

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*Psalm 100*

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

## **A HYMN OF PRAISE**

*Hymn 689 – Be Still, My Soul*

## **PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

## **THE CONFESSION OF OUR FAITH**

*Westminster Larger Catechism 18 Q&A*

*Minister:* What are God's works of providence?

*Congregation:* God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.

## **ASCRPTION OF PRAISE**

*Hymn 669 – Commit Now All Your Grievs (Stanzas 1 & 4)*

## **RESPONSIVE READING**

*Psalm 10*    Pew Bible Pg. 573

## **THE CONFESSION OF SIN**

Mighty God, our Rock and our Shield, You are our deliverer and our refuge from danger. We know we have nothing to fear in life or in death, yet we do fear. You have told us to rest from our own striving, yet we often rely on our own strength and find ourselves consumed with anxiety and deeply shaken by this world and by our own weakness. You have promised to work all things in this universe together for our spiritual blessing and good, yet we doubt your love and argue with your wisdom. Father, forgive us for our unbelief and pride, which cause us repeatedly to doubt your love, your Word, and your power to hold onto us and work all things together for our good. Lord, thank you that in the midst of our faltering belief, you have provided a strong and powerful Savior. Though Satan's accusations ring in our ears and threaten to undo us, you have declared us righteous and blameless in your sight because of Christ. Silence our mouths when we condemn ourselves, and settle our frightened souls when we tremble with fear before you. Show us how your wrath toward our sin has been emptied on your precious Son. Give us eyes to see our Saviour, pleading for us as he bears deep wounds that proclaim, "No condemnation." Give us growing faith to believe in your relentless love for us, and strong minds to discern your truth from Satan's lies. Please grant us joyful hope to long for heaven, and grace to find rest and contentment in you, on our journey there. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

## **SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN**

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.  
*Romans 8:31-34*

## **RESPONSE OF THE CONGREGATION**

*Hymn 253 – There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood (Stanza 1 & 5)*

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

Genesis 50:15-21    *Pew Bible Pg. 55*

## **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 600 – He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought*

## **THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD**

Philemon 15-16                      *Pew Bible Pg. 1273*

*Paul's Advocacy for Onesimus, Part 3*

Pastor James A. La Belle

## **A HYMN OF RESPONSE**

*Hymn 128 – God Moves in a Mysterious Way*

## **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)*

## God's overruling providence in human events

- I. V.15 begins with the word *For*. This shows that this 3d argument is another reason why Paul set aside his wish to keep Onesimus and instead willed to send him back, viz., because God seems to have had Philemon's interest in mind when He permitted the flight of Onesimus.
- II. See how charitably Paul speaks about Onesimus' flight from Philemon: *he was parted from you*.
  - A. He could've simply said "he ran away;" but he speaks of it euphemistically—not because his sin was small, but because his repentance was great.
  - B. **Lesson:** when a person's repented of his sin and God's forgiven him we shouldn't aggravate it by speaking of it harshly. Instead we should speak of it graciously—just as God does with us. Compare 2Sam 12.9-10 with 1Kgs 15.5
    1. When calling people to repentance, we need to paint with a black brush; but afterwards, we should never speak of it as if it's not under the blood of Christ or forgiven by God.
- III. But there's more behind this phrase. The verb Paul uses is *passive* (i.e. he *was parted*). That means behind Onesimus' willful flight was another will at work—even God's will; and it's to God's will that Paul's directing Philemon's attention.
  - A. Onesimus *sinned* in what he did, but God *overruled* it by His wise providence for His glory. Thus while God is not the author of sin, He is the sovereign orderer of it. And He ordered that Onesimus' sin would result in Onesimus' conversion, cf. Gen 50.20; Acts 2.23; 4.27-28.
  - B. **Lesson:** God not only rules over the sins of men, but overrules them in the infallible accomplishment of His holy will.
    1. Nothing can mitigate sin. But despite what sin is, God is pleased to permit it as a lever in His providence, utilizing it to bring about the very opposite of what sinners intend by it. E.g. the crucifixion of Christ.
    2. Thus, by a merciful providence, God infallibly guides His people in the course and to the ends which He's chosen for them, wisely using their decisions and blamelessly using their sins to bring it all about.
  - C. *However*, while this is the manner of God's providence it's not the manner of our lives. We may not sin that good may come. It's God prerogative alone to use sin to bring about good, and He does this holily, blamelessly, and wisely.
- IV. Paul says God overruled Onesimus' sin to work it for good. The *good* God brought out of this is highlighted by two things:
  - A. The contrast between how short Onesimus was gone and how long Philemon now has him back (an hour vs. forever). Thus, Philemon's loss is incomparable with his gain.

- B. The contrast between having Onesimus back as a bondservant and having Onesimus back as a brother.
    1. God made the relationship between them more and better than it ever was. He made the *slave* a *brother*. Onesimus is now more of a blessing than he ever was to Philemon.
    2. N.B. By these words Paul planted the seeds of our brotherhood which eventually abolished slavery.
  - C. **Lesson:** God not only sovereignly overrules evil and sin for His glory, but he mercifully orders it all to bring about the good He wills for us, cf. Rom 8.28.
- V. Paul's wise use of the word *Perhaps*.
    - A. If there's one thing we can be sure of, it's that we can't be sure of our interpretation of the ways of God's providence.
      1. The ways of God are mysterious and His ultimate purpose behind them is simply out of our view, Dt 29.29.
    - B. It's rash, then, to speak with certainty about God's ways. The wisest thing to say is, "*Perhaps* this is why that happened."
    - C. But this *uncertainty* is beautiful because while it confesses our ignorance of God's ultimate purpose, it also confesses our dependence and trust in the wisdom and goodness of God's ultimate purpose.
      1. Thus the *perhaps* of the believer is an undying hope because it leaves God to be God and trusts God to be good in all that He does. Therefore, behind the Christian's perhaps is an absolute certainty—not in the events but in his God.

## Inferences

- I. If God's able to bring good out of evil then we have no reason to fear the injuries of men or the devil. Whatever happens, God will bring it about for our good, Ps 27.1-3
- II. If God turns temporal losses into eternal gains then consider how that should affect how you respond to your trials, cf. 2Cor 4.17-18. This calls for patience, contentment, and trust.
- III. If your God is a God of providence then consider how you should look at all the events of your life. *Every* event has a *good* purpose—whether you can trace it or not.
- IV. If God alone sees the end from the beginning and if God alone is at the helm to bring that end about then consider the wisdom of saying: *Perhaps*. It's foolish to speak as though we can mine the depths of God's unsearchable wisdom, Rom 11.33-34
- V. If God has a purpose for all things and sits safely at the helm in all circumstances then we should be ashamed of the many times we looked at our circumstances in unbelief and despair. We have a God we can trust and it is safe to trust Him always.

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 Study** – 4:30pm, Pastor La Belle will be leading the study entitled *Heartwork*. Join us for Lesson 10, “Governing the Heart, Part 5”.

**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.

**Men’s Retreat** – Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> thru Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> this coming week. Enjoy a wonderful trip!

**Registration Deadline TODAY!** Prayerfully consider registering for this year’s men's retreat this February 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Folta returning to China.

**Birthdays & Anniversaries this week:**

Lorraine Klaassen

**Please remember to check out the literature rack in the foyer.** There are many interesting books available and new are added from time to time. An interesting one about baptism is “Matthew the Baptist”. There is no charge for these books but a small donation is appreciated to keep the ministry going.

**Bulletin announcements** should be submitted to Tara Furman by 12 noon on Wednesdays. Please e-mail to [pcccsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:pcccsecretary@gmail.com) or call 774-208-8544.