Fugitive: **The book of Philemon - wk 2 - Dead Man Running**

**Running - an outlaw - a fugitive - wanted - a bounty on his head - a thief - a runaway slave - If caught, beaten and branded - and dragged back**

**This little letter was written so none of that would happen**

**\* Roman Empire slavery was a part of life - majority of pop (2/3) by choice (skill, poverty), force (conquered, debts) some owners were good, some ruthless. \*\* The Bible never condones or promotes.**

* **Philemon - hosted Colossae house church. Philemon was a kind master - Onesimus was a bad slave.**
* **Onesimus - When his boss's back was turned - robbed him and ran - and left for Rome - But he ran into unlikely person...**
* **Apostle Paul - under house arrest in Rome - Onesimus, the fugitive finds refuge in Jesus - and becomes a new man.**

**Three characters - each at one time running from God - but God in his grace intervened in their life.**

**Paul was in many ways a Father to both**

**Paul & Onesimus became close – Paul finds out who he is.**

**Tells him: no more running - face the music and trust God... And you’ll never guess what? I led your master to Christ. (Imagine that moment)**

**It's time to go home and face your past. Here give him this**

**(A letter). After a dangerous fugitive 1300 mile journey back w/ Tychicus. Knock Knock - It's Onesimus. Head down, he hands him this letter.... Philemon breaks the seal and reads...**

**This is an intimate look over the shoulder. A friend writing to a friend about a friend – on grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This letter has tremendous value for us – it is the story of our lives.**

**Last week - Philemon 1-7 - Paul gives a loving greeting: I miss you - I am proud of you - I am thankful for you. Wow- my spiritual father is writing me**

**Today the elephant in the room... Dead Man Running**

**Theft is grounds for execution in Rome, add to that a runaway servant. Branded, dismembered, shackled, often family killed.**

**(After Paul encourages him, He gives every reason for Phil to receive Onesimus)**

**8 Therefore, (I believe in you - keep it coming - therefore... Jedi speak - this is not the slave you're looking for) although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love.**

**As an apostle, I could tell you what to do, but I am going to try to motivate rather than legislate.**

**It is as none other than Paul - an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus (funny – I don’t want to pressure you as an apostle but, I'm an old man and a prisoner... (can you hear my chains) I am asking you - the only favor by Paul recorded) 10 that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. (Onesimus became Christian while Paul was in jail - "thank you for the chains...”)**

**We need to learn how to thank God for the chains. Those chains are tools for yours and others to know Jesus.**

**11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.**

**It’s a play on words, a pun - Onesimus lit. means "useful"- This is how it would have read to him, "I know useful wasn't very useful to you, but now he is super useful to both of us now."**

**Onesimus ran from work and took what others worked for - he was useless, but not anymore... wait till you see him now!**

**He went from useless to valuable in Christ.**

**(Gets more intense) 12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.**

**Sending him back was like ripping my heart out - this is heavy.**

**When you think about what to do with him – remember this is my spiritual son & my heart that stands before you.**

**“Come on Paul - how can I discipline your own heart/son?”**

**13 I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel.**

**I wished he could stay. His being here was so encouraging.**

**You can’t be here - you need to be there - serving, supporting.**

**14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. (I am not trying to coerce you or tell you what to do – but because you want to) 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever -**

**Great verse - maybe this was the reason this happened...**

**Step back - look at everything that has happened - maybe it was for this. This is what God was doing... maybe this was why... so he might meet Jesus. Eternal friends.**

**Onesimus is - 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.**

**Imagine neighbors & friends. We can't allow this! Someone has to pay for this and set an example. The other slaves: I'm gonna catch some of this Jesus - and get away with anything...**

**Paul's most powerful persuasive plea is saved for the last. Don't miss the last - as we unpack the challenge to Philemon.**

**But now - Five Thoughts For this Dead Man Running**

**From a father in the faith to his spiritual son - This is for all of us.**

**Things to remember on the way back.**

**1 – It's better to bite the bullet than to fear it.**

**Some live with a daily fear of being caught and found out.**

**Paul says it’s time you acknowledge your sin those you hurt.**

**Onesimus was hiding - he had secrets. This was an intense challenge - there was no skip in his steps back to Philemon.**

**As he reaches the small city it gets harder - people know him.**

**There was probably no joy in that walk home. But it was right.**

**Imagine the relief when he handed that letter to him - no more sleeping with one eye open - looking over his shoulder. No more heavy heartbeats... there is no pillow like a clean conscience.**

**There is no power like confessed sin - The fear of being found out is over - once you face your past it can't sneak up on you anymore.**

**Humble confession is a requirement for reconciliation.**

**Sin sucks the life right out of you: your confidence, conviction, certainty, worship, and strength. As long as it’s secret it smolders in the dark and burns you up inside. Until you confess it.**

**Table grille smolder - pushed back but was still there.**

**Sometimes the only way to walk into your future is to face the past.**

**Matt 5:22-24 - if you come to the altar of worship and have ought with a brother - go back and get it right.**

**God can use your pain for a platform – and take your mistakes and turn them into a megaphoned message so others may know of his life/hope \*\*This is where you can lead by example and build respect again.**

**Oh and BTW - It will come out eventually anyway - "Be sure that your sin will find you out" - Numbers 32:23. So break the news, before it's breaking news... and come clean or get caught.**

**Caught tears - unbelievable vs. confession tears - broken**

**2 - Love can't be forced and neither can forgiveness**

**8 ... although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. (I want it to be about love not compulsion or by force. Forgiveness is voluntary) 13 I would have liked to keep him with me... 14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary.**

**When you confess and own up to your sin – it’s their choice to forgive. You can't force them to accept you. All you can do is your part.**

**“Hey, I confessed you have to forgive me.”**

**No, they don't. But it's still the right thing to do.**

**Restoration is voluntary - things won't always turn out the way we had hoped - but we can't experience their forgiveness without giving them that chance to choose it too.**

**How did Philemon respond? He voluntarily...**

**Was a friend - he robbed you, but he needs a friend right now.**

**Was a forgiver - Phil had every right not to but he chose to restore.**

**He followed the example of Christ and forgave.**

**3 - God wants to help you live up to your name.**

**Philemon - name means kind - here is your chance to be kind**

**Onesimus - name means useful - here is your chance to show yourself useful again in Christ to others. God is not done with you!**

**Onesimus now has a new way of looking at life – in a diff letter he carried - Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him**

**Jesus brings full redemption - he did not just purchase your soul he wants all of you. Your whole life - To bring out a better you.**

**From the inside out - as a student, employee, parent, son, daughter - the art you make, songs you sing - you are to live up to your name in Christ. Your full potential realized in Jesus.**

**\*Dad/mom you have a name - God wants to help you live up to that**

**Our names are picked and influenced by celebrities and popularity -**

**Names in ancient cultures were significant to their hoped destiny.**

**Rev 2:17 - He will give you a new name / Isaiah 56, 62 - God says that names speak of you – they tell others of your mission.**

**God wants you to live up to your new name – Christian.**

**It’s a new name – is a new start – and a new you.**

**Your past might have shaped you, but it does not define you.**

**4 - Your unity in Christ is greater than your differences in this world**

**Philemon was - 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother... both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.**

**This is what Jesus does – makes us one in Him!**

**You were once separated by class and position - but now…**

**We have diff positions and opinions in this room. Diff backgrounds and cultures have shaped those opinions but guess what? Our unity in Christ is greater than our differences.**

**Ephesians 4:1-3 - I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

**Because of Jesus, we see each other thru the eyes of Jesus rather than the eyes of - rich, poor, skin tone, dem, rep - we are family.**

**5 - You might be closer to God than you think**

**Philemon 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever...**

**Do you think Onesimus felt close to God when he was running from Philemon, ducking in the shadows, on that 1000-mile trip to Rome. Hiding, indulging in his supposed “freedom”- God felt 1000 miles away... But God was right there all along.**

**Long before he rebelled and ran away and long before he ever got to Rome. God got Paul to Rome through an arrest and sat in jail.**

**The stage was set. God had him run into the man who led his victim to Christ. His running was the plan. God was working it all.**

**Romans 8:28 - We know that in all things God works (God is working behind the scenes) for the good of those who love him, who have been called (Not for everyone… but the called) according to his purpose. (God’s purpose not ours)**

**This is not a God can fix it verse, but a God has a purpose verse. Therefore, have peace in knowing God is working it out for his glory and my good – somehow.**

**\* God used Onesimus' mistakes to bring his salvation.**

**Well, I am a Christian, and life still hurts:**

**(Paul in 2 Cor 4 talks about dealing with our weaknesses and trials) 2 Cor 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

**Why God all the trials? Why the heartache? What’s the point?**

**2 Cor 4:15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.** **16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**

**Romans 5:3 …but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (NKJV – this hope does not disappoint)**

**When you’re running and when you are hurting – you can’t outrun God's presence and comfort. He is working in you.**

**You are closer to God than you think.**

**God’s will brought them together. How did they meet? 2 Possibilities:**

**\* Onesimus was arrested - holding cell (What's your name... Chachi)**

**\* Paul under house arrest, had a window – crowds gathered.**

**Onesimus listened in and came back more and more...**

**Until one day - that person who felt useless, spent, and tired realized God was there all along - leading him to that very moment.**

**Like Onesimus we are a dead man running - Dead in our sin**

**Romans 6 / John 8 - born slaves to sin- chained to selfishness - Slaves to sin**

**Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, (dead in sin) He made us alive together with Christ, 6 and raised us up with Him, (as Jesus rose – Jesus raised us up from the grave of our sins) and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus... (that's Onesimus - that's us...)**

**You have not run too far. God is not done with you - you have not sinned too much. He is closer than you think. Can you hear his voice calling to you?**

**God looks at our sins - our sorry choices and destructive habits and says - I can work with this... come on home.**

**Own up to your past - there is grace and forgiveness to be found.**