

Nice Shorts: Philemon

The true test of our faith and obedience to Christ is how we extend mercy and restoration to those who previously wronged us.

Philemon

CONDOLENCE

Judy Martin's husband Milo went to be with the Lord last week.

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:1-25 NKJV] 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy [our] brother, To Philemon our beloved [friend] and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. 8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 9 [yet] for love's sake I rather appeal [to you]—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ— 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten [while] in my chains, 11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. 12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. 15 For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but

how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. 20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 [as do] Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Written around 61 AD when Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the first time. He experienced two imprisonments in Rome. This first imprisonment lasted about two years and Paul was busy ministering to others while imprisoned. In this same period, He also wrote the incredibly rich letters of Colossians, Philippians, and Ephesians.

Philemon is not a character we find in the rest of the New Testament, but is obviously known by Paul and has a reputation in the church as an effective and sacrificial minister of the gospel.

- By the name Archippus in the greeting, we can safely assume that Philemon was a leader in the church of Colossae. Archippus was the guy in Colossians 4 that Paul had to exhort to, ***“Take heed to your ministry that you may fulfill it.”***
- Apparently, Philemon had a small church gathering in his house and was a gracious host. Actually, Gaius from 3rd John and Philemon seem to have some things in common in their hospitality and generosity.

Context: In this letter, Paul encourages Philemon in His ministry and applauds him for His service, but this letter is far more than an encouraging note from Paul to Philemon.

- No, this letter would prove to be one of the greatest tests in Philemon’s ministry and personal life. Paul makes a request of Philemon that will put his love, obedience, and forgiveness to the ultimate test. It’s going to be a very uncomfortable read for Philemon, so Paul really wants to express his love and encouragement before requesting something very challenging.

The other main character in Paul's letter is a man by the name of Onesimus.

- Onesimus is a picture of God's reconciliation, redemption, and divine sovereignty in the realm of relationships.
- Onesimus was a slave. Just so happens he was a slave of Philemon. Just so happens that he was a slave of Philemon who ran away. Just so happens he was a slave of Philemon who ran away after stealing Philemon's property. Just so happens he was a slave of Philemon who ran away after stealing Philemon's property and "randomly" ran into Paul from whom he heard the gospel, got saved, and joined Paul in His ministry.

ILLUSTRATION

Example about the dog always wanting to play and me getting frustrated at her when she stands and barks at me.

THE PROBLEM

Well, this letter deals with the unresolved issue in Philemon and Onesimus's relationship.

- Now we have not slave and master, but two brothers in Christ. Onesimus had wronged a man but found forgiveness, new life, and a new identity in Christ.
- Paul recognized that in order for Christ to be honored, and for all parties to move forward in spiritual health, there needed to be attempted repentance and reconciliation between these two brothers in Christ, putting the past behind them and allowing God to redeem this wrong for His glory.

QUOTE

The enemy seeks to use sin to destroy our relationship with God and others, driving divisive wedges of bitterness, hatred, and victimhood. But God uses the cross of Jesus to reconcile those relationships.

Josh, Quote

BIG IDEA

As I've been doing, I want to sum up this short letter into one big idea for us. It's simply this: ***“The true test of our faith, love, and obedience to Christ is how we model the gospel by extending the hope of reconciliation to those who have wronged us.”***

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:1-3 NKJV] 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

Paul, the prisoner of Jesus – Paul was a prisoner of Rome, but he never saw it like that. Rome didn't have any power over Paul. It was only by the Lord's will and greater purpose that Paul was imprisoned by Rome. **When you are captivated by Christ, you can be captive to no other!**

- Most likely Timothy was writing the letter for Paul as he dictated it to him. this is important because, at one point, Paul will take the pen and start writing with his own hand for a specific reason.

Notice, This is a personal plea from Paul to Philemon, yet Paul includes two others in the letter: Archippus and Apphia (probably Philemon's wife).

- Part of me thinks that this might be for the sake of accountability. Paul didn't want to humiliate Philemon in front of his wife and pastor, but he did want Philemon to have some accountability to follow through on doing the right thing.
- I've found that at times, God asks me to do hard things. To repent of sin, to change my attitude, to follow through on a commitment. I am far more successful at obedience when I have some other brothers in my life who challenge me and “hold my feet to the fire” in love.
- Philemon now had a couple of people in his life who would follow up with him on his obedience to Paul's request.

SIDE NOTE

Interesting that he calls Archippus, “Our fellow soldier.”

- a number of years before this, Archippus was a timid, fearful man who was wavering on fulfilling his call into the ministry. Apparently after Paul's exhortation to, "**Take heed to your ministry and fulfill it**", Archippus went all in and earned soldier status in the ministry!

QUOTE

It's never too late to go from a wavering, fearful spectator to a dedicated, fearless soldier of Jesus Christ!

Josh, Quote

1

The Praise

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:4-7 NKJV] 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

APPLICATION

There's no question that Philemon was a "ministry-minded" man who was full of faith and sincere love for the brethren.

- He had faith in Christ and love for all the saints
 - What does this say? *You can't obey a master you don't completely trust and you can't minister to people you don't sincerely love.*
- He was a man whose reputation preceded him as one who, "**refreshed the hearts of the saints.**"
- This is important, because a little later in the letter, Paul will ask Philemon to, "**refresh my heart**" by being obedient to his request.

- What a beautiful thing to be known for. Have you ever been around those people? You spend time with them and when you leave you feel encouraged and strengthened and desiring to be more like Christ; like you went away lacking nothing that you needed?
- This was a man whose life and actions made others satisfied. You could say that Philemon had a fruitful and effective ministry within the church. **And how did his ministry become so effective?** There's a little secret for effective ministry found in verse 6:

6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION

In short, we could say, ***“Effectiveness in our faith comes through the acknowledgment that we all share together in the goodness of Jesus Christ.”***

The more we recognize all that Jesus has instilled in us, the more effective we become in giving out of us.

- When I'm focusing on Jesus and all that I have in him; when I'm considering the price He paid for me, gifts He's entrusted to me, the generosity He's shown to me, the grace and forgiveness he's freely given, I become full and ready to give out of that abundance. But when I'm only focused on myself, my goals, how I'm feeling about something, what's in it for me, my ministry will be ineffective because I'm giving only out of my own resources.

[Phm 1:6 NLT] 6 And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ.

Having trouble getting committed to the ministry? Finding it challenging to be generous and sacrificial? Finding it a chore to put your faith into action? Finding it difficult to show mercy, forgiveness, and grace to those around you?

- That simply is an indication that it's time to look up to Christ. Think of all you have been given in Christ that was undeserved and unearned.

Paul is reminding Philemon about what kind of man He is, what he had been given in Christ, and his reputation as a Jesus follower **because he is about to make a request of him that will put his obedience to the ultimate test.**

Sharing – fellowship – koinonia – true fellowship in the faith occurs when we all recognize who we are in Christ.

2

The Plea

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:8-13 NKJV] **8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—**

APPLICATION

Paul has something that Philemon needs to do, but in bringing it to his attention, *he uses a loving appeal rather than a forceful command:*

- Paul was not ever afraid to use his apostolic authority when necessary to get things done. It would not have been wrong of Paul to issue a command to a believer or a church because of his position of authority.
 - There have been times when I've looked at someone dangerously close to the edge and I don't ask them. I look and say, "don't do that, it will be bad."
 - **But for someone like Philemon who had a sensitivity to the Spirit and a heart that wanted to please the Lord, Paul changed his tone to that of trusting Philemon's personal integrity.**
- To his friend Philemon, Paul wanted to make sure that he knew that his request was motivated by love, and he wanted Philemon's obedience to me motivated by love as well.
 - Sometimes we obey authority simply because they are in authority, but it's better if we obey authority out of our love for God and our love for doing the right thing.

ILLUSTRATION [string image]: Once Dwight Eisenhower was explaining the two types of leadership. He put a string on the table and pushed one end. He failed to move it where he wanted. But then he pulled the string and controlled it precisely.

- [A lesson in leadership...whenever possible, pull people along with love instead of pushing pushing them along by force.](#)

I love Paul's reasoning!!!

I'm too old for this. I'm an old man in a Roman prison, awaiting death... I would rather not have to force the issue, but know that you're responding in love and respect for who I am, where I've been, and where I'm at. Trust me, Philemon!

- Paul wasn't actually that old when he wrote this letter (*between 58-62 / older at that time than it is now*). But he was aged.
- The ministry had aged him. Being left for dead outside the city, running and hiding, sleepless nights, endless days, building tents, preaching the gospel...

The nature of Paul's request is described as, "to do what is fitting in the Lord."

- This particular request will be difficult, but it will also be biblical. It will be hard, but it will be right. Paul is not asking Philemon to do something that he himself would not feel compelled to do.
 - **PS – it is frequently the case that the right, biblical thing to do in a situation also happens to be the most difficult and uncomfortable thing to do.**

BIBLE VERSE

10 I appeal to you for my son (*the tension / the anticipation...*) **Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains** (*in the Greek, Onesimus actually comes last after all the qualifications*), **11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. 12 I am sending him back** (*What! blood starts boiling... good I'm going to have that guy arrested and thrown in debtors prison!*). **You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.**

APPLICATION

Apparently, while Paul was in prison, he had a "divine accident". Paul had a run in, a divine appointment, with Philemon's runaway slave and common thief, Onesimus. Onesimus received

Christ under Paul's preaching, but more than that, became a friend and a spiritual son to Paul as well as a comforter and assistant to him while in prison.

APPLICATION

But now, Paul is going to ask that Philemon doesn't view him that way anymore. Now, Onesimus is a brother in Christ, a fellow worker in the kingdom. Between brothers in Christ, it shouldn't be, "Business as usual".

Imagine the thoughts running through Philemon's head when he hears the name Onesimus.

- It probably wasn't a name he was expecting to hear again. Later in the letter, Paul indicates that Onesimus probably had a debt to pay Philemon, perhaps because of something he stole when he ran away.
- Perhaps the thought of this man caused Philemon's blood to boil. Perhaps he was still working through the forgiveness of someone to whom he had shown incredible love, generosity, and hospitality who turned around and took advantage of him.
- Not only does he hear his name, but he is told that Paul is sending him back. Not only that, but Paul calls Onesimus "my own heart."
- Talk about laying it on!

CONTEXT

Paul indicates that he would love to keep Onesimus for himself to help help in the ministry, but he realizes the more important thing would be the reconciliation of these now brothers so they could work together for the furtherance of the gospel. So he pleads with Philemon, ***"Receive him back, he is profitable to you... not monetarily, but spiritually."***

This is a bit of a play on words by the apostle. The name "Onesimus" means "profitable."

- ***To Philemon, Onesimus represented a loss of profits, a liability, and a potential backstabber. But now, Jesus has made Onesimus truly profitable for the kingdom. Together they could now sharpen each other, serve together and further the kingdom together, and that was far more valuable than any monetary profit of loss.***

APPLICATION

I want to specify here that I believe Paul, based on what I know of Him in the Bible, would not have sent Onesimus back to Philemon if he has any question of whether or not he was truly repentant of His past sin.

- Paul is not asking Philemon to receive a threat into his home or to put him back in a compromised situation.
- No, Paul even tells us that if we have someone who calls themselves a Christian, but they are still living in sin we shouldn't even eat a meal with them.
- Paul saw the change. He saw the remorse. He saw the willingness to make things right. He saw the new nature of Christ in this former thief.

I believe this is important. We always need to forgive everyone. We need to let go of bitterness and vengeance for anything done against us. But reconciliation and restoration can only truly occur when repentance occurs.

- I'm not implying that you and I should unreservedly allow anyone back into our lives that have a pattern of wronging us. I'm not suggesting that broken trust can be restored overnight.
- What I am saying is that as people who have received the unfathomable gift of God's forgiveness and acceptance, we must be willing to forgive and work toward reconciliation with those who have shown authentic repentance toward their past sinful actions.

QUOTE

“Love may forgive all infirmities and love still in spite of them: but Love cannot cease to will their removal.”

CS Lewis,

BIBLE VERSE

[1Co 6:9-11 NKJV] 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you

were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

3

The Purpose

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:15-17 NKJV] **15** For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, **16** no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. **17** If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.

ILLUSTRATION

When I was in high school, I had a really bad lisp in my speech. My s's sounded more like th's.

- There was a particular guy who, on a daily basis, bullied me about it. He pushed me around a little, but never tried to beat me up. Instead he would mock me. I was, **“Donkey Lips”**, the guy with the big mouth and bad lisp who couldn't speak very well. Being the brunt of he and his friends jokes every week was demoralizing and discouraging.
- Fast forward about 1 years or so, We were visiting my old church in SoCal, and after church as I was walking in the courtyard, who do I see walking down the stairs with a Bible in His hand? Let's just say that all I could hear in my heart was the words, “Donkey lips.”

That day I ended up embracing a man whom I was once the brunt of his jokes, and now I was his brother in Christ. It was hard to confront him. At first he recognized me, but didn't connect the dots. Once I told him “Donkey Lips” his face turned red and he immediately apologized and shared with me how God got a hold of his life. At the end of the day, how could I not rejoice for His salvation! It just goes to show:

QUOTE

In Christ Jesus, even an enemy can become a brother.

Josh, Quote

ILLUSTRATION

SIDE NOTE: Now we hear the word slave and automatically shutter, as we should. Slavery as we most commonly conceive it is utterly reprehensible. The trading and selling of human beings as personal property devalues an image-bearer of God and is against God's design and below human worth and dignity. Now while this letter isn't a direct treatise on slavery it does require some context. Slavery in the ancient Hebrew context was extensively different from what one might think in the context of modern-day slavery. One commentator observes:

QUOTE

In some cultures, slavery was more benevolent. In Hebrew society, slavery was an alternative to debtor's prison. If you fell behind financially, and you could work off your obligation. Rather than file bankruptcy or go to jail, slavery was a way to dig out of an insurmountable financial hole.

APPLICATION

Philemon was not a vile, exploitive slave trader who took advantage of weaker people in order to satisfy his greed or project superiority. Paul commends him for his love, and kindness, and faith. Most likely, he was just a Christian businessman, trying to help a neighbor or stranger pay off his debt and regain his financial freedom.

No, Paul doesn't use this as an opportunity to try to abolish slavery... he does even one better. He combats slavery with the seeds of gospel reconciliation.

- Even when slavery is outlawed, people still hate one another, oppress one another, and take advantage of each other because their hearts are still unreconciled, unredeemed, and unregenerate.
- Paul now eradicates a slave/master relationship by bringing the cross of Jesus into the middle of it; by declaring the old things have passed away and now there's a new relationship that can be established.

QUOTE

William Wilberforce, a member of Parliament in the 18th century, and a driving force behind the abolition of the African slave trade was a strong believer, heavily influenced by the gospel in his social action. He wrote,

“Should not Christianity...

extinguish the malignant passions; curb the violence, control the appetites, and smooth the asperities of man; make us compassionate and kind, and forgiving one to another; make us good husbands, good fathers, good friends; and render us active and useful in the discharge of the relative social and civil duties? ”

— William Wilberforce

William Wilberforce, Real Christianity

APPLICATION

Paul's second big request – “Receive him as you would me!”

- If Philemon had seen Paul, he would run to meet him with a hug and a kiss. He would have welcomed him into his home and fed and clothed him. He would have stayed up all night hearing about his journeys. He would have taken a day off to attend to his needs and pray with him.
- Paul says, “When you see Onesimus, treat him like I’m the one who is coming to you.”

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:18-20 NKJV] 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

APPLICATION

Here's what I really want you to notice: Paul is taking upon himself the ministry of reconciliation. He recognizes that Jesus wiped the debt of sin completely away, the very least he can do is cover the debt of Onesimus. Remember what Paul said to the Corinthians about his ministry:

BIBLE VERSE

[2Co 5:18-19 NKJV] 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

ILLUSTRATION

In the movie Les Miserables – Jean Valjean served prison time 14 years over for stealing a loaf of bread. He is hardened and he is cynical. He finds underserved refuge in the church grounds and stays at the home of the priest. And this is probably my favorite movie scene of all time (along with one in the Count of Monte Christo) because it displays this kind of unearned grace and the impact it can have on a person. **Let's roll it.**

APPLICATION

Paul is taking this call seriously! Jesus reconciled us to himself, but in doing so made the way possible for us to be reconciled to each other.

- The bigger point Paul is trying to convey is, “Philemon, don't let money be the deciding factor in this relationship. This is bigger than money, this is brotherhood.”
- “If that means I have to pay it”, Paul says, “Than so be it.”
- But then notice that Paul backtracks a little bit. Paul isn't not going to keep his word, but he throws a little extra context in there.

PICTURE IT: He's speaking and the scribe is writing. He says, “I'll pay the debt myself!” All the sudden Timothy pipes up, “He Paul, he owes him like 20k.” Everyone is quiet for a minute than Paul says, “Ok write this next...”

BIBLE VERSE

[Phm 1:19-21 NKJV] 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.

PARAPHRASE

Yes, I will pay the small debt he owes you, but before you take me up on that, I'd just like to remind you that you owe your life and eternal destiny to me... just saying. No price could ever be put of your salvation which came through my ministry to you and my sacrifice for you... but if you really want me to pay for his debt, so be it.

- But Philemon, I know you! I know that you're going to be obedient to what I say, and I even know you will even do more than I ask cause that's the kind of guy you are!

APPLICATION

Now I don't know about you, but this just comes across as passive aggressive to me, and a little bit of a guilt trip. But here is the redeeming factor:

- Paul loved Philemon
- Paul loved Onesimus
- Paul loved Jesus

1 Corinthians 16:14 – do all things with love.

Paul was still human, and he might have been passive aggressively throwing his weight around a little, but at the end of the day his motive was still love and obedience. Our method is important, but even more important is the motive and attitude of our heart. Paul and Philemon's relationship was strong enough to handle a few personality quirks and still see the bigger picture.

BIBLE VERSE

20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

[Phm 1:22-25 NKJV] 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

APPLICATION

Paul throws a little extra weight on at the end, “Oh and by the way, I might show up one of these days and we can rejoice together in your obedience!”

- More than that, it shows Paul’s faith in adversity. Even while imprisoned he believed that the faithful prayers of the saints could bring forth his deliverance.
- But Paul wasn’t delivered. He never made it to the house of Philemon.
- Paul was confident that God was going to do something to deliver him, and God didn’t!
- How do we reconcile this?

At the end of the day, God’s wisdom is still wiser than mine, yours, and even Paul’s. It is good and right to confidently believe God for miracles, for healing, for provision and deliverance, but at the end of the day, He is still king. His counsel stands forever. His plans are the only right course of action. And if its in his greater purpose for me to not be delivered, not be healed, not see all my dreams and visions fulfilled, He is still good and still right.

BIBLE VERSE

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION

Interestingly enough, this is the only letter of Paul where he doesn’t mention the cross or the resurrection of Christ. This is not because the gospel isn’t center in this letter, but rather that Paul was embodying the preaching of the gospel through his example. He was a living image of why Jesus died, and the reconciliation that the gospel brings.

In Martin Luther’s commentary of Philemon, he makes the short but true statement, **“All of us are Onesimuses.”**

There is such a truth in this:

- We all possessed a debt against God we could never repay.
- We all like sheep had gone astray, each of us turning to our own way.
- We all had run away in rebellion from our God and creator.

- Then we had a divinely orchestrated appointment with Jesus who said, “It is finished” and wiped away the debt against us. He nailed the handwriting of requirements to His cross.
- He took us from being slaves to sons and daughters, from being enemies of God to friends of God.

AND SO... What do we do with the Onesimuses in our own lives?

- Can we say of ourselves, “He who has been forgiven much loves much?”
- Can we extend the same forgiveness and clearing of debts to others as Christ has extended it to us?
- Are we, like Paul was, willing to risk relational tension in order to see people repent and be restored to fellowship with each other?
- This is the ministry of reconciliation and the heart of God.

Perhaps today you are like Philemon – your fruitful and effective in the ministry but there is a hurt that has been caused by a person that runs deep. Perhaps today God wants to remind you that perhaps God is going to use that past wrong to bring about something good. Are you willing to pray for that person, that God would grant them repentance leading to life and restoration?

Perhaps you're an Onesimus – You've been running from the past, but now Jesus has a hold of your life and you're seeking to make right the things you've made wrong in the past. Do you have the courage to repent, apologize, and seek to rectify what your decisions have damaged?