm sending my very heart back to you refresh my heart

in Christ refresh maybe anesthetist in Christ maybe so Christians remind

Christians so let's tell of our past faithfulness and challenge to future

faithfulness because this word refresh is something that Paul in verse 7 has

already commented on that Philemon does well like what you do well is you

refresh the brothers and sisters so do it again do it again be faithful again

don't stop now the gospel opportunity for reconciliation and restoration is in

front of you don't quit then that work the beautiful story guys yes I think

that's a good summary Doug we should use the gospel as a framework for our

theology exactly right because it and it alone can support our theology all right

so that's the lesson for today you should have your weekly update on the

table one quick announcement before we go so February 23rd is a TBD Jules and I

will be probably out of the state that day maybe maybe not but it'll be a long

weekend and I won't be available to teach that day so if you want to teach

that day let me know and we will go forward with that and then the first

Sunday in March March the 2nd which coincides with our 16th birthday for our

Sunday school which is a great day is we're having a lunch after the service

in this room for our members and maybe friends so more details to come on that

but maybe pencil that in if you want to do that now so thanks for coming today

guys I appreciate you thanks for engaging and don't forget to subscribe

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three of those at our Sunday school calm grace and peace to you