



DEVOTIONAL FOR ACTS 27-28; COLOSSIANS; PHILEMON

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In 1951, The Paul Harvey News and Comment debuted on the ABC Radio Network, and was nationally syndicated after being well received in Chicago. The Rest of the Story – featuring short biographical narratives written by Paul Harvey Aurandt, Jr. – premiered as its own series in 1976 on the ABC Radio Network. From 1951 to 2008 his programs reached as many as 24 million people per week.

"Hello Americans! I'm Paul Harvey." He would share his story and before the next break he would say, "In a moment...the rest of the story". He always concluded with, "Paul Harvey...Good day".

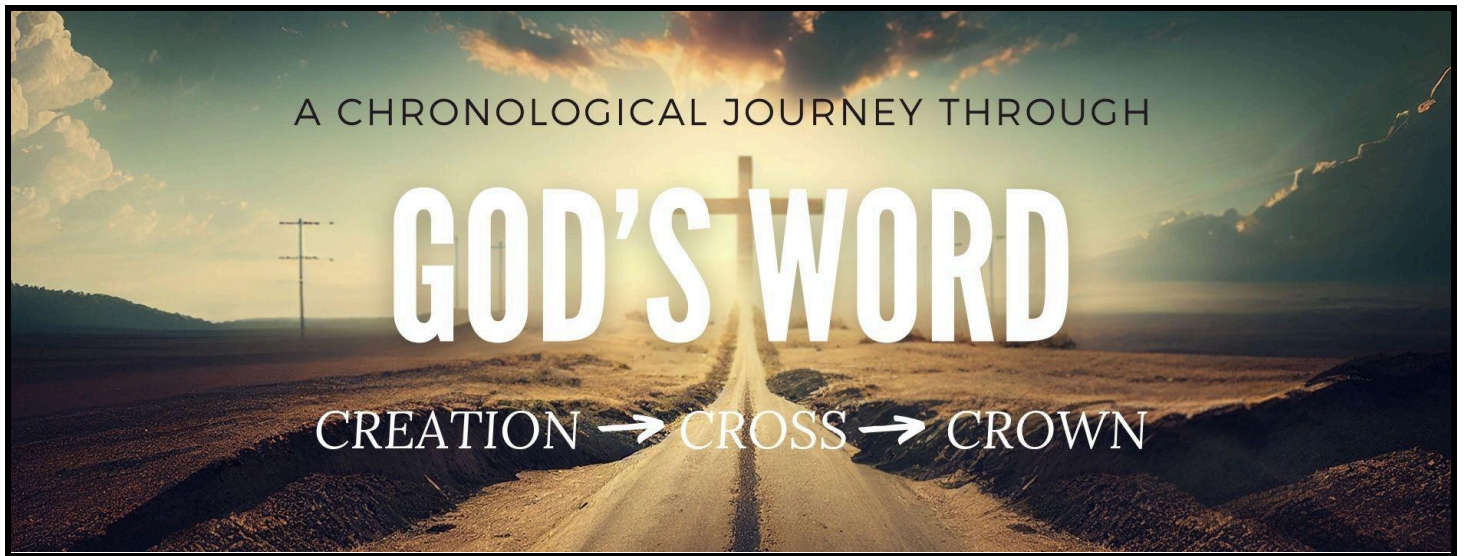
I love peoples' stories. I think that's why I love the Bible so much! Every single story points to God's plan to redeem His creation and fix what went wrong. That is what the entirety of the Bible reveals – our separation from God; the penalty of our separation paid through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and our trust that when we believe – our brokenness is healed, and we are citizens of a new kingdom. The kingdom of God. "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

In 60-62 AD a different Paul told us a story of his friend Philemon and a slave named Onesimus. But we are not given the rest of the story; we are only left to speculate the ending. Look for the theme of redemption along with me.

A fugitive slave named Onesimus – his name meaning "useful, profitable, beneficial" – robbed his master Philemon and escaped to Rome where he encountered Paul. Under Paul's teaching Onesimus came to believe in Jesus Christ for His salvation. Paul is returning him – his very heart (Philemon 1:12) – and appealing to Philemon's goodness to receive him as well. I love Paul's wit in Philemon 1:11: "(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me)". Paul then assures his friend Philemon that "If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it... (Philemon 1:18, 19).

Do you see the story of redemption? Here is a slave, marked by disobedience and fleeing from the consequences of his sin. His story leads him to Paul and to salvation. His soul is set free, but now, as a son of God – it is important for him to make amends. Paul intercedes for Onesimus and makes reparation. But we are not told the rest of the story.

The text leaves us with the question – what is the rest of the story? How did Philemon respond? How do we respond to the fugitive who has wronged us? Stolen from us? And abandoned his charge? Paul ends his correspondence with



confidence that Philemon will do even more than what Paul asks of him. It gives me pause to consider not only my response to those who have wronged me, but my own failings as well.

Paul is asking Philemon to love Onesimus as he has loved him. It echoes the words of Jesus "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). Let no debt remain except to love Christ well and love one another well.

Questions:

1. How do I respond to those who have wronged me and not sought forgiveness?
2. How do I respond to those who have wronged me and are seeking forgiveness?
3. What story of redemption does my life tell? Have I been redeemed?