

peace be with you weekly devotional

from the desk of Rev. Marta Wheeler
SAINT PAUL BENSON

The Unexpected

Tapping in the code before
entering the dense church doors
I unknowingly
pause in the flight path of a
mourning dove
with wings fluttering just above my head.

By now I'm sitting on the
deck trying to type this weekly
devotion while my
small, dappled puppy is
delighted
in the treats sent from heaven for her.

She lifts her head as slender
golden leaves drift downward
in the soft breezes
and two cute squirrels chatter
while tossing
ripe walnuts with a thud that smashes.

Each day holds unexpected
and strange moments that awaken
our groggy minds from
their sleepiness, like when a
person whispers
prayers that had resided only in her heart.

August 31, 2022

Philemon

I, Paul, am a prisoner for the sake of Christ, here with my brother Timothy. I write this letter to you, Philemon, my good friend and companion in this work—also to our sister Apphia, to Archippus, a real trooper, and to the church that meets in your house. God's best to you! Christ's blessings on you!

Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, "Oh, thank you, God!" I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other believers. And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it. Friend, you have no idea how good your love makes me feel, doubly so when I see your hospitality to fellow believers.

In line with all this I have a favor to ask of you. As Christ's ambassador and now a prisoner for him, I wouldn't hesitate to command this if I thought it necessary, but I'd rather make it a personal request.

Continued

Keep on prayin'

When the apostle Paul was in prison, he wrote letters that expressed his faith and beliefs. Some of his statements have caused pain, but this personally written letter to Philemon was full of grace. This Epistle was later used in the battle to stop the slave trade and make it illegal.

Even though Onesimus, Philemon's slave, had run away, Paul uses his influence to encourage him to treat him like a brother, charge any debts to him, and welcome Onesimus back. We see that Paul was a mentor to Onesimus while in prison. He baptized him and thought of him as a son. Paul asks Philemon to do the unexpected and respond in love.

In the beginning of these letters, Paul lets the people know that they are being prayed for. That is something they can count on. Even when life is difficult, prayers will provide strength and inspiration to live their lives to the glory of God.

You can also count on our prayers as we hold you in the Light of Christ wherever you may be in life. May our misunderstandings be transformed by divine love that we might live peacefully as sisters and brothers in Christ.

God's love and peace be with you,

Marta

Rev. Marta Wheeler

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Philemon

Continued

While here in jail, I've fathered a child, so to speak. And here he is, hand-carrying this letter—Onesimus! He was useless to you before; now he's useful to both of us. I'm sending him back to you, but it feels like I'm cutting off my right arm in doing so. I wanted in the worst way to keep him here as your stand-in to help out while I'm in jail for the Message. But I didn't want to do anything behind your back, make you do a good deed that you hadn't willingly agreed to.

Maybe it's all for the best that you lost him for a while. You're getting him back now for good—and no mere slave this time, but a true Christian brother! That's what he was to me—he'll be even more than that to you. I know you well enough to know you will. You'll probably go far beyond what I've written. And by the way, get a room ready for me. Because of your prayers, I fully expect to be your guest again.

Sermon-By-Phone

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