Fugitive: **The book of Philemon - wk 3 - Do me a favor**

**Fugitive movies… except in this case, he did do it. A thief and runaway. If caught, beaten, branded on his forehead – a permanent visible mark, some amputation, and some - sold to gladiator school.**

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

**Roman Empire – in 1st century, 2/3 of the population.**

**\*Philemon (kind) Colossae house church.**

**\*Onesimus (useful) robbed him & ran to Rome, but can’t run from God**

**\*Apostle Paul - under house arrest in Rome – God providence…**

**Three people - each at one time running from God.**

**Fugitives that find refuge in Jesus - and a new life.**

**Paul tells Onesimus: no more running - face the music and trust God. Knowing all that could happen – you can understand the weight of this.**

**Here this might help. A letter – travels 1300mi and knocks on the door.**

**This is really a story of a prodigal who comes home.**

**This in many ways, it is the story of our lives as well.**

**Paul deliberately and delicately pours out his heart in 25 verses.**

**Philemon is reading it on the spot - looking at Onesimus...**

**Philemon 1-7 - a loving greeting - miss you - proud of you - thankful for you.**

**Philemon 8-16 - the difficult, bold, and courageous step to face the past**

**Last week - the power of confessed sin.**

**15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever - (whoa - maybe it was for this very moment – he left a criminal to come back a follower of Christ) 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.**

**This was counter to everything they knew about slaves.**

**This changed everything about their relationship.**

**This was a complete change of perspective for Philemon.**

**Philemon was encouraged by his friend and spiritual father, Paul, to take a challenging and potentially controversial step of faith.**

**Today - Paul's powerful persuasive plea to Philemon.**

**Philemon 17 So if you consider me a partner, (if we are friends - only recorded favor by Paul) welcome him as you would welcome me. (Are you kidding, how about I just don't kill him? But treat him like you... really!?)**

**How would Paul have been treated? Treasured guest, served and celebrated - Paul was an apostle.**

**Receive him into full fellowship - he is family now.**

**Paul then lays out the plan... 18 If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.**

**Plaguing Onesimus was a massive bill he could not pay.**

**What he stole, lost wages - reckless expenses. Someone had to pay. Paul said - put it on my account - I’ll pay it.**

**This was a legally binding IOU - note of indebtedness.**

**This letter was as good as cash to Philemon. To prove to others that Onesimus was paid up and justice was served - the debt satisfied.**

**Notice - He did not say forgive his debt - but charge his debt to me. He knew it had to be paid. This was just *and* right.**

**19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back - (at this, the dictated letter stops - Paul in chains, pass me the letter. I am writing this line himself. Legal note. I will pay for it myself - Paul) not to mention that you owe me your very self. (Don't forget you were going to Hell when I met you.) 20 I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit (I want you to be useful = Onesimus) from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. (I believe in you - I know you will do the right thing and more!)**

**22 And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. (BTW – I may be in jail, but I’m coming as soon as I can. Paul the optimist.) 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. (Colossae pastor came to visit and ended up in jail - we don’t know how) 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. (Never a one-man band, always rolled w/ his boys delegating and giving credit to the team who made it all happen - everything we do here is a team effort) 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**

**\*\* Philemon looks up at Onesimus... and... (fade to black)**

**What happened? We will find out – but first…**

**The Walk Away – Challenges for us – Looking back**

**1 - For there to be withdraws, there must be deposits**

**v17 So if you consider me a partner welcome him as you would welcome me.**

**Paul is asking a big request - making a big withdrawal - but over the years he had been depositing into Philemon's life.**

**And - even now Paul was making a deposit of encouragement and blessing.**

**Are you depositing into people lives?**

**Time, love, grace, building equity.**

**3 types of relationship seasons: Deposits, withdraws, and balance.**

**What do your relationships say of you - when you need to make a withdrawal - are you making more deposits than withdraws?**

**BTW – the more deposits you get the more you can give.**

**2 - True repentance involves restitution**

**Onesimus - was coming back to make things right.**

**When a life truly has a change of heart - there is a true desire to make the wrongs right. We don’t go to simply say I am sorry - but to appeal and try to repair and amend the wrong.**

**Luke 19:1-9 - Zacchaeus the Tax Collector- v8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”**

**Restitution was not his salvation; it was the evidence of it.**

**We can see it - because he is moving in the opposite direction.**

**Luke 15 - Prodigal son - came back to make amends – “make me a servant” - I'll repair all that I have damaged /pay back. I will show you things will be different.**

**Did Philemon take Paul's money? Please send check to PO BOX... Probably not - the prodigal son's father didn't want it back.**

**Sometimes restitution will cost you – payment is proof of your repentance (Zacchaeus) but it may not always be accepted. But true repentance will always seek to make the wrongs right.**

**3 - Forgiven people - forgive people**

**19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back - not to mention that you owe me your very self.**

**I know how you were… I know how much grace you needed. Remember where you came from. Remember God’s grace.**

**He brought up Phil's salvation. Remember how you were forgiven? You were a running slave to sin, but what did God (and I) give you?**

**This letter is a living picture of a prodigal - a living picture of the mercy and grace of God. He asked Philemon to give mercy/ grace to this thief.**

**Mercy - not getting what you deserve - don't punish him as he deserves**

**Grace - getting what you don't deserve - lavish what he doesn't deserve**

**(Matthew 18:21-35) Matt 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” (Seven times it a lot, right? You think Jesus would say - good job Peter, but…) 22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (some 70 X 7 = so 490X - this is not about a number)**

**It's bigger than a number - keep forgiving - stop counting.**

**Take your best number and multiply it - it is to never have an end. Jesus follows with a parable of an unmerciful servant (share parable).**

* **Forgiveness starts with a mirror.**

**If you've been given another chance - how can you not do the same?**

**Matthew 7:2 - For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.**

**We are to always have in our view, God's treatment of us - it is the determining factor in how we treat other people.**

**Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. - Similarly - Colossians 3:13 - Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**That is the power of a forgiven life - the power of the cross in you - you can forgive by the Holy Spirit.**

**We read those and think - I'll try to Jesus... Jesus answers back - (w/ Yoda voice) "No try... do"**

**Lord's prayer - Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (God forgive me the same way I forgive my boss, my neighbor, my parents, kids, brother, my ex - Do you really want that? v14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

**Try this - Take a Sin Walk when you struggle to forgive- take a walk and remember as far back as you can - think of everything you ever did that was wrong & hurtful... I have been forgiven endlessly.**

**Forgiveness starts w/ a good look in the mirror - What do you see?**

**\*\*\* But they really hurt me – betrayed my trust.**

**Proverbs 19:11 - Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. This is not ignoring but acknowledging and forgiving.**

**Forgiveness is not: to allow it – dismiss it – belittle it – or ignore it. But says yes it hurt - but Jesus is my healer.**

**\*\* Forgiveness acknowledges the offense, the pain, the hurt, the loss and then releases the debt of that offense to God.**

**\*\* Forgiveness – is refusing revenge and receiving the suffering**

**It is not easy – it cuts deep. If it was easy and justice is not needed it’s not forgiveness. There is suffering in forgiveness.**

**Remember we are never more like God than when you forgive and serve those around you. The 2 hardest things for us to do.**

**So - When we do wrong, we need to make it right – and - When we’ve been wronged, we need to let it go and know God is in control.**

**The Bible was not written for the other guy - it was for you.**

**If you are like Onesimus - you need to make it right**

**If you are like Philemon - you need to let it go – forgive.**

**4 – Grace releases grace**

**v. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. \*\* When you let go of a grudge it releases more grace.**

**There is joy to be had & joy to be shared when you let go of a hurt.**

**There is freedom for the one who forgives - as much as it is to the one forgiven.**

**When you choose to hold on - you harm your heart and rots it.**

**Proverbs 14:30 - A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy (bitter about another) makes the bones rot.**

**It's like eating rat poison and waiting for the rats to die.**

**The person it hurts the most is you.**

**Forgiveness receives the suffering and dies to self = leading to a new resurrection. Forgiveness sets the one who was hurt free and alive!**

**By recognizing God is the one who heals, restores, and deals justly.**

**1 Peter 3:9 - Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.**

**When you forgive - grace is unlocked in your life - and you become more like Christ - you inherit God's favor.**

**Some of you right now have a hurt you do not want to forgive:**

**Your Onesimus is still in Rome spending your money, they never came back and told me I'm sorry - they are with someone else – they left me -= I forgave them, but they did it again - and again... what do I do???**

**I cannot tell you what to do - But I can tell you who to look to**

**Consider Jesus - For if, while we were God's enemies, - while we were still sinners - Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)**

**Whether they ever own up to it or if you can’t trust them again,**

**either way, you do not have to walk in bitterness.**

**5 - There is an Onesimus inside each one of us**

**17 - Receive him and charge it to my account...**

**Maybe you have family and friends who are runners.**

**Kids who run away from home - little kids not thinking it out - my brother ran a few times. I always thought that was not me… until I realized it was me – I was running too.**

**For us all - the profound reality of this letter is this:**

**\*\* We too are fugitives - we have all spit in God’s face, wronged God - we run from our kind and loving master.**

**Ro 3:23 - we have all sinned and fallen short of God's requirements**

**\*\* We too have an unplayable debt - called sin racked up and charged**

**Ro 6:23 - wages of sin is death... Our debt like Onesimus can’t be ignored - it must be satisfied. Because God is a just / righteous judge – he does not wink at sin. Sin racks up a bill.**

**\*\* We too have an undeserved substitute – Jesus. Like Paul, Jesus receives us, paying the debt we could not pay – and send us home.**

**\*\* We too have an unbelievable payment - the Cross. Like Paul - Jesus says to the Father on the cross - put it to my account.**

**As his blood flowed = charge it to me - "It is paid - it is finished."**

**Colossians 2:13 ...Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.**

**Jesus canceled the debt - so we could be family w/ our Master, and like the prodigal, there is a celebration waiting for you when you get home.**

**SO - What was the outcome? What was Philemon's answer?**

**We don't know... there is not a happily ever after given...**

**If there was closure, we might leave the book- that's great, The End.**

**Instead, we live it with questions and wondering - we are to wrestle with it - and think about how we would answer it - if we were them.**

**Philemon is our story to walk out. How will we respond to those who have hurt us, stolen from us, and done us wrong - people we trusted - who deserve punishment?**

**\*\*\* But there is hope that Philemon made the right choice...**

**Ancient manuscripts record: Onesimus moved to Ephesus and became head pastor of the church - later arrested and brutally tortured to death in Rome – a man set free lived to be martyred for Christ.**

**The early church leader Ignatius mentions pastor Onesimus in Ephesus. He speaks of his gratitude for this wonderful pastor. He then says something powerful about this man named Onesimus - "his love is beyond words"**

**Reminds me of - Luke 7:47 A young prostitute woman on the run from God found grace & mercy at the feet of Jesus - she began to weep at his feet - he says... V47 - Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven- for she loved much… (she loves so much – because she was forgiven so much)**

**This little 25-verse letter - reminds us that grace and forgiveness can be yours. Are you ready to take a step back home?**