

Philemon – Week 4 – The Price of Peace – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Price of Peace: Christ's Substitution and Our Reconciliation

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the book of Philemon as a powerful illustration of reconciliation and substitution, pointing directly to Christ's work on the cross. The Apostle Paul writes to Philemon asking him to receive back Onesimus, a runaway slave who has now become a Christian. Paul offers to pay any debt Onesimus owes and asks Philemon to receive him as he would receive Paul himself. This beautiful picture demonstrates how Jesus Christ stands between us and God, paying our sin debt and asking the Father to receive us as He would receive His own Son. The message challenges believers to extend the same grace, forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice that Christ showed us, particularly in broken relationships where reconciliation is needed. True peace requires someone to absorb the cost, and Christ paid the ultimate price for our peace with God.

Key Points:

- Reconciliation can begin when we see and receive an offender through Christ's eyes rather than through the lens of their offense
- Reconciliation requires the wrong to be acknowledged; we cannot heal relationships by denying wounds exist
- Biblical reconciliation comes from total honesty with God and with each other
- Reconciliation requires someone to absorb the cost and pay the price for peace
- Paul's willingness to substitute himself for Onesimus is a picture of Christ's substitution for us
- Jesus Christ paid a debt He did not owe so we could be freed from a debt we could never pay
- Because of what Christ has done for us, we should be willing to sacrifice for reconciliation with others
- Peace is never free and reconciliation is not cheap; it always requires a sacrifice
- Christians who have received God's grace must extend that same grace to others
- Family estrangement and broken relationships are growing problems that God's Word addresses directly

Scripture Reference:

- Philemon 1-19 (primary focus)
- Matthew 18:1-22 (teaching on offenses, forgiveness, and reconciliation)
- Psalm 51:1-5 (David's prayer of repentance)

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- Luke 10:25-37 (The Good Samaritan)
- Isaiah 53 (prophecy of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice)
- Romans 4:25 (Christ's resurrection for our justification)
- 1 John 5:12 (having life through the Son)

Stories:

- The story of Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul's letter requesting reconciliation between a master and his runaway slave who became a Christian
- The parable of the Good Samaritan who paid for a stranger's care and promised to repay any additional costs
- The story of the Prodigal Son and his father's willingness to forgive and restore relationship
- The story of Hosea the prophet who was commanded by God to marry a harlot and later buy her back from her sin
- Illustration of a judge who declares guilt, pronounces sentence, then removes his robe and pays the debt himself (representing Christ)
- Modern example of family estrangement statistics showing 38% of American adults are estranged from at least one family member
- Personal anecdote about a son damaging the family car and being afraid to tell his father
- Example of the "pay it forward" concept in a drive-through line as a small picture of unexpected grace

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Discipleship Questions

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus 'as myself'—how does viewing others through Christ's eyes rather than through their offenses change our approach to broken relationships?

The sermon mentions a statistic that 38% of American adults are estranged from at least one family member. What cultural or spiritual factors contribute to this epidemic of 'going no contact,' and how does the gospel challenge this trend?

Paul acknowledges the real debt and wrong that Onesimus committed rather than minimizing it. Why is it crucial to acknowledge genuine hurt and injustice before reconciliation can happen?

How does Jesus Christ's substitution for us—being received by the Father 'as Himself'—inform the way we should approach reconciliation with those who have wronged us?

The sermon states that 'reconciliation requires someone to absorb the cost to pay the price for peace.' What does this sacrifice look like practically in marriages, families, or church relationships?

Paul was willing to stake his entire reputation on Onesimus, a former runaway slave. When have you had to put your reputation on the line for someone else's restoration, and what did that cost you?

The message warns against both minimizing pain ('just get over it') and maximizing it (never moving past it). How do we find the biblical balance between acknowledging real hurt and extending forgiveness?

In what ways does 'keeping score' in our relationships contradict the nature of the grace we've received from God, and how can we break free from this pattern?

The prodigal son's father ran to meet his returning son despite the pain he had caused. What would it look like for you to 'run toward' reconciliation with someone who has hurt you deeply?

If Jesus Christ paid a debt He did not owe so we could be reconciled to God, what debt might God be calling you to pay that you do not owe in order to restore a broken relationship?

Small Group Guide: The Price of Peace

Based on Philemon 1-19

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever had someone unexpectedly pay for something for you (like coffee in a drive-thru)? How did it make you feel? Did it inspire you to do the same for someone else?

Key Sermon Points

1. The Substitution (Verse 17)

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus "as myself" - a powerful picture of how Christ asks the Father to receive us.

2. The Debt Acknowledged (Verse 18)

Paul doesn't minimize the wrong done - he acknowledges the real pain and debt that exists.

3. The Price Paid (Verses 18-19)

Paul commits to pay whatever Onesimus owes - a beautiful picture of Christ paying our sin debt.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. What stood out to you most from this sermon? Why?
2. The sermon mentioned that 38% of Americans are estranged from at least one family member. Why do you think family estrangement is so common today?
3. Read Philemon 17. What does it mean that Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus "as myself"? How is this a picture of what Jesus does for us?
4. Why was it important for Paul to acknowledge the debt in verse 18 rather than just saying "get over it"?

Personal Reflection

5. **The pastor said, "Reconciliation can begin when we can see and receive an offender through Christ." What makes this so difficult? Have you experienced this?**
6. **Which is harder for you:**
 - Minimizing pain ("just get over it")
 - Maximizing pain (never letting it go)

Why do you think that is?

7. **Read Matthew 18:21-22. Peter thought seven times was generous. Jesus said seventy times seven. What does this teach us about God's heart for forgiveness?**
8. **The sermon stated: "Peace is never free. Reconciliation is not cheap. It takes a sacrifice because someone always pays." What does this look like practically in relationships?**

Application

9. **Who in your life is currently at a distance? (You don't have to share names, but consider this personally)**
10. **What's the biggest barrier keeping you from reconciliation with someone?**
 - Pride
 - Fear of being hurt again
 - Feeling justified in your anger
 - Waiting for them to make the first move
 - Other
11. **The sermon mentioned several tactics we use to avoid reconciliation:**
 - Silence/avoidance
 - "Sweeping it under the rug"
 - Keeping score
 - The silent treatment

Which of these do you tend to use? Why?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Jesus paid a debt He didn't owe so we could have peace with God**
- ✓ **Reconciliation requires seeing others through Christ's eyes, not through our offense**
- ✓ **Biblical reconciliation starts with honesty - acknowledging real pain and real debt**
- ✓ **Someone must be willing to absorb the cost and make the sacrifice for peace**

✓ We forgive others because of how much we've been forgiven by God

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following action steps:

Option 1: The Prayer Step

- Identify one broken relationship in your life
- Commit to praying daily for that person and for God to show you what step to take
- Ask God to help you see them through His eyes

Option 2: The Acknowledgment Step

- If you've wronged someone, reach out and acknowledge the debt/pain
- Don't minimize it or make excuses
- Simply say: "I was wrong. I understand I hurt you. I'm sorry."

Option 3: The Forgiveness Step

- If someone has wronged you and wants reconciliation, choose to "absorb the cost"
- Stop keeping score
- Take the initiative to extend grace (as Christ did for you)

Option 4: The Open Door Step

- For parents/family with estranged relationships: Keep your door open
 - Send a simple message: "I love you. When you're ready, I'm here."
 - Continue praying and waiting with hope
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Scripture Memory

Ephesians 4:32 *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

Reflection Questions for Personal Journaling

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- How has Jesus' sacrifice for me changed my perspective on forgiving others?
 - What would it look like for me to "receive" someone who has hurt me "as Christ"?
 - Am I willing to pay the price for peace in my relationships?
 - What sacrifice might God be asking me to make for reconciliation?
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Closing Discussion

Read Isaiah 53:4-6 together as a group.

Final Question: How does understanding what Jesus paid for our peace with God motivate us to pursue peace with others?

Closing Prayer

Pray together for:

- Broken relationships represented in your group
 - Courage to take steps toward reconciliation
 - Hearts that reflect Christ's forgiveness
 - Wisdom to know when and how to reach out
 - God's supernatural work in impossible situations
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Additional Resources

Related Scriptures to Study:

- Matthew 18:15-35 (The Unforgiving Servant)
- Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son)
- Hosea 1-3 (God's pursuing love)
- Colossians 3:12-14 (Bearing with one another)

Questions for Further Study:

- What does it mean that Jesus is our "mediator"? (1 Timothy 2:5)
- How does justification relate to reconciliation? (Romans 5:1)
- What role does humility play in reconciliation? (Philippians 2:3-8)

Remember: Reconciliation is a process. Be patient with yourself and others. Trust God's timing while being obedient to take the steps He shows you.

5-Day Devotional: The Price of Peace

Day 1: Received as Christ

Reading: Philemon 1:17-18; Romans 15:7

Devotional: Paul's stunning request—"receive him as myself"—echoes God's acceptance of us through Christ. When Philemon looked at Onesimus, he naturally saw betrayal and loss. But Paul asked him to see through different eyes—the eyes of grace. This is precisely how God receives us. We don't deserve His welcome, yet through Christ, we're accepted as beloved children. Today, consider someone who has wronged you. Can you see them through Christ's eyes rather than through your pain? God doesn't minimize the hurt, but He offers a new perspective. Reconciliation begins when we stop seeing the offense and start seeing the person Christ died for. Who needs you to receive them today?

Day 2: The Debt Acknowledged

Reading: Psalm 51:1-4; Luke 15:17-21

Devotional: David's confession reveals a crucial truth: healing cannot begin with denial. He didn't minimize his sin or make excuses—he acknowledged it fully. Similarly, the prodigal son rehearsed his confession before returning home. Real reconciliation requires honest acknowledgment of wrongs committed. We cannot say "just get over it" or "it wasn't that bad" when genuine hurt exists. God doesn't ignore our sin; He addresses it completely through Christ's sacrifice. In your relationships, are you minimizing pain or honestly acknowledging it? Whether you've been hurt or have caused hurt, reconciliation starts with truth. Stop avoiding the elephant in the room. Name the wound. Only then can healing truly begin.

Day 3: Someone Must Pay

Reading: Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

Devotional: "Put that on my account." Paul's willingness to absorb Onesimus's debt mirrors Christ's substitution for us. Peace is never free—someone always pays the price. Jesus paid a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay. This is the gospel's beautiful heart. Now God calls us to follow this pattern. Reconciliation in your marriage, family, or church may require you to absorb a cost you don't deserve to pay. It might mean sacrificing your pride, your "rights," or your desire to win. Stop keeping score. Someone must be willing to take the hit for peace to happen. Because Christ absorbed infinite cost for you, you can absorb finite cost for others. What sacrifice is God asking you to make today?

Day 4: Forgiven to Forgive

Reading: Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32

Devotional: The unmerciful servant's story confronts us powerfully: we who have been forgiven everything cannot withhold forgiveness from others. You've received what you didn't deserve—complete forgiveness, eternal life, adoption into God's family. How then can you refuse to extend grace to others? This isn't about ignoring real pain or pretending wrongs didn't happen. It's about choosing to release others from the debt they owe you, just as Christ released you. When you hold onto bitterness, you're essentially saying Christ's sacrifice isn't sufficient to cover their sins. That's dangerous ground. Today, who are you refusing to forgive? What grudge are you nursing? Remember: forgiveness isn't about them deserving it—it's about you reflecting Christ's heart.

Day 5: The Sacrifice of Peace

Reading: Hosea 3:1-3; Colossians 3:12-14

Devotional: God commanded Hosea to do the unthinkable: buy back his unfaithful wife. The wounded husband had to pay to restore the one who betrayed him. This painful picture reveals God's heart toward us—and what He asks of us. Reconciliation often requires the innocent party to make the greater sacrifice. It's not fair by human standards, but it reflects divine love. Your estranged relationship may require you to make the first move, to keep your door open, to absorb the cost of restoration. Pride says, "They should come to me." Love says, "I'll go to them." Time alone doesn't heal—intentional, sacrificial love does. Peace in your home, church, or family may require everything you have. But remember: it's worth it. Christ thought you were worth it.

Reflection Questions for the Week:

- Who has God placed on your heart for reconciliation?
- What sacrifice is He asking you to make for peace?
- How does remembering Christ's sacrifice for you change your perspective on forgiving others?