

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 97:10-12

O you who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

A HYMN OF PRAISE

Hymn 76 – Blessing and Honor and Glory and Power

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

THE CONFESSION OF OUR FAITH

Westminster Shorter Catechism 35 Q&A

Minister: What is sanctification?

Congregation: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Hymn 676 – Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (Stanza 1)

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalm 51 Hymnal Pg. 804

THE CONFESSION OF SIN

Heavenly Father, if we deeply understood the cross, gratitude and love for Christ would daily control our thoughts and actions. We are new creations, but we are still great sinners, and this confuses and discourages us. Instead of marveling at your love for weak and sinful creatures, we try to hide our sin and reform ourselves. Rather than seeing each other as gloriously redeemed people, we focus on the weaknesses of others and magnify our own strengths. We reject your sacrifice for our sin and try to substitute our own. We have turned away from you and loved our idols instead, and we have been miserable with ourselves and with others. Instead of living for Christ and calling others to admire and adore him, we have lived small lives that have been governed by our own feelings and desires. Father, forgive us. Help us to think about Jesus whenever our thoughts turn carelessly to self-defense, self-pity, self-glory, and self-condemnation. Use your mighty power to free us from self-love so that we can love others well. Reconcile us to our own weakness, so that we will look away from ourselves to Christ often, and be drawn into worship and praise. Cause the love of Christ to control us increasingly as we become more and more persuaded that he loves us. Teach us to rest in Christ, and make us people who graciously lead others, to find rest and peace in him and with one another. Holy Spirit, make us new. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. *2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 21*

RESPONSE OF THE CONGREGATION

Hymn 699 – Like a River Glorious (Stanza 1)

SCRIPTURE READING

John 14:15-24 Pew Bible Pg. 1146

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

Followed by the Lord's Prayer ("Debts")

OFFERING and DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heav'nly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Old Hundredth L.M. (731)

A HYMN OF PREPARATION

Hymn 688 – Have Thine Own Way, Lord!

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Philemon 12-14 *Pew Bible Pg. 1273*

Paul's Advocacy for Onesimus, Part 2

Pastor James A. La Belle

A HYMN OF RESPONSE

Hymn 707 – Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

BENEDICTION

Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone does wondrous works in glory that excel. And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity; the whole earth let his glory fill. Amen, so let it be. *McKee CM (11:1,2)*

Paul's sending Onesimus back, v.12

- I. It was a great struggle for Paul to send Onesimus back. It was like sending his very heart (v.12), like sending his very self (v.17).
 - A. Paul's identification of himself so closely with Onesimus is a beautiful reminder of the more glorious and precious identification of Christ with His people, Mt 10.40; Mt 25.40.
 - 1. In fact, it was from Christ that Paul learned to love in this way, cf. Acts 9.4.
 - B. Sending back Onesimus would've broken Paul's heart. So why did he do it?
 - 1. Because he was lawfully the property of Philemon. It'd be wrong for Paul to keep him.
 - 2. Paul sent him back because *it was right*. Just as it was right for Philemon to receive him (v.8) so it was right for Paul to send him (v.12). It was *the Christian duty* of them both.
- II. But for how hard it was for Paul to send him back, and for how hard it was for Philemon to forgive him, can you imagine how hard it was for Onesimus to go back!?
 - A. He was knowingly returning to the yoke of slavery.
 - B. So why did he do it? Because it was *his* Christian duty. It was his duty to reconcile with Philemon, to demonstrate the reality of his conversion, to bring forth fruits of his repentance, to resume his duties, &c.
 - C. **Here's one of the surest evidences of the presence of grace in a person's life, viz., the resuming of neglected duties.
 - D. So here are 3 men. Before each is a hard duty, and each one gives himself to it. Why? Because it's *the right thing to do*.
- III. **Here's a profound lesson in giving ourselves to our Christian duty, no matter what it costs us personally.
 - A. We'll never truly follow Christ unless we're willing to deny ourselves and take up the cross He lays upon us, Mk 8.34.
 - B. The path of Christ's disciples is the path of self-denial, cross-bearing, reproach, and hardship because it's the path of participation in Christ's sufferings. The right path is costly, but it's always outweighed by the love we have for the Saviour, a love which compels us to live, not for ourselves, but for Him, 2Cor 5.14-15; 1Cor 6.19-20.
- IV. The relationship between Christianity and slavery in the NT.
 - A. Clearly slavery is wrong. But the reason the Bible doesn't condemn it and instead brings the gospel to bear upon those within it is because the road to change with un-Christian institutions in society is not by revolution but by reformation.
 - B. The gospel seeks to change the hearts of men and then show changed men how to change their society.
 - C. The gospel lays down the principles for slavery's abolition, but lets it work upon it slowly over time in order that it may not be

chopped off so quickly that a root is left in the ground but rather entirely uprooted never to rise again.

Paul's desire to keep Onesimus, v.13

- I. Paul would've gladly kept Onesimus so that he might render that service to Paul which Paul knew Philemon would gladly give him if he were there.
 - A. Saying that Onesimus' service was so good and profitable that he'd accept it in Philemon's place is a way of wrapping Onesimus around Philemon's heart.
 - B. Strangely, then, Onesimus is a link between them. In some sense he's a part of Paul being sent back to Philemon; and in another sense he's a part of Philemon being enjoyed by Paul.
- II. **What a striking illustration this is to the position of the Lord Jesus, who shares both in our humanity and in deity!
 - A. He's the link between us and the Father (1Tim 2.5)—a link such that to receive Him is to receive the Father (Mt 10.40; Jn 14.9), and the Father's receiving Him is also a reception of us (Jn 17.22; Heb 2.10-13)! We show our love for the Father through Christ even as He shows His love for us through Christ.
 - B. How clear it is, then, that none can love and receive the Father who does not love and receive the Son, Jn 17.3; 14.6-7; 5.37-38.

Paul's determination to have Philemon's consent, v.14

- I. The difference between v.13 and v.14 is between Paul's wish and God's will.
 - A. Paul would've been glad to keep Onesimus but since it was wrong without Philemon's free consent, he sent him back.
 - B. **Here's an important lesson: as long as we have to fight indwelling sin, we'll have to fight the battle between what God says is right and what we wish were right. The struggle is a sign of life, so take heart; but the surrender of our wish to God's will is a sign of maturity, cf. Mt 26.39.
- II. Of the three options open to Paul, he chose the one which sought Philemon's free consent.
 - A. **This is a testimony to the effects of the bond of love on our relationships. Love finds no sweetness in obedience that's been forced. Love seeks willing and free obedience.
- III. **Once again we see our Saviour in Paul's example. For this is the way Jesus approaches us. He doesn't want men pressed into service. He wants volunteers. He wants us to serve Him freely, willingly, out of love and not out of necessity. And so He calls us to come freely, Isa 55.1-3; Mt 11.28
 - A. Knowing how hard it is at times to be willing, how glad we should be that He makes us willing! Ps 110.3; Phil 2.13.
 - B. Pray that all your obedience might be done in the same spirit that Christ did His: willingly and freely (Heb 10.7). Bring your heart to your duties, Prov 23.26; Ps 51.6

We extend a **cordial welcome** to the visitors in our service today.

Please sign our guest register in the narthex.

Christian Education classes are available each Sunday at 8:50 am. All are welcome.

Adult Sunday School Class – Join us for a study, *Old Testament Survey: The Wisdom Books*, led by Pastor La Belle.

Sunday Afternoon Hymn Sing & Fellowship Dinner – 4:30pm, Please join us this afternoon for a Hymn sing and fellowship dinner! All are welcome!

Prayer Meeting – Come pray with us Wednesday at 6:30pm. The prayer meeting will begin with a brief study led by an Elder followed by a time of intercessory prayer.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation and the Corporation – Saturday, 9:30am

A note from the Board of Trustees: Thank you all for your patience while we figure out the Livestream video service. A warm thank you to KT Wisack and Ann Walsh for the lovely new curtains in the ancillary rooms!

Upcoming Men's Retreat – Registration Deadline 1/28! Prayerfully consider registering for this year's men's retreat this February 1st – 3rd at Camp Shiloh in Jefferson N.H. This promises to be a blessed time for us as we will be instructed in God's word unto our sanctification along with enjoying Christian fellowship among the Brethren. Brochures are included with this week's bulletin. Any questions, contact Joe Marcel. Please make every effort to attend!

The missionaries for this month – Sam and Eun-soo Foltz returning to China.

Birthdays & Anniversaries this week:

Chris Beveridge

Bulletin announcements should be submitted to Tara Furman by 12 noon on Wednesdays. Please e-mail to pcccsecretary@gmail.com or call 774-208-8544.