Our Forever Family
Philemon 1:12-16
The Gospel Changes Everything—Part 3
November 1, 2026

[12]"I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. [13]I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, [14]but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. [15]For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, [16]no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." --Philemon 12-16 (ESV)

Today's Main Idea:
Genuine love _____ control, _____ willingly, and _____ in God's providence.

Let's look at how Paul identifies genuine love:

1. _____ what you love even when your heart wants to _____.

"I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart." (v. 12)

"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." --Colossians 3:11 (ESV)

"I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel." (v. 13)

2. Respond _____, not because you _____.

"But I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord." (v. 14)

"You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst…" --Deuteronomy 23:15-16 (ESV)

"In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you." --1 Chronicles 29:17 (ESV)

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." --2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (ESV)

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you." --1 Peter 5:2 (ESV)

3. Rest in God's _____ as He works out His _____.

"For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever." (v. 15)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
--Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

"And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."
--Genesis 50:20 (ESV)

This definition is helpful:
"Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe."

Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."

"My Father is working until now, and I am working." --John 5:17 (ESV)

"No longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." (v. 16)

Next Week's Text: Philemon 1:17-25