Be Reconciled

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[0:00] Philemon is the shortest epistle that Paul has written.

! I want to explain the context, maybe answer some tough questions that come from the text, and see how Christ is exalted in this epistle.
If you don't have a Bible with you today, just please take one of those that's in the row right in front of you. We have some Bibles that are in every single pew. And if you are a visitor today that maybe doesn't have a Bible, go ahead and take that Bible with you as a gift from our church.
Because I want to say this, if you are here today and you don't know how to use the Bible, we are so glad that you are here, you are in the right place. So if you have any questions, please feel free to just reach out to someone, ask them, where is Philemon? Where is this in the Bible?
Because you've come here to learn about Christ, to learn about His Word, and we are glad that you've come today. So if you don't know anything about God's Word, thank you for being here. So if you would, let's stand together as we read the opening section of Philemon, verses 1-7.
[1:34] Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, to Philemon, our beloved fellow worker, and Aphia, our sister, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and the church in your house, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints.
And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.
This is the Word of the Lord. You may have a seat. As I said, we're going to be kind of looking at the whole book of Philemon today, just kind of from a 30,000 foot view. And Philemon is one of the prison epistles.
So this was written around 60 to 62 A.D. during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. Now, normally, Paul's letters, they're written to churches to address specific issues within that church, whether that be doctrinal issues, polity issues, all the different things that a church might encounter.
[3:01] You see Paul addressing that in his letters. And if he's not writing it to a specific church, he's writing it to a church leader and admonishing them on how to better equip the church to grow it to be more effective for God's kingdom.

But Philemon is interesting in that you don't hear about Philemon in any other book in the Bible. You only hear about him in this letter that Paul has written.
And this letter also is not written to a church addressing issues within the church. It's written to a specific person addressing a personal matter.
So this kind of brings up some questions that we have in Philemon. Who was Philemon? What was the issue at hand? Where was Philemon from? And honestly, what was his connection to Paul in the first place?
Because Paul is in prison. He's in Rome. He doesn't know what's going to happen the next day, if he's going to live or die. So this had to be an important issue for him to write a personal letter rather than writing to one of the churches.
[4:05] Now the issue at stake here is that Onesimus, who we're going to read about as we go further into this letter, he's a slave. He has run away from his master Philemon.

Now why, we're not exactly sure. Some think that maybe he stole from Philemon. Maybe he had a disagreement with his master. Maybe he just decided, I want to try my life out as a free person.
But for whatever reason, we find Onesimus on the run here. And he is in Rome, and by God's providence, has met Paul. Now slaves running away to Rome, this was not an uncommon thing

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back then.
Rome was, at this time, it was the bustling metropolis. If you wanted to get lost somewhere to be a face in the crowd, slaves ran away to Rome all the time to get lost from their masters. But while Onesimus was with Paul, something happened that changed everything.
He became a child of God. He dedicated his life to Christ. But the issue still remains that, according to Roman law that they are all subject to, Onesimus is a fugitive.
[5:15] And by all rights and standards, at this time, Onesimus had basically just forfeited his life by rebelling against his master. And if he had been caught by slave catchers at this time, Onesimus would have been taken back in chains to his master.

And could have been punished very severely, even executed if Philemon wished it. But because Philemon is a brother in Christ, and now so Onesimus, Paul has made the decision to pursue reconciliation between these two brothers in Christ.
And again, there's also this legal issue going on here too. Onesimus is a slave of Philemon's who is on the run. And according to Roman law, Paul, who is already in prison, is technically harboring a fugitive.
Now, this isn't the reason why Paul is sending Onesimus back. There's a much deeper reason for that that we're going to get into as we go farther into this sermon and into our text. But being too dangerous to make the trip alone, Paul sends Onesimus back to Colossae with this guy named Tychicus.
Again, we're going to get more into some of these names here in just a second. But as we read through this epistle today, a question that comes up, and we're not going to spend a ton of time with it, because that's not really what the text is about, but it's still a question that comes up.
[6:37] What does the Bible say about slavery? Is the Bible pro-slavery? Is Paul pro-slavery? And the answer is no.

See, a lot of times when we think about slavery, we immediately go to what happened in American history, which I think all of us in this room can agree was horrible.
There is no excuse for it. There's no reconciling that. It was wrong. Slavery is wrong. We can't get around that fact. But a lot of times the traps that we fall into when reading the Bible and trying to interpret it is inserting our own social justice causes into the Bible that aren't necessarily laid out in the text.
So what I want to do is I want to look at slavery briefly from a historical context. What was going on in Rome at that time? What was slavery like in the Roman Empire?
What kind of slavery was there? There were different types of slavery. So we need to look at these things before we start jumping to interpretations of the text. Slavery in the Roman Empire at this point was very common.
[7:47] At this point in time, it was estimated that one-third of the Roman population were slaves. One-third. That is a huge percentage of the population. Now that being the case, there weren't really a ton of jobs in the free market to go to.

It wasn't like today where you can just go to the local Walmart or go to the local gas station and apply for work. If people were wealthy enough to own their own business, they were probably wealthy enough to have slaves that ran it for them.
Also, at this time, there was no welfare system. So some people back then, if they just were not making it in life, if they just were facing the prospect of starvation for them and their family, some people would willfully pledge themselves to a wealthy person to be their indentured servant in exchange for food, clothing, living quarters.
Indentured servitude, which is kind of what I'm talking about here, was a form of slavery that was almost a way to make a living for people back then. And depending on the circumstances, was also a judicial requirement for somebody that was maybe being punished for a certain crime against somebody.
A lot of times, the government or the authorities at that time would sentence someone to indentured servitude. Also, a lot of people back then, as I said, they would pledge themselves to a master to maybe learn a trade or to maybe work off a debt.
[9:13] Or like I said again, if they just aren't making it in the free world, they would do that as a way to provide for themselves. But at this time, a lot of slaves that were in the Roman Empire, they could live normal lives.

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They could marry. They could own property. They could learn a trade. They could go take classes. So it wasn't the image of slavery that we are getting from our context today.
But the fact that we cannot get around is one human owning another. And there's no way to rationalize that. So why didn't Paul command Christians, release all your slaves?
Why didn't Paul use his apostolic authority and scold Philemon for even owning a slave? The truth is that Paul and the apostles and the gospel, really, were not so much concerned about political reform or social reform.
Is slavery wrong? Yes, of course it is. And what Paul did do was teach how all people are equal in Christ. No matter what status you find yourself in in society, no matter what place you are at, we are all equal as brothers and sisters in Christ.
[10:34] He was speaking Christ into the culture that was, into the context that he found himself. Not in the culture that he wished could be, but into the culture that was at the time.

And Paul did make some pretty radical proclamations. If you would, let's read this passage from Ephesians chapter 6, verses 5 through 9. It says, This is where it gets kind of radical at this time, because again, even though slavery did look different, slaves did not have rights of their own.
So this is where Paul addresses the masters now. Masters, do the same to them. And stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.
You see a similar reply to Philemon that we're going to read about here in just a second, to receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother, not just a bond servant anymore.
So Paul does not advocate necessarily for the abolishment of slavery as a societal institution. But what he does do is that he preaches for a heart that views all people as equal before Christ.
[12:12] And it was these teachings that people like William Wilberforce stood on to abolish slavery. It was these teachings that people like John Newton, the poet of Amazing Grace, that led him to repent of his occupation in the slave trade business.

Does the Bible explicitly say to free all the slaves? Not necessarily, but it does teach on the freedom from slavery to sin. And that is the real point of the gospel.
Also, based on the teachings of Scripture, a Christian in good conscience following God's word cannot own another human being. Slavery between human beings has no place amongst Christians, amongst people in general.
Because Paul, as he has made clear, we are all slaves to the greatest and the most just master who is in heaven. So before we jump into the rest of our text, I want to answer some questions about Philemon.
Who was he? What was he doing? Where was he from? Well, Philemon, who was the recipient of this letter, he was a fellow saint who was located in the city of Colossae, who was saved under Paul's ministry.
[13:32] You'll see that in verse 19, most likely while he was teaching in Ephesus. In Acts chapter 19, verses 8 through 10, you'll see a picture on the screen here. Paul taught for two years from the lecture halls of Tyrannus in Ephesus.

And it was from this point that the Bible says that all of Asia heard the gospel. From this place, the lecture halls that you are seeing right here, all of Asia heard the gospel from there.
Now, why do we believe that Colossae was where Philemon was from? And it's really because a lot of the names that we have seen mentioned in some of his letters. Epaphras, who was the founder of the church at Colossae, you'll see that in Colossians 1.7, is mentioned as sending a greeting to Philemon.
There's obviously some connection there. Onesimus, who is mentioned as being a companion of Tychicus, was the one who delivered the epistle of Colossians.
Archippus is greeted in Philemon as a fellow soldier. And then Colossians, he is exhorted to fulfill his ministry that he has received in the Lord.
[14:39] So there's a lot of dots that are connected between Colossae and Philemon. And all of this in mind, Philemon is a wealthy resident of Colossae. He's obviously wealthy enough to own a slave.

He is wealthy enough to have a house that is big enough to host the church that is at Colossae. And in this letter to this saint, we're going to see a beautiful picture of the fellowship that Christ brings, the equality amongst believers.

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We're also going to see this imperative for reconciliation among believers. An amazing picture of what Christ has done for us to receive reconciliation from our heavenly master.
So the main idea for our sermon today is this. Reconciliation is an act of obedience as God's children. We're going to see two principles from this as well.
That Christians, first, they should pursue reconciliation. And another reason is that Christians portray Christ through reconciliation. So if you would, let's continue reading.
[15:46] Starting in verse 8 through 16. Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you.

I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus. I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.
Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel.
But I prefer to do nothing without your consent, that your goodness might not be by compulsion, but by your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant, but more than a bondservant.
As a beloved brother, especially to me, but now much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So Christians should pursue reconciliation.
[17:01] We're now getting into the real reason why Paul has written this letter to Philemon. There is a need for reconciliation between brothers. Onesimus has obviously wronged Philemon in some way.

He is on the run from his master. And something has happened here, though, while he was on the run that has totally changed the circumstances of the events that we're reading. Onesimus, while trying to flee his earthly master, has met his new heavenly master, Jesus.
The same heavenly master that Philemon has. And so Onesimus is now a child of God. This new standing of righteousness in the family of God, it creates a need for reconciliation amongst two brothers in Christ.
That's the whole reason for this letter. Now, two principles for pursuing reconciliation. First principle is this, that reconciliation is pursued in love and humility.
And if you think about it, Paul was obviously an authority figure in the early church. He was an eyewitness of Jesus as being resurrected. He had planted many churches.
[18:10] He had gone on many mission trips, sharing the gospel and spreading it to all corners of the known world at this point. He was very well studied in the scriptures. And Paul could have used this apostolic authority and commanded Philemon to do what was right.

Now, Paul, he doesn't have any legal authority necessarily to make any mandates on anyone. But there's a certain amount of respect that people that are seen as spiritual leaders or spiritual influencers in your life have.
My youth pastor, that was such a person in my life. He was the Gandalf that guided me through the Middle Earth of my teenage years. I'm sorry if some of you haven't watched Lord of the Rings or read the books.
That was a reference from that. I'm showing my geekiness right now. But he was a person that would often speak painful truths into my life.
If I was going astray or had a sour attitude, he was the one that would help me correct course. But what made that influence so powerful and so effective in my life is never once did he come to me and say, Tyler, as your pastor and you as the subordinate student, I command you to do this.
[19:29] No. He never came to me with that. It was never from a position of arrogance. It was always this very loving, soft, Tyler, you're being an idiot.

Let's fix this together now. Now, that is often when leaders in the church are most effective, whether you are a Sunday school teacher, whether you are a pastor, a community group leader, is when you don't view your position as an authoritative stick to beat people with, but as an opportunity to lovingly disciple people, to be more like Christ in whatever circumstance they find themselves in.
That's where leadership in the church is most effective in whatever platform you find yourself in.
Now, often one of the biggest jobs as a pastor is to help safeguard the unity of the church.
Unity is hard won. And it's worthy of every ounce of protection that we as pastors and that you all as the church can muster. What often breaks the unity in the church is the refusal to pursue

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reconciliation amongst your family of faith.
People seem to be okay with holding on to bitterness, wearing it as some sort of badge of honor that tells people of their past trials and their church hurts that they have brought with them or that they are holding on to while still in the body of faith.
[20:59] Paul says this in another epistle that's written from the same prison that he was writing from in Rome. 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 and the bond of peace.

walking in a manner that's worthy of the calling that we have received and being at peace with your brothers and sisters are inseparable in Scripture. Paul knows this and we see him pursuing this with Philemon.
You cannot be in good fellowship with the local church that you were involved in if you were okay with dissension amongst your brothers and sisters in Christ. Nowhere in Scripture are you going to see that that is okay. That's why in John 13, 35, Jesus says this, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.
Jesus has given us every resource and command that we need to pursue unity and to keep unity. And because Jesus is so passionate for it, Satan will be passionately against it.
people always tell me that the leaders in the church are going to be Satan's greatest target. Now it's true, I've seen the downfall of a lot of pastors and it has wrecked the church that they were leading.
[22:35] But he will also shatter the effectiveness of a church and every other church by gaining a foothold in the petty differences that we allow to take residence among us.

Are pastors a big target? Yeah. But here at Highland Park specifically, there are also 250 other targets in our pews every single Sunday.
And I say this with a loving care for whoever is hearing this and maybe it is applying to you. It is a pure act of selfishness to believe that your momentary afflictions, that your hurts and hard feelings with other members in the body are worthy of sacrifice and the unity in this church.
The unity that Christ has died to establish. I'm not saying that your hurts are imagined. I'm not saying that your conflict is made up.
They are real. That's why Scripture addresses it. That's why the Bible gives us guidelines to deal with these problems amongst our brothers and sisters. the Bible never says forgive and forget.
[23:47] It says to go to your brother. That is why we are commanded to pursue reconciliation, not to agree to be at odds with each other and just live in an unsteady ceasefire.

No, we are to pursue healing and to be able to function as the body of Christ is intended to function. There has to be unity.
Has anyone ever dealt with an autoimmune disease or maybe you have known somebody that has dealt with autoimmune issues? It is not a fun thing to watch. It is a terrible thing to go through.
Without going into too many details on it, basically in a nutshell what an autoimmune disease is, is when the normal functions in your body that are supposed to promote the health and the welfare of your body basically turn against itself.
What used to support your well-being, your body is now using to destroy it. It's hard to watch a loved one struggle through this. Now, the same thing happens in the church when we allow dissension to take root amongst our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
[24:58] the individual members of the body that should be promoting the edification of one another, that should be promoting the welfare of the church, have now turned against it and seek its destruction.

Now, maybe you're thinking as you're listening to this, like, well, I'm not really at odds with anyone. This is great for somebody else. I have to tell you that this is for everyone.
As a church, we should desire reconciliation between other brothers and sisters in Christ and we can become an agent of peace in those conflicts.
We see Paul doing a similar thing here from a place of humility as a prisoner pleading for mercy on behalf of his fellow brother in Christ, Onesimus. pleading for reconciliation.
Onesimus is also a new creation in Christ now and Paul has grown very fond of this new brother in Christ and notice how he says, I am sending him back to you.
[26:02] Sending my very heart. Now, Paul could have just as easily said, you know what? I don't need this kind of heat, Onesimus. Go, good luck, hope everything works out for you.

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As a brother in Christ, that is not the fitting response. And Paul has decided that he is going to be an agent of peace in this conflict. Out of love for the two brothers in Christ that he is addressing, but also out of love for the local church that is meeting in Philemon's home.
He longs for there to be peace between the slave and this master, but he also, more importantly, knows what's going on at the church in Colossae. If you've been following along on our sermon series on Sunday nights, you can kind of go back and listen to what some of these issues were that they are dealing with.
But, just imagine what might happen if Onesimus, a new brother in Christ, walks into this local church that is meeting in his master's home and his master, who is also a brother in Christ, brutally punishes him and casts him out.
It would tear the church apart. So, yes, the issue between these two believers is important, but there is a much deeper issue at stake here, the health of this church that is meeting in Philemon's home.
[27:23] There's a word of application here as Christians in fellowship with other believers. You have a responsibility to not turn a blind eye to conflict within our body, to not be okay with dissension between other believers that are meeting together.

We are called to pursue peace, not hope for peace, not wish for it, but to pursue peace and to be agents of peace.
Hebrews 12, verses 14 and 15 says, to pursue peace with everyone as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.
Church, we bear the image of Christ to a lost world. We do it as individuals, but we do it even more effectively as a church.
And that image is extremely blurred when we allow the fog of war to take residence among us. Unity and effectiveness as Christ's church are directly linked with each other.
[28:40] So be an agent of peace. Don't join sides and arm the conflict even more. The last thing that we need is more proxy wars in this world. Pursue peace for the sake of the church and for the sake of the lost that are looking into this church to see Jesus.

So when someone comes to you with a conflict, what should your response be? Be the person that encourages them to go to the one that they are in conflict with. As someone who is now a third party to this situation, you have the opportunity to be an agent of peace by speaking truth, by clinging to the objective authority of God's word and pointing them on the correct path of reconciliation, not by teaming up and joining sides.
In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 9, Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Who better, church, to be an agent of peace than those who have been made children of peace by the Prince of Peace himself?
The next imperative that we see here for pursuing peace is that we should pursue peace that leads to reconciliation. reconciliation. Notice the instructions that Paul gives to Philemon.
He says, to receive him as you would me. Reconciliation is not about burying the hatchet. If you bury a hatchet, all you're going to do is you're going to remember where you buried that hatchet in case you need to use it again on somebody else.
[30:22] Alright? Reconciliation does not leave room for any unspoken animosity between brothers and sisters, but it should always lead to a full restoration of a brother in Christ.

For love to have the effect that it's supposed to, church. In the body of Christ, it requires forgiveness, forbearance, requires grace.
The command of Christ is to forgive as you have been forgiven. That is the great commonality amongst all believers. Christ didn't say, you know, I'm going to forgive you, but I'm going to just dangle this past mistake in front of you just to keep the guilt on you so you don't mess up again. No, He forgave us of a debt that we could never be forgiven of ourselves. He has reconciled us completely to the Father, forgiven us of a tremendous debt.
We have all received an adoption that we could not earn ourselves. And with this adoption, we have all become children of the same Heavenly Father. That is the great equalizer amongst all brothers in Christ.
[31:32] This is the eternal bond that goes deeper than any bond that we could have on this planet. Whether that be blood or common interests, the eternal bond that we have with our brothers and sisters goes deeper.

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It's eternal. Colossians 3.11 says that here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.
The work that Christ did to establish the church, to bring unity to the church, is far greater than the work that Satan is trying to do to destroy it. and the bond that we have with one another should be prioritized above all else.
There is no one that is superior to the other, nor is there anyone that is worthy of more grace than the other. if Jesus has forgiven us and if we are his children, then the act of grace that we have received should be our call to action towards other believers that have sinned against us.
Love as Jesus has first loved us. Now Paul shows us a great picture of this love toward the end of his letter when trying to be an agent of peace between Philemon and Onesimus.
[32:57] So let's continue reading as we see how Christians portray Christ through reconciliation. Starting actually here in verse 17.

So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all or owes you anything, charge that to my account.
I, Paul, write this with my own hand. I will repay it. Say nothing of your owing me your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord.
Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I say. At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.
Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit.
[34:04] So let me replay just the narrative of Philemon for you. You have a fugitive that has rebelled against his master.

Now facing certain wrath according to the law, a mediator steps in, speaks on his behalf, pleads for grace, and even offers to take the price of his rebellion on his own head.
Can the gospel story be made any clearer for us in Philemon? By law, Onesimus had just forfeited his life should Philemon wish it.
In Roman law, he would have no defense, no way to speak up for himself in this. He is guilty. He is now an outsider with no place in the family of his master anymore.
But now, through the redeeming work of Christ, through the mediation of Paul and the offer to take his punishment for himself, Onesimus can be made right with his master.
[35:12] The same is true in all of our lives, fellow believers. in this story, we are Onesimus. We're not Philemon offering forgiveness. We're not Philemon who is at this higher-than-thou place ready to deal out grace.

We are Onesimus. We were once fugitives in need of grace who had rebelled against our rightful master under his wrath, waiting for the judgment to come.
But Jesus, our mediator, he stepped in. He mediated for us on our behalf to a heavenly Father and said, I will take the wrath for them by dying on the cross, making a way for us to be reconciled.
Church, the true sign of somebody that has been forgiven is their willingness to forgive. If we have been made new in Christ, we should strive to forgive like Christ has forgiven us.
So if you are a believer in conflict with somebody else within this church, this is my altar call to you today, and it is simple.
[36:34] If they are in this room today, when we have our altar call, I want you to go to that person and start that process of reconciliation with them.

It may not be done in that one setting. This may just start the process. But as believers, we are called to go to our brothers and sisters in Christ. So if you are in conflict with someone, just like Pastor Mike says every single Sunday when we take the Lord's Supper, go to that fellow believer that you are in conflict with and start that process of reconciliation.
It is an act of obedience on our part to our Heavenly Father to pursue that reconciliation. Now, in our culture today, the news, the media seems to celebrate a victim mentality.
The Bible does not celebrate that. some of you might be the one that was wronged. The Bible does not give you a license to sulk and to soak up all that bitterness.
If there is still dissension between you and another person, that other person may not even know that they've wronged you and you just may be sitting there bitter, not even affecting their lives at all.
You have a responsibility to go to that person still, to confront the sin that they have committed

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against you in a loving way, not in a way that seeks to degrade them, but in a way that pursues reconciliation.
[38:07] I can promise you this, that burying your hurt feelings is not going to bring peace. What happens is those hurt feelings begin to take root.

They will turn into bitterness. And your bitterness will turn into action against your fellow believer. And I'm speaking from experience on this.
You need to pursue reconciliation. If you want to be at peace in this body of believers, there should be no dissension among you. There's an important truth to remember about reconciliation among believers, though.
And this is probably the most important part of it. First thing is, it's not about you. Second thing, reconciliation, first and foremost, isn't even about you and the person that you are in conflict with. Reconciliation is about bringing peace between you and your relationship with God. Mark 11, 24 and 25 says this, And whenever you stand praying, forgive.
[39:14] If you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you of your trespasses. Church, God does not only desire forgiveness, He commands it.

And to neglect it, it is an act of willful disobedience. God has forgiven us a greater death than we are going to be forgiven anyone else. Alright?
And considering such grace, Christians should give grace. Now some of you might be in some challenging circumstances. Maybe you are not in a position where it's possible to have reconciliation.
Maybe the person that you are in conflict with, they have outright refused reconciliation. They have cut you off despite your efforts. Maybe you are somebody where it's not even possible the person that you are in conflict with has passed on.
I've seen that situation before too. The Bible still lays out a path for obedience. 1 Peter 5, 6, and 7 says to humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.
[40:32] We live in obedience by handing it over to God and not letting it be a barrier in our walk with Him. We praise God for the mercy that He has on us and hand our hurting hearts over to Him who is able to heal all wounds and to bring reconciliation even from the most broken circumstances.

Is this a promise that relationships are going to be mended that your relationships with people in this church or outside of this church will be mended? No, it's not. If you pursue the right path if you are following obedience that is not a promise that the other person will reciprocate but what this is a promise is that if you are living in obedience God will still work all things out for your good and His glory.
Now if you are an unbeliever that is amongst us today again we are glad that you're here. This message is for you as well because like Onesimus sin has been committed in your life that has thrown a barrier between you and a holy God and has created a need for reconciliation.
And I'm pleased to tell you this that God has made a way for you to be reconciled to Him. Just as Onesimus and Philemon needed a mediator and Paul you also need a mediator.
Someone to speak on your behalf to a holy God. Someone that can declare you innocent and blameless in His sight who has paid the price for your reconciliation. God has sent His own Son Jesus to be that person for you.
[42:20] To pay the debt between you and God so that there would be nothing standing in the way of peace and reconciliation between you and a holy Holy Father.

Your only response today to this needs to be repentance. Repentance of the sin that has broken that fellowship between you and God and a proclamation of faith that Jesus is Lord and that He has paid the price in full for your transgressions.
The agent of peace that you need in your life is the Prince of Peace Himself. And if you rest your faith on Him He will not fail in bringing peace.
You know I often have to wonder as I was studying this I just wonder what Onesimus was thinking as he was on his way back to his master. Is this parchment that I have is it going to be enough? Will Philemon forgive me? Or will I face certain wrath? In Jesus I can tell you that you do not have to wonder that.
[43:28] if you place your full assurance on Christ you will be reconciled. You will be made right with God and you will be a child of God welcomed into your master's family.

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So if that is you today my call to you is it's time to stop running. You just need to lay all of your faith on Jesus. It's time to come into the light and be reconciled to the greatest master.
Philemon has painted an amazing picture for us of the importance of reconciliation in maintaining unity. The imperative that it brings to our life the acts of obedience that it says that we should pursue as we live this life together as the church.
So church believer be reconciled to one another. Follow the example of our savior that he has set for us. Show forbearance.
Show grace. Show that first Corinthians 13 type of love towards each other. And make reconciliation a priority in your life together as a church.
[44:40] Unbeliever, my final call to you is this. Be reconciled to God through Jesus. The redeemer is still calling the lost to himself today. He is still making the fugitives right with him.

and he might be calling you. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that Lord, in our state of rebellion, Lord, you did not count us as a lost cause.
Lord, you so loved the world that you gave your only son so that we could be made right with you, so that we could have eternal life with you. And Lord, we thank you for that great act of mercy.
And Lord, I pray that if there is someone here today, Lord, if there is somebody in this room that has not made that commitment, that has not professed Christ as Lord of their life, then Lord, my earnest prayer is that they would do that today.
Lord, that they would be made right with you, that they would pursue reconciliation and take hold of the victory that your son has already won for us. Lord, I also pray for the believer in this room.
[45:56] Lord, if there is conflict, Lord, if there is dissension, then Lord, I pray that they would pursue reconciliation with each other.

Lord, that we would lay aside self and seek your glory in this church. Lord, so that as your body that we could function as we're supposed to, that we could share the love that Christ has shown for us.
Lord, I pray that when unbelievers look in this church, Lord, that they would not see dissension, that they would see unity. Lord, a unity that goes deeper than anything that we have here on this planet.
Lord, a unity that has been established by your son, Jesus.
Lord, I pray that Christ would be glorified in this. Lord, that we would see barriers between you and the believer removed as they pursue this reconciliation and obedience to your word.
Out of love for you, out of the love that you have first shown for us. Lord, I pray for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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