July 5, 2026
Forgiveness
Philemon 1:1–25

This week, Dr. Brad Gowing, Dawson's Executive Pastor, preached a message titled "Forgiveness" from Philemon 1:1–25.

GOING DEEPER:

- Our Executive Pastor, Dr. Brad Gowing, explained that forgiveness is really the heart of the matter for the Christian faith. At the heart of our faith is a blood-stained cross on which Jesus died for your sins. As you read through Paul's letter to Philemon for the first time, what do you notice? As you read it a second time, what does the Holy Spirit highlight in your heart and mind? How does this passage prompt you to pray this week?

- Onesimus was the one in need of forgiveness. He was Philemon's slave and had run away, possibly stealing from Philemon or harming him in some way. Most of the slavery in the New Testament world was more like indentured servitude than the race-based slavery that was practiced in America. Paul and Onesimus met in prison somewhere in the Roman world. Paul proclaimed the Gospel to Onesimus, led him to faith in Jesus, and therefore referred to him as his son in the faith. Onesimus needed Philemon to welcome him back into his good graces and restore their relationship. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon even though Paul would rather have had him stay with him. God's love and grace cover the greatest offenses and set us free to love and forgive as God has forgiven us. Each of us is like Onesimus and stands in need of forgiveness. When have you needed forgiveness from a brother or sister in Christ?

- Philemon was the one who had the opportunity to forgive (Philemon 1:8–9). Paul appealed to the love of God and the forgiveness of Jesus. Paul's letter to Philemon is an appeal—an exhortation to a brother in Christ—to obey what the Bible teaches(Ephesians 4:32). Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a beloved brother, forgive him, and reconcile with him. When we forgive someone who has hurt us deeply, we begin to let go of bitterness and resentment, and they no longer hold us captive. How does viewing all relationships through the lens of the Gospel change your relationships? In what ways do you recognize your own need for forgiveness? Is there a relationship in your life that needs to be reconciled? Are you holding on to resentment or bitterness toward someone? What would it look like for you to reach out to that person and offer your forgiveness?

- Paul was the one who encouraged forgiveness. Paul appealed to Philemon to receive Onesimus back. Paul was willing to foot the bill to see forgiveness occur and a relationship restored (Philemon 1:18–19). Jesus, our Mediator, the only One who lived a sinless life, went to the cross bearing the guilt of our sin. He died a sacrificial death, paying the debt we could not pay so that we could be forgiven, restored, and received by our Heavenly Father. Is there someone you need to encourage to make peace and restore a broken relationship? How can you be a peacemaker like Paul in the coming week?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- To view past sermons, please click **here.**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

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