



---

**Philemon: Grace & Peace** | January 21, 2017**Opening Thoughts**

- Onesimus allows Paul to help him. In the midst of the story, while lost, he understands he needs to be found. He is willing to share with Paul "his stuff."
- In the middle of "the stuff" Christian community forms. In authenticity and the work of God's Spirit.
- Matthew 19.20 - Jesus' emphasis on relationships. As this situation unfolds Jesus is present.
- Paul let's Onesimus in, and through this welcome the gospel helps to make wrong things right, unjust things just, giving the advantage to the disadvantage.
- This is described as "the ministry of reconciliation" and begins with Jesus' story as he moved into the midst of our humanity (John 1.14). Jesus reconciles the world to God through himself.
- As Jesus to Paul, now to Paul to Onesimus and Philemon. This is no small task - the stakes are high!

**Grace & Peace**

- The letter opens with "grace and peace" and those words are found throughout the letter, and, of course, Paul's broader writing.
- Paul sets the tone, as he usually does, with grace and peace. This conversation, this world, in fact, will go know where without grace and peace.
- And we can't find grace and peace within ourselves, it comes from God, a gift from him alone, along with all of life. (John 1.17)
- We heard a story about parents who gave their wayward son unexpected grace.

- The peace (in Hebrew *shalom*) is the wholeness and right relationship with God, humans and creation. The free gift of grace and the peace of God come to us in Christ and hold our Christian relationships together. Radical grace and healing peace.
- We heard a story about a recent LWC gift to inmates in a correctional institute and the response, in letter format, thanking us for our “unconditional love”.
- 2 Corinthians 3.2-4, we are “living letters”. May our lives be worked out in grace and peace.

### **Discussion Questions**

- In what ways, as we work out Christian community, do we share “our stuff” with one another? Why is it vital if we are to live in grace and peace?
- How did Paul act as a “reconciler” between Philemon and Onesimus? Have you seen people do this kind of thing before and what did it look like?
- Why is grace so radical?
- How can we “set the tone” with grace and peace in various relationships? What are the hardest relationships to do this with and how can we aim to do this as “living letters”?