

Forgiveness
Philemon 1:8-14

- **Forgiveness: Biblical Principles**

- God forbids unforgiveness. (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22; Colossians 3:8, 13)
- Whoever has offended us has offended God infinitely more. (Matthew 18:23-35; Colossians 3:13)
- Christians who do not forgive others will not enjoy God's forgiveness; their fellowship with Him will be hindered. (1 John 1:9; Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:30-32)
- Christians who do not forgive other believers will not enjoy fellowship with them. (Matthew 5:23-24; 1 John 4:20-21)
- By avenging ourselves we usurp God's authority. (Romans 12:17, 19)
- Forgiveness should be given even if not sought by the offending party. (Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)

- **The Appeal and its Foundation (v. 8-9)**

- Because Philemon's godly character was evident to Paul and to others he had no need to be demanded to do what is right. (Philemon 1:4-7)
- Paul, as an apostle and the spiritual father of Philemon, could have forced Philemon to do what was right, and yet he did not. He appealed to something greater. (1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 2:6)
- The appeal is not to law or to principle, but to love. This is what should motivate each one of us to obey God's commands. (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:3)
- In his appeal Paul uses every argument he can in order to stir Philemon's will and conscience to desire what is right. He brings up two things:
 - Age: As an older man there were not many opportunities left to serve the apostle.
 - Imprisonment: It is hard to turn down a request from a man suffering for the sake of Christ.

- **The Transformation of Onesimus (v. 10-12)**

- Who was Onesimus?
 - He was a slave of Philemon that ran away and possibly stole some of his belongings. (Philemon 1:18-19)
 - He was (more importantly) a spiritual son of Paul and a slave of God in Christ.
- The transformation of Onesimus by the work of Christ was evident by his good works. (Ephesians 2:10; John 15:8; Colossians 3:22-24; 2 Timothy 3:17)

- **The Heart of Obedience (v. 13-14)**

- Paul set an example for Philemon by setting aside his rights and his wishes in order to do what was right; both according to his calling and under Roman law. (Romans 13:1-8; 1 Corinthians 9)
- The Lord desires our obedience from our own will, not by force or compulsion. (Isaiah 66:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Hosea 6:6; Romans 13:8)

"The best kind of giving is spontaneous, spiritual, systematic, and free from coercion."

- John Phillips