

Onesimus: The Forgiven!
Col 4:9

I. Introduction

A. Have you ever heard of Mitsuo Fuchida?

B. 7:55 A.M. on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

C. The Japanese attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

1. 2,403 Americans killed / 1,178 wounded
2. Aircraft losses =188 planes, and
3. Most of our Pacific Battleships were destroyed
4. But, you knew all this.

D. The raid was led by thirty-nine year old Japanese Navy pilot named Mitsuo Fuchida,

1. His plane was hit several times that day but never shot down.
2. BTW - His idol was Adolf Hitler..

E. Fuchida survived WWII (which is amazing providence).

1. He was deeply bothered by all the death he'd inflicted and seen
2. He turned to the simple life of farming near Osaka.
3. He couldn't let go of the war
4. He started working on solving the problem of peace!

F. He decided to write a book – “No More Pearl Harbors” to get the world to pursue peace!

1. His problem with the book – He couldn't come up with a reason / a principle for which there should be peace!

G. A Survivor of Pearl Harbor – Donald A. Rosenberger, heard about him and wrote his story...Quotes from what he wrote...

1. [“Fuchida] heard two stories about prisoners of war that filled him with excitement. They seemed to illustrate the principle for which he was searching.
2. The first report came from a friend—a lieutenant who had been captured by the Americans and incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp in America...he told Fuchida a story which, he said, had made a great impression upon him and upon every prisoner in the camp. “Something happened at the camp where I was interred,” he said, “which has made it possible for us who were in that camp to forego all our resentment and hatred and to return with a forgiving spirit and a feeling of lightheartedness instead.” There was a young American girl, named Margaret “Peggy” Covell, whom they judged to be about twenty, who came to the camp on a regular basis doing all she could for the prisoners. She brought things to them they might enjoy, such as magazines and newspapers. She looked after their sick, and she was constantly solicitous to help them in every way. They received a great shock, however, when they asked her why she was so concerned to help them. She answered, “Because my parents were killed by the Japanese Army!” Such a statement might shock a person from any culture, but it was incomprehensible to the Japanese. In their society, no offense could be greater than the murder of one's

parents. Peggy tried to explain her motives. She said her parents had been missionaries in the Philippines. When the Japanese invaded the islands, her parents escaped to the mountains in North Luzon for safety. In due time, however, they were discovered. The Japanese charged them with being spies and told them they were to be put to death. They earnestly denied that they were spies, but the Japanese would not be convinced, and they were executed. When the report of their death reached her, her first reaction was intense anger and bitter hatred. She was furious with grief and indignation... Then Peggy began to consider her parents' selfless love for the Japanese people. Gradually, she became convinced that they had forgiven the people God had called them to love and serve. Then it occurred to her that if her parents had died without bitterness or rancor toward their executioners, why should her attitude be different? ... Therefore she chose the path of love and forgiveness. She decided to minister to the Japanese prisoners in the nearby POW camp as a proof of her sincerity. Fuchida was touched by this story, but he was especially impressed with the possibility that it was exactly what he had been searching for: a principle sufficient to be a basis for peace. Could it be that the answer for which he was seeking was a forgiving love, flowing from God to man, and then from man to man?

3. Shortly after this, Fuchida was summoned by General Douglas MacArthur to Tokyo. As he got off the train at Shibuya station, he was handed a pamphlet entitled, "I Was a Prisoner of Japan." It told about an American sergeant, Jacob DeShazer, who ...had been a bombardier on one of the sixteen Army B-25 airplanes which, under...General Jimmy Doolittle, had been launched...from the deck of the USS Hornet to bomb Tokyo...They were captured and incarcerated for the duration of the war. DeShazer notes that all prisoners were treated badly. He said that at one point he almost went insane from his violent hatred of the Japanese guards. Then one day a guard brought them a Bible. They were all in solitary confinement, so they took turns reading it. When it was DeShazer's turn, he had it for three weeks. He read it eagerly and intensely, both Old and New Testaments. Finally, he writes, "the miracle of conversion took place June 8, 1944." DeShazer determined that if he lived until the war was over, and if he were released, he would return the United States, devote a period of time to serious Bible study, and then return to Japan to share the message of Christ with the Japanese people. That is exactly what he did. ...Here it was again: a second example of love overcoming hatred. He sensed the power of forgiveness to actually change the hearts and lives of people. ...he sensed that it could be his principle...
4. He determined to learn all he could about DeShazer and his beliefs. At the train station on his way home, he obtained a copy of the New Testament in Japanese. A few months later, he began to read two or three chapters a day in the Scriptures.
5. Fuchida read [Luke 23](#). This was the first time he had read the story of the crucifixion. The Calvary scene pierced Fuchida's spirit...In the midst of the horror of His death, Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Tears sprang to Fuchida's eyes; he had reached the end of his "long, long wondering." Surely these words were the source of the love that DeShazer and Peggy Covell had shown. ... As Jesus hung there, on the cross, He prayed not only for His persecutors but for all humanity. That meant He had prayed and died for Fuchida, a Japanese man living in the twentieth century.

6. (“What Happened to the Man Who Led the Attack on Pearl Harbor?” *Command*, Fall/Winter 1991, pp 6–8.)

H. While reading Luke, he was saved!

I. He wrote his book – now titled - “From Pearl Harbor to Golgotha.”

J. Today – we learn of another man whose life changed dramatically when God forgave him – Onesimus!

K. Of course, we are all a story of forgiveness – may be not as dramatic as Fuchida or Onesimus – but all forgiven in the same way by the same forgiving God!

II. Review: Tychicus -Three Earned Commendations from Paul

Col 4:7 ...Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord,...

A. Three EARNED COMMENDATIONS from Paul!

1. Beloved Brother
2. Faithful Servant
3. Fellow bond-servant

B. Beloved Brother

1. After 4 years of faithful service with Paul
 - a) Around Gentiles, Jews, Roman Guards, etc.
 - b) Paul SAW and KNEW this man’s LOVE
 - c) What kind of love is “beloved” = agape = choosing to Love in ALL situations.
 - d) AND – in many places they went (including prison) – SHOW LOVE to Paul was a risk!

Jn 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

Jn 15: 12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **13** “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends ...**17** “This I command you, that you love one another.

2. BL: KNOWN by OBSERVABLE love for one another!
3. So, do you want to be considered “Beloved”?

Ro 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; **11** not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ...

4. Would the Christians around you in this body call you a “beloved brother”?

C. Faithful Servant

1. “Faithful” = Reliable
 - a) Faithful = ALWAYS there in every circumstance/ battle
 - (1) NOT AWOL “I’ll sit this one out, thank-you” attitude.
 - (2) When the call comes, it is answered. Period.
2. “Servant” = diakonos = word for deacon.

3. As Paul said to the Corinthians:

1 Co 4: 1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. [Can you say that?]

4. Would the people around you in our church call you a "faithful servant"?

D. Fellow bond-servant in the Lord

1. Literally: fellow SLAVE in the Lord
2. Different word than servant before
3. Fellow bond-servant = Sun + doulos = "with + slave"
4. "in the Lord" – goes with all of these commendations = SERVING CHRIST – NOT ME!
5. KEY difference between the two servant words in v.7 = SUBMISSION / Slave-like attitude= Christ's WILL not MINE
6. Fellow bondservant = "someone who acknowledges and submits to Christ's will as I do"
7. For Paul to say this, Tychicus had to CONTINUALLY KNOWN as SOMEONE who ALWAYS submitted to the WILL of Christ through His WORD. Period.

E. Two EXPECTED Purposes for Paul

Col 4:7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus...will bring you information. 8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;

F. Now, let's meet our next "character"!

III. Col 4:9

Col 4:9 and with him Onesimus, *our* faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your *number*. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

A. 9 and with him = Tychicus

B. Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number.

1. "Onesimus" = "useful" = common name for a slave
2. Faithful = reliable – just like Tychicus
3. Beloved brother = same as Tychicus
 - a) Some PROVEN to willfully love
 - b) BROTHER = CHRISTIAN (this is key).
4. "who is one of your number" = from Colossae

C. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

1. Paul repeats what he just said one of his purposes was of sending Tychicus – bring information. Onesimus will help!

IV. Who is Onesimus?

A. With Tychicus we had 5 verses to work with!

B. With Onesimus we have 1 verse in Colossians AND the whole book of Philemon (25 verses!)

C. Remember – Tychicus is CARRYING the “book” (i.e. letter) to Philemon!

D. Let’s start with Philemon

1. Philemon had been saved under Paul’s ministry, probably at Ephesus (Philemon 19), several years earlier.
2. Philemon OWNED the house WHERE the Colossian Church met! (Philemon 2),
3. Philemon had at least one slave = Onesimus

E. Onesimus ran away from Philemon – to Rome.

1. Common thing to do – disappear in major city
 - a) Many slaves to be lost among - Hard place for bounty hunters to find him
 - b) BUT – Penalty for running away = DEATH
 - c) And – remember – Philemon was a CHRISTIAN

(1) Do you think he treated slaves like others did? NO

(2) Same time Tychicus is handing him a letter and Onesimus, church is reading Paul’s letter to them!

[Col 4: 1](#) Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

(3) Or the Ephesian letter he’s carrying!

[Eph 6:5](#) Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

2. May have wronged Philemon (stole something like money or other property)

[Phm 1:18](#) But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account;
3. Onesimus was NOT a Christian when ran away...

F. Onesimus was NOT a Christian when ran away... saved through Paul in Rome

[Phm 1:12](#) I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *sending* my very heart,

[Phm 1:16](#) 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.

[Phm 1:13](#) whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel;

- a) Paul LOVED Onesimus! VERY CLOSE relationship!
- b) Wanted to keep him in Rome! – TRULY “useful” to Paul!

G. What was the Problem?

1. Running away and possibly “wronging” – IS Unlawful/Sinful
2. As Christians, Paul and Onesimus KNEW he had to return to repent, reconcile and GO BACK to his responsibility as a slave! – serving Philemon!

Phm 1:15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while, that you would have him back 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 regard me a partner, accept him as *you would me*.

H. What does Paul do?

1. Send him back with a companion – Tychicus
 - a) Helps with the reconciliation
 - b) Helps with bounty hunters (paid to catch runaway slaves) whom they might come upon
2. Send him back with a letter to Philemon
 - a) Do you know what the theme of the letter to Philemon is? FORGIVENESS
 - b) Paul wanted Philemon TO FORGIVE Onesimus!

V. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

A. Forgiveness – our ALWAYS response to sin against us

1. Remember Colossians 3:13?

Col 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

 - a) Now that you know Onesimus, do you think Paul “might” have had Philemon/Onesimus in mind when he wrote this? ☺
 - b) Key Points of this verse
 - (1) Forgiveness is ALWAYS expected
 - (2) Forgiveness is UNCONDITIONAL (doesn’t say the other part repented)
 - (3) Forgiveness BASED on your forgiveness from your Lord and Savior!
2. Remember our sister letter Ephesians? (turn to)

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
3. ...forgiving each other.
 - a) Verb = CONTINUOUS, YOU DO THE ACTION!
 - b) This says WE NEVER STOP forgiving!
 - c) Most people – I’ll forgive you once or twice – after that forget it!
 - (1) I don’t want anything to do with you
 - (2) I’m not going to risk being hurt by you again – you’ve got a track record!
 - d) God – You must forgive and forgive and forgive!
 - (1) 1st time, 2nd time, 7th time, 70th time – 7x70th time!
 - (2) In modern speak we’d say 24x7!
4. What’s the problem if you don’t forgive?
 - a) Well – you’re back to the previous verse!

- b) You're going to become bitter!
- c) IOW – when you don't forgive, you keep a POISON inside of you
- d) You leave a seed in the soil of your heart that will grow and poison you!
- e) That poison is some form of the "Put off" in v.31!
- f) There is a VERY HIGH PRICE to NOT FULLY FORGIVING!
- g) That's why VERB TENSE here is SO IMPORTANT!
 - (1) Q: Is Forgiveness an EVENT or a PROCESS?
 - (2) A: BOTH!
 - (3) STARTS with an EVENT – you have to choose the godly path of FORGIVENESS
 - (4) You have to FORGIVE
 - (5) BUT – it is also a PROCESS!
 - (6) From TWO SIDES
 - (a) Their side – you may have to forgive 7x70!
 - (i) Always choosing to forgive NO MATTER how often they sin against you!
 - (ii) Always going BACK into the RING and take another punch!
 - (b) BUT – from your side,
 - (i) do you instantly forget a sin against you?
 - (ii) Does the pain instantly go away?
 - (iii) Do the thoughts of hurt melt away immediately?
 - (iv) NO – you have to work at it!
 - (c) BUT – here's your side...
- h) WHEN you say "I FORGIVE YOU" you make a commitment / a promise to
 - (1) Never speak or use this against you again
 - (2) Never speak to others about this (gossip)
 - (3) NEVER DWELL on this – I will work to keep my mind focused on things above and every time this ENTERS my mind – I will STOP it and TURN to the LORD and think biblical thoughts!
- i) Do you know what happens then?
 - (1) With God's help, it DIES WITHIN you
 - (2) Why? You've NOT FED IT, NOURISHED IT at all
 - (3) AND you've REPLACED it WITH GODLY thoughts!
 - (4) Do you see that?
- j) When I sin against you – do you realize what is really happening?
 - (1) You're sitting there trying to work up the godliness to forgive me, right?
 - (2) You know what, God has already forgiven me!
 - (3) He's just waiting for you to do the same!
 - (4) He wants you BE LIKE HIM and DO LIKE HIM
- k) AND – if you don't forgive –

- (1) You're saying I need to pay an ADDITIONAL price – MORE than Christ paid already.
 - (2) Do you want to try to put yourself above God like that?
5. OK, IF Philemon IS godly man we hope he is, how do you think the reunion went?

Lk 15: 11 And He said, "A man had two sons. **12** "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. **13** "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. **14** "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. **15** "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. **16** "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. **17** "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! **18** 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men." ' **20** "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. **21** "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; **23** and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; **24** for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

- a) Isn't that what God and Paul were hoping for?

B. Reconciliation: The ALWAYS Follow-up to REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS

1. OK – this has probably never happened in your life – so you'll just have to imagine along with me!
2. Have you ever had someone with whom
 - a) You were friends – maybe close or just good friends or even in a relationship
 - b) Then something happened between you. Result –
 - (1) Completely broken friendship / relationship
 - (2) Lots of emotions- anger, hurt, etc.
 - (3) Maybe said, "I will never talk to them again, never be friends again, never, ever!"
 - (4) You see them coming down the sidewalk – you cross the street and don't acknowledge that they are alive, right?
 - c) Again – probably never happened in your life – so you'll just have to "pretend" with me!
 - d) Then – at some point go through formalities with them
 - (1) Say, sorry / ask forgiveness (one side or both sides)

- (2) You feel relief
 - (3) Now – see them coming down the street and are willing to
 - (i) Stay on same side AND Say hello
 - (ii) Maybe exchange courtesies
 - (b) But, the relationships over- you want nothing to do with them!
 - e) One day, someone asks you – whatever happened between you and so-and-so?
 - (1) A: We worked things out! Talked about it / forgave each other- RECONCILED!
 - (2) Wow! That’s great! You two have reconciled?
 - (3) A: Yep. Thanks. Wasn’t easy but we resolved our differences.
 - f) Now – I know most of you are having to imagine this, but we’ve all seen this happen, right?
 - g) Maybe a person has come to mind that fits what I just described
 - (1) Q: Could you imagine going back into that relationship
 - (2) Working and willing to make it JUST AS CLOSE as it was before?
 - (3) NO MATTER what they had done or said?
 - (4) No matter HOW BAD you had been hurt and sinned against
 - (5) WILLING to risk it all and give yourself to the relationship (obviously, because TRUE repentance had taken place between you).
 - h) Most people would say NO and their lives show it
 - (1) Broken friendships / relationships
 - (2) People that they avoid / hope they don’t run into
 - (3) Yet – people they will tell others that they’ve made amends and reconciled.
 - i) Clearly, my illustration has a point
 - (1) You’ve probably figured out that THIS ISN’T GOD’S IDEA of RECONCILING a relationship!
3. Let’s now talk more about this word “[reconcile / Reconciliation](#)”
- a) “[reconcile](#)” = turn hostility into friendship!
 - b) Greek word has a DOUBLE preposition on top of the root word = EMPHASIS of TOTALITY of the reconciliation!
 - c) Root = to change something
 - d) So first = change from a hostile to a friendly relationship.
 - e) But second = emphasis on friendly / closeness
 - (1) Not = those who don’t talk (hostile) now “are on speaking terms”
 - (2) = reuniting, reconnecting, bringing together again = closeness of relationship
 - f) Third= COMPLETENESS of the action
 - (1) Hostility is COMPLETELY PUT ASIDE
 - (2) NOT a TRACE IS LEFT! ZERO, ZILCH!

- g) Fourth = NOT a TWO PARTY action
 - (1) Not BOTH SIDES decide to RECONCILE
 - (2) = ONE PARTY takes ACTION
 - (3) ONE PARTY is the UPPER PARTY = ACTION from ABOVE
 - (4) Because of one of the two prepositions
 - (5) = CHANGE in relationship BROUGHT FROM ABOVE
 - h) Fifth = Restoration of that which was there before
 - (1) Other preposition = bringing back again!
 - i) So – what is reconciliation?
 - (1) RESTORATION of a RELATIONSHIP between God and man
 - (2) A relationship that had become HOSTILE - now CLOSE / REUNITED / BACK TOGETHER AGAIN
 - (3) ALL Done BY GOD – FROM ABOVE
 - (4) ALL DONE COMPLETELY - NO HOSTILITY LEFT
 - (a) ONLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP!
 - (5) That's quite a word -MORE THAN THAT – quite a concept!
 - (6) All conceived, carried out by God!
4. Like I said– probably never need reconciling with anyone, right? WRONG!
- a) What kind of reconciliation did God do with man?
 - (1) A relationship that had become HOSTILE- now CLOSE / REUNITED / BACK TOGETHER AGAIN
 - (2) HE COMPLETELY removed ALL the hostility and brought COMPLETE PEACE
 - b) In our lives God expects the SAME reconciliation between Christians!
 - c) We are the BODY of Christ! MEMBERS of the same BODY!
 - d) Could you imagine if your hand and arm didn't FULLY get along?
 - (1) Or you mouth and your brain (Ok, so that happens!)
 - e) Same in the BODY!
 - f) Reconciliation = NOTHING is more IMPORTANT than a COMPLETELY RESTORED relationship!
 - g) IF you don't restore the relationship what is the problem? PRIDE! Someone is holding out!
 - h) God says – I'm more important than your pride
 - (1) If I can put aside the offense your sin was to Me, so can you
 - (2) I made it possible at the cross
 - (a) To reconcile you and Me
 - (b) AND – for you to reconcile with your brother
 - (3) Don't expect more from others than I do
 - (4) FORGIVE and RECONCILE – COMPLETELY
 - (5) Don't have MY Body LOOKING LIKE A CRIPPLE!