

Real Friendship

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 July 2013

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Philemon, and we'll read the entire chapter. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, to Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker, to Aphia, our sister, to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your home.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

I pray that you will be active in sharing your faith so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love.

I then, as Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

[1:14] Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he has become useful to both you and me. I am sending him, who is my very heart, back to you.

I would like to have kept him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced.

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good, 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 man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you welcome me.

If he has done anything to wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back, not to mention you owe me your very self.

[2:20] I do wish, brother, that I may have 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 ask.

One more, and one thing more, prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Would you rather have 300 Facebook friends or one best friend?

Young people, would you rather be in a popular group at school or have one good friend that sticks closer than a brother, sticks with you through thick and thin?

It's interesting, we're more connected than we've ever been in our society. We're texting and tweeting and chatting and all that.

[3:31] But again and again, reports say that people are more lonely than ever. More disconnected than ever before. More isolated than they've ever been.

I wonder, is that you? Can you relate to how that feels? In the book of Ecclesiastes, the teacher puts his finger right on one of the most bitter realities of living in a sin-frustrated world.

If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who doesn't have a friend to help him when he falls. A friend.

That's what we need. That's what Jesus was to us. And is to us. And the book of Philemon is all about sin. It's all about broken relationships.

It's all about reconciliation. And it's about friendship. So sin has struck. Onesimus has run out on Philemon. And on the way out, he stole a bunch of Philemon stuff, apparently, or wronged him in some way.

[4:41] And now, in prison, Paul and Onesimus meet. And Paul is God's instrument to convert Onesimus. And now, Paul sends Onesimus back with the letter that we've now read three times in your hearing.

And at the letter, at the very beginning of that letter, it says to Philemon, our dear friend. And then, in verse 17, if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

Friendship is at the heart of the book of Philemon. It's the heartbeat of this passage. Paul's not standing above Onesimus.

Even though Onesimus was of a lower class. He's of a slave class. But Paul's not standing above Onesimus. Paul's not standing above Philemon. No, he's standing right with both of them.

He's a friend to these two people that have now had a falling out. And in verses 17 through 22, Paul now steps into the situation.

[5:54] He's told us what God has done to reconcile these two. And now, he puts himself in the middle. And in doing so, he shows us what God calls us to be as friends.

What it really means to be a good friend. And he does it in the context of sin, of broken relationships, of disappointment.

In other words, he does it in the context of real life. In the place where we live. So, in these verses, Paul shows us that friends, people sharing in the Christian life.

And that's all of us. They say four things. They say four things in the face of sin, disappointment, heartache. First, as friends, we say, I'll pay for that.

I'll pay for that. What is at the heart of every broken relationship? That's sin. So, are you going through a broken relationship?

[7:04] A difficult, hard relationship? If you trace it back far enough, and it won't take very long, you'll find at the bottom of that problem, of that broken relationship, is the root cause of sin.

There's only one way for sin to be dealt with. It has to be paid for. There's only one way that sin can be dealt with. Someone has to pay.

It's that simple. Sin incurs a debt. Just like going to the bank and taking out a loan puts you in debt to the bank, sin puts you into debt to God, first and foremost.

We do not give him what he's due when we sin. And so we go into his debt. So what does God do? What does his do?

Well, all of your love. Those words are easier said than done. All of your love.

[8:08] All of the passion of your heart. Every thought of your heart to be guided and directed by love for God. He so impresses me.

I am so taken with him. He is so wonderful that I think these thoughts. All the love of your mind. All the love of your heart.

That's talking about your feelings, your emotions. I am so taken with God. He is so wonderful and so beautiful and so glorious. My heart goes out to him.

And so I feel this way. I feel anger. And I feel hurt. And I feel joy. Because I love him. And all the love of your strength. My hands do what my hands do.

Because I am obsessed with God. God. That's what. Is giving God his due. That's what you and I owe God.

[9:09] Because he is God. And we are his creatures. When God says. Love me with all of your heart. And your mind. And your soul. And your strength. He's not telling us how to be extra religious good people.

He's not telling us how to be extra special good people. How to be. He's telling us what it means to be. His creature. He's telling us what it means.

What we owe him. Because he's God. And so when you sin. You rob God. Now sin always has a Godward direction. It's always first and foremost against God. When you sin.

You go into debt. With God. To God. But usually sin has a manward direction as well. Onesimus sinned against Philemon. He literally stole.

Robbed Philemon of what belonged to him. And so Onesimus is in Philemon's debt. Now the only way. That healing can take place. And reconciliation can happen.

[10:10] For forgiveness to happen. Is someone has to pay the debt. Someone has to absorb the cost. To make up for what was stolen. And the gospel teaches us.

To say. I'll pay for that. I'll pay for that. Look at verses 18 and 19. If he's done you any wrong. Or owes you anything. Charge it to me. I Paul am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back. Not to mention. You owe me your very self. Well what does it mean to be a friend? What does it mean to be partners? What does it mean to be sharing in the life of Christ?

Which Grace Fellowship Church. That's what we are doing. That's what it means to be a body of Christ. We're sharing in the life of Christ. Well what does it mean to be those partners? Those friends? In Paul's mind.

[11:09] It means saying. I will pay whatever Onesimus owes. And that. I think. If you think about it. Is so different than what we think about things.

We think. Your debt is your debt. My debt is my debt. I'll worry about myself. You worry about you. But. Paul obliterates that. And the gospel obliterates that selfish way.

And self-centered way of thinking. And he says. Whatever Onesimus owes. I'll pay for it. Charge it to me. Take it out of my account. If it's between me suffering loss. And Onesimus suffering loss. I'm going to suffer the loss. If it's between Onesimus paying. And me paying. I'll pay for that. So how can Paul say that? How can we get to the place.

Where we are saying that. About our brothers and sisters. When they've sinned against us. Well Paul can say that. Because that's exactly. What Jesus did for him.

[12:06] That's exactly. Precisely. What Jesus did for Paul. Jesus was the kind of friend to Paul. That Paul is now being. To Onesimus. And to Philemon.

Paul had ruined. His relationship. With God. He had ruined. His relationship with God. Paul was in deep.

Debt. To God. Paul owed a sum. That he could never pay back. But Jesus said. I'll pay for that. And the cross was Jesus payment.

He said. Paul owes you honor. Father. I'll pay for that. Shame. Me. Take my honor away.

Paul owes you glory. Father. Take my glory away from me. Humble me to the grave. Paul owes you obedience.

[13:10] I'll obey for you. Father. I'll obey in his place. Paul's relationship. With God. Was ruined. In Jesus.

In order to. Restore. And reconcile. The two. He ruined. His own relationship. With the father. Paul knew what happened.

On the cross. He knew what. Jesus had done for him. And so. He said. With boldness. And with honesty. And with humility.

I'll pay the price. There's anything. I'll pay any price. To bring healing. To this relationship. And he did that. He was able to do that.

Because grace. Had captivated him. The power of the cross. Had. Gotten a hold of him. With both hands. And wouldn't let him go.

[14:04] And that's what it means. To be a good friend. When we're living together. People are going to sin against us. You walk around with sinners. And you're going to get splashed on.

Mud's going to fly on you. And they're going to sin against you. But what it means. To be a good friend. Is you absorb the loss. That's what it means. To forgive someone. Instead of demanding. Punishment out of them.

You absorb the cost. Yourself. You say. That's nothing compared. To what I've done. This is nothing compared. To what Jesus has done for me. I'll pay whatever price.

To heal the relationship. I'll absorb whatever loss. Whatever sin. When they come to me. And ask for forgiveness. I will give it to them. Because Jesus paid for me.

And so the very first thing. That we say in friendship. Is. I'll pay that. I'll pay for that. Now secondly. It says. As friends. We say.

[14:59] My heart. Is in your hands. My heart. Is in your hands. Is in your hands. Look at verse 20. I do wish brother.

That I may have some benefit. And that word benefit is. It sounds like the word Onesimus. It sounds like the word useful. He's saying. I wish you could be useful to me. And here's how you can be useful to me.

Refresh. My heart. In Christ. Now how is. How is Philemon going to refresh. Paul's heart. Philemon. If you welcome Onesimus back.

You're going to refresh my heart. If you welcome him. And say. I'm sending him back to you. And you say. I welcome you.

I receive you. All is forgiven. Paul's heart is going to be refreshed. Paul's saying. I'm sending my very heart back to you. Now do you get.

[15 : 54] What that picture is. I mean. Imagine that. Where was Paul's heart. It was in Onesimus. Onesimus. How was.

He going to refresh. Paul's heart. By welcoming Onesimus. See Paul. Had become. A heart donor. He'd become a heart donor. He had taken out his heart.

And he'd given it. To Onesimus. And now. His heart is going back to Colossae. Back to Philemon's house. And now. Here it was.

Paul's heart. In Philemon's hands. And he says. Refresh my heart. Do me good. Now when we are joined to Jesus. When we are savingly joined to Jesus.

We're baptized into his body. Our hearts go out. We become heart donors. And first and foremost. Our heart goes out. And rests itself. Now all of our joy. And our comfort.

[16 : 53] And our peace. And our glory. And our hope. Is in Jesus. But through Jesus. By the spirit. It goes out to all of. My fellow brothers and sisters.

My fellow Christians. It rests on all those. Who are in Christ. With me. And so. It's not only on him. I only. I not only give my heart away.

To Jesus. But I've given my heart away. To all my. Brothers and sisters. In Christ. And so now. My heart is in you. And your heart is in me.

And we weep together. And we rejoice together. Your sorrows. Move my heart. So. You say.

My brother has cancer. You say. My friend. Has died. You say. My children. Are running from the Lord.

[17 : 48] Lord. And yes. Those things haven't come upon me. Not my brother. Not my friend. Not my children. But because I've given my heart away.

Because my heart is in your chest. I feel that. My heart moves in sympathy. With you. And we're in this together.

Together. That's what it means. To live the shared life. We're sharing sorrows. We're sharing joy. He saved us. To live.

This life together. To take us out of ourselves. And out of our own private concerns. And to give us. To each other. But with this mystery.

There's a responsibility. I have to realize. And you have to realize. Friends. That it's your. Responsibility. To refresh.

[18 : 46] Each other's hearts. If my heart is in your hand. And your. Your heart is in my hands. Then I am responsible. To refresh it. To encourage it.

To hold it up. So he says. Philemon. Refresh my heart. Someone said. Life is short. And we do not have much time. To gladden the hearts.

Of those who travel with us. So be quick to love. And make haste. To be kind. We're traveling together. And this path is dark.

It's hard. It's full of bitterness. And bitter trials. And difficulties. And pain. And it's a short path. There's not a lot of time.

To gladden our hearts. And so we have to hurry to love. And hurry to be kind. And so are you refreshing. The hearts of the saints.

[19 : 45] Are you looking how to encourage your brothers and sisters. Is the church a place for you to encourage people? Or is the church and Sunday morning just a place to be?

To receive. To receive. To receive. And not to give. We're locked arm in arm. You've given your heart away. I've given my heart away.

And so let's refresh our hearts. Each other's hearts in Christ. Well how do you do that? How do you do that? What is Paul looking for? Well he says welcome him.

Receive him. He's saying be gracious. To Onesimus. Throw open your arms. Yeah he's sinned. But be gracious and forgive him.

And isn't that what we want? Isn't that what we want from Grace Fellowship Church. From each other. We want this to be. Where people know our sins.

[20:41] Where we don't have to. Pretend to be better than what we are. Where people know our sins. And yet love us anyways. Grace Fellowship Church. Needs to be. That kind of place.

This isn't a fellowship. Where people. Come together. Who clean up well. It's a fellowship. Where people come in hurting. Where people come in. Aching.

So we're. We're airplanes. And we've been flying over enemy territory. And we've been shot up. We need a place to land. We need a place to refuel.

To rest. To be restored. To be repaired. And. Grace Fellowship. You are the airfield. You are the airfield.

For your. Brothers and sisters in Christ. And so welcome them. Welcome them as they are. People who don't have it all together. People who are shot up.

[21:39] People who are hurt. People who are dirty. People who need forgiven. People who have stories. And so be a good listener. Listener. We all want to come and talk. Or at least most of us want to come and talk.

And tell our stories. But. Welcoming someone means. Listening to them. Listening to their struggles. Listening to their triumphs. Welcoming them.

It means covering over a multitude of sins. It's rough out there. Isn't it? You're in the workplace. And it's hard. And it's rough. And you're tempted.

And you're tried. And it's difficult. We're living in the wild west. And so we can't be surprised if we get dirty. And we come in. And we have problems. And bad habits.

And sins that we've picked up along the way. Well love covers over a multitude of sins. It doesn't make an issue out of small things. It takes you in. Like the good Samaritan took that man in.

[22:37] Heels. Washes. We clean them up. We love on them. And we don't worry about the smudge on their face so much. Or the dirt on their shoes.

Refresh their hearts. How can you do that? Philemon. This is the second time. Paul's said something about Philemon. Refreshing hearts. This is something that he's been good at.

Now how can we be good at it as well? How can we be these kind of friends? Another way is with an encouraging word. With an encouraging word. When the pilot gets out of the airplane.

Out of a shot up airplane. After going on a long mission into enemy territory. He wants to come back with the ground crew cheering for him. With an encouraging word.

And you say. Well I don't. I don't have anything to encourage my brothers and sisters with. It's hard for me. There's nothing in my life right now. This week that is particularly encouraging.

[23:40] It's been a hard week. And just may I say that. If that's what you're thinking. Where you're looking at your life. And you're saying. I don't see a lot to encourage. I just want to point.

Maybe you're looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Maybe you're looking at the wrong thing. When we encourage our brothers and sisters.

We aren't first and foremost telling them about us. I'm not the good news. I'm not the good news. I could have had the worst week of my life.

And I still have something encouraging to say. And I'll tell you why. Because here are 66 books of encouragement. And not a one of them is about what happened to me this week.

It's about God. It is about what Jesus Christ is doing. It is who God is for sinners like us. And so what I'm saying is. Encouragement is not mostly about me.

[24:40] Obviously it has something to do with me. And obviously this book has something to do with what happened with me this week. But what I'm saying is. Encouragement is mostly about Jesus Christ. It's about what God is doing.

It is about what God has promised. And so I need to hear that he loves me. I need to hear the bigness of his promise. To forgive me of my sins.

And you know. Pastors aren't the only ones who can speak the gospel. Philemon wasn't a pastor. And yet he was refreshing the hearts of his brothers and sisters.

And pastors aren't the only ones who are allowed to refresh the hearts of the saints. That's something that you can do. You have Bibles. You have the word of God.

And so. Just. You can pick out an encouraging verse that you've found. And you can say brother or sister. Let me share this with you.

[25:36] Now isn't that good news? And that has nothing to do with how I feel. That has nothing to do with what happened with me. Or what's happening in my life. It has everything to do with Jesus.

Has everything to do with the God. With God. And with the gospel. See. I'm not the good news. Jesus is. That's how we can refresh the hearts of the saints.

Now imagine if we were doing that more. Imagine what kind of place this would be. I know that's going on. But I want to say. Excel still more.

We could do better. Can't we? We could do better. This place could be an oasis in the desert. This place could be wonderful. We could be saying. I can't wait.

For Sunday. Because Sunday is the day. When my brothers and sisters. They love on me. And they encourage me. And I come with my sin. And my problems. And they receive me.

[26 : 33] And they help me. And I'm encouraged. And they pick me up. Now. Like I said. I know that's going on. With a lot of you. But if that's not what is going on.

In your life. Can I encourage you. To get with it. To join with us. What are you waiting for? Yes. It's dirty. Yes.

It's messy. Yes. It's difficult. Yes. There's some fear. Yes. You're going to have to get over. Maybe your issues. About speaking with people. But that's what it means.

To be a friend. And there's help in Jesus. There's help in Jesus. To be those kind of people. So. Secondly. When we're friends. We say. You have my heart.

And I have your heart. And I'm called to refresh you. Now. Thirdly. We say. I trust you. I trust you. Now. We're not used to thinking like this.

[27 : 26] We're used to just thinking about. I trust God. And that's. Obviously. What you want to do. But. In verse 21. Paul says. I trust you. Philemon.

Confident. Of your obedience. I write to you. Knowing that you will do. Even more. Than I ask. In other words.

Philemon. We're partners. We're partners. Philemon. I trust you. I am confident. That you're going to do. The right thing. And I'm confident. That you're going to go.

Beyond. Even the call of duty. You're going to even do. More than what I ask. See friends. Trust each other. Friends. Trust each other. A good team.

Trust all the members. On that team. So. As. Game six. Of. The 1997. NBA championship. It's the Chicago Bulls.

[28 : 21] Versus the Utah Jazz. With. 28 seconds. Left in the game. It's all tied up. And Utah. Missed a shot.

And. The Bulls. Got the rebound. And they called a timeout. Now. Who's going to take the last shot? Well.

The Jazz. Expected Michael Jordan. To take the last shot. All of TV. Land. Expected Michael Jordan. To take the last shot. The TV announcers.

Expected. Jordan. To take the last shot. Everybody. In the gymnasium. And in the stadium. And the TV. Knew that the ball. Was coming. To Michael Jordan. But you go inside that huddle.

Inside that team. Or inside that timeout. And Jordan. Is looking at Steve Kerr. Saying. Kerr. This is your chance. So Jordan.

[29 : 20] You're not going to take the last shot. You're the best player of all time. Kerr. It's your chance. Ball comes in. To Michael Jordan. Jordan's double teamed.

And he passes. To a wide open. Steve Kerr. Who hits a 17 footer. With five seconds left. To win. The game. And the championship. And the United Center. Went crazy.

Jordan. Trusted. Steve Kerr. To rise. To the occasion. That's what it means. To be friends. That's what it means.

To be partners. There's trust. And there's expectation. Jordan. Expects. Kerr. To make it. And so he passes. The ball to him. Paul. Expects.

Philemon. To rise. To the occasion. And so. He's not going to command. Philemon. What to do. He's not going to. Blackmail him. Into doing. What the right thing is. He says. I'm confident.

[30 : 15] That you're going to do. What you're supposed to do. I'm confident. That you're going to even do. More than what. I have even asked. Trust. Expectation.

We need those things. We know. We need those things. From our fellow Christians. From our fellow church members. We want those things. We thrive in those conditions.

The family of God. Is not a place. With low expectations. God is not a father. With low expectations. When people expect.

Great things from us. We want to rise. To the occasion. And we have a natural. Desire. To do those. To meet those expectations. But when there are low expectations. When there are no expectations. You fall to those things. And you even do less. Than the bare minimum. Or nothing at all. So.

[31:13] I need you. We'll just put this. On the personal level. To illustrate. I need you. To expect good sermons out of me. And I know you do. That helps me.

That helps me to grow. That helps me. When I don't feel. Like putting in the hard work. When I'm not so excited. When it's hard going. When I'm discouraged.

I need you. To expect that from me. And you know what? You need me. To expect you. To use your gifts. So when you join. Grace Fellowship Church.

You make a commitment. To use your gifts. That's an expectation. That everyone puts on. Every new member. But.

It's. Both. Expectation. With trust. With confidence. Confident. Of your obedience. Knowing that you're going to do. More than I ask. Well why can we be so confident?

[32:12] Why is Jordan. Willing to pass the ball to Kerr? Why am I willing. To. Let you. Use your gifts. Why am I. So expectant. And so trusting. That you're going to rise.

To the occasion. Paul says. Well Paul knows. It's because Christ is at work. In Philemon's life. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is with Philemon. And I. As I look out. I see a lot of you. Where Christ is at work. In your life. And so. There's this expectation. That I can have. He's a fruitful vine. I'm expecting you. To be fruitful.

Because you're plugged into him. Just like my hope.

For myself. Is not me. It's. The spirit. Working. The spirit of Christ. Working in me. So my hope. And my expectation. And my trust. For you. Is that the spirit of God.

[33:09] Will be at work. In your life. And I expect you. To grow. I expect you. To thrive. You know. That's what you expect. Of all children.

And God's children. Are no different. When children. Don't grow. That's an issue. It's a real problem. When parents. Don't expect their children. To grow up.

But I expect you. To thrive. I expect you. To overcome sin. I expect you. To persevere. And I expect. That you're going to live up. To your commitments. Because Christ.

Is in you. Not just you. Christ. Is in you. The spirit of God. The spirit of power. And of self-control. And of wisdom.

Is in you. And he's at work. And so I expect. To see his fruit. In you. See. The church. Is this perfect. Environment. For us. To grow. We talked about it.

[34:08] Two weeks ago. I think. Where. You know. We want to have. We would love. To have. Like a sterile. Environment. Some spiritual. Laboratory. Somewhere. Where we could. Just grow. All by ourselves.

In a clean. Environment. With no mess. But the church. Is a greenhouse. It's the perfect. Environment. For plants. Like us. To grow up. Because.

Here. The hot light. Of expectation. Falls on us. Here. The water. Of trust. You trust me. You expect. From me.

You're encouraging. Me. And the power. Of the spirit. Is in me. And so. We grow up. Together. You need.

Each other. You need. Each other. You can't live. Without each other. You need. That trust. You need. That expectation. You need. That encouragement.

[35:00] From your brothers. And sisters. But. You finally. You need. Accountability. And that's. What. The fourth point. Fourthly. We say. I'm holding.

You accountable. I'm holding. You accountable. It's not. Just trust. It's not. Just expectation. In friendship. There's accountability.

There's accountability. Verse 22. One thing more. Prepare. A guest room. For me. Because. I hope. To be restored. To you. In answer. To your prayers.

Now. Most people. Wonder. If this is. A change. Of subject. Is Paul. Moving on. To different things. Well. Obviously. There's a little bit. Of a change. Of subject. But I think. Somehow. This is related. To what is going.

Before. I can't help. But think. Yes. He's moving. To a different topic. But nevertheless. Paul is saying. Philemon. I'm coming. To your house. Soon. With the unspoken.

[35 : 57] Words. Being. And I'm going. To see. What you did. With Onesimus. With the unspoken. Words. Being. So you better.

Have welcome. To an SMS. I'll be coming. To see you. So you better. Do what is right. At the end. Of the day. Paul is still.

Holding. Philemon. Accountable. All along the way. He hasn't. Wanted. To push. His weight around. He's been saying. You know.

I could be bold. To order you. But I'm not. I appeal to you. On the basis. Of love. He says. I don't want. To do anything. Without your consent. I want this. To be willing. But at the end.

Of the day. Paul is going. To make sure. That this matter. Is resolved. He's going. To make sure. That Philemon. Does what is right. That the relationship. Is patched up.

[36 : 52] I think. What he's saying. Is. Philemon. I don't. Necessarily. Want to. But if I have to. Hold your feet. To the fire.

I will. And. We need that. Trust. Expectation.

Those things. Are good. But we also. Need accountability. And friendship. In the Bible. Is never. A passive thing. It's never. A passive thing. Where you just.

Go along. With a crowd. You never. Stand up. To your friend. Wounds. From a friend. Can be trusted. And that means. Sometimes. Your best friend. Is going to stand.

In your path. And slap you. Across the face. Because that's. What you need. And he loves you. So being friends. Means. Giving.

[37 : 45] And receiving. Rebuke. And correction. Friendship. In the Bible. Means accountability. And it means. That when. One of you. Or one of us. Posts something.

To their Facebook. That they shouldn't. Someone's going to come along. And say. You know. What. What's that about? What are you doing? It means.

If one of you. Is not here. For a while. If you're skipping out. You shouldn't have been. It means that. Not just your pastors. Others. But. Someone in the body. Of Christ.

Is going to come. Alongside you. And say. Where have you been? You need to be. With us. Guys. I think it means. That someone's keeping an eye.

On your computer usage. And I think ladies. It means someone's. Single ladies. It means someone's. Keeping an eye. On who you're dating. It means that.

[38 : 41] When you aren't making up. With someone. You're holding a grudge. You're not forgiving. Someone is going to come. Alongside you. Like Paul did. And say. Remember what Jesus.

Did for you. Who are you. To hold a grudge. See. Biblical friendship. Is not. It's not a wet paper towel. You know.

What's a wet paper towel. Good for. It falls apart. Has no strength. Friendship. It's not limp. And useless.

Friendship in the Bible. Is like sandpaper. Has rough edges. And it takes the rough edges. Off of you. Off of other people. Biblical friendship.

Living together in Christ. Means I'm holding you accountable. And you're holding me accountable. And we need that. See the Christian life. Is not a secluded life. That's what we've seen again. And again.

[39 : 35] In the book of Philemon. It's not the secluded life. It's the shared life. It's not just you. And Jesus. And your Bible. That's not Christianity. That's not the way you grow.

That's not the way you thrive. Here. Is the greenhouse. For growing Christians. It's lived in the dirty. The dusty.

The disappointing. The hardships. Of relationships. Someone wrote a book. Relationships. A mess worth making.

And that's exactly right. And so if you say. You know. Relationships are hard. And I'm discouraged. And I don't have what it takes. It's hard enough for me.

To live my life. Let alone start caring about all these other people. Look at Paul's last words. In verse 26. Or verse 25.

[40 : 32] Just his very last words. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be with your spirit. Relationships are hard.

They're messy. They're the hardest thing. About being a church. Aren't they? Church would be perfect.

If there were no people. Someone. Once made a movie. Said Lord. This is the title of it. Lord. Save me. From your followers.

And we feel that way sometimes. Don't we? It's hard. But here's some hope. To take with you. Take with you.

As you talk with your brothers and sisters. As you talk with your friends. We don't do this on our own. We don't go on our own. Going with us. With our spirits.

[41 : 29] As the grace. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. His strength. His help. His mercy. His pity. His love. His power. He's the refuge.

When we get beat up. In a relationship. And we need to go back. To that hospital. He's that hospital. The grace of our Lord Jesus. Is with our spirits. So wherever we go. Jesus.

Grace. Is there. He's with us. And so whatever hard conversation. You need to have. Whatever difficult. Personal situation. You're in.

Jesus Christ. And all of his grace. And all of his resources. And all of his power. All of his pity. Are there. With you. And so let's go and hope then.

We're not doing this hard. Messy business. By ourselves. Jesus had 12 disciples. And he did this. He knows what it's like. He's not unsympathetic to us.

[42 : 28] And his grace is with us. So let's go and hope. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you've given us Jesus Christ to be that kind of friend for us.

The kind of friend that says, I'll pay for that. When we had sinned.

When we had opposed God. He said, I'll pay for that. And he who knew no sin became sin for us. Lord Jesus, thank you for becoming the thing that God hates. In order to love us. Thank you for becoming the thing that God's wrath must fall upon.

In order that that wrath would not fall upon us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being a kind of friend that would say, I'll pay for that.

[43 : 38] That would say, you have my heart. Thank you that in heaven we do not have a great high priest who is unsympathetic. But one who has tried and tested in every way just like we are.

And yet was without sin. And now he is sitting there. And he's able to sympathize with us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are that kind of high priest.

That kind of friend. And thank you that you are the kind of friend that holds us accountable. Will not let us stray. But you wound us.

And you afflict us. In order to bring us back to where we need to be. We thank you that your wounds can be trusted. And I pray that the spirit of God would be upon our hearts to help us to be those kind of friends to one another.

Out of the fullness of your grace. Out of the greatness of your strength. And the amazing mercy for us. That we would extend that mercy and that grace to one another.

[44 : 49] Help us to be a church that is looking more and more like her Savior. Pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.