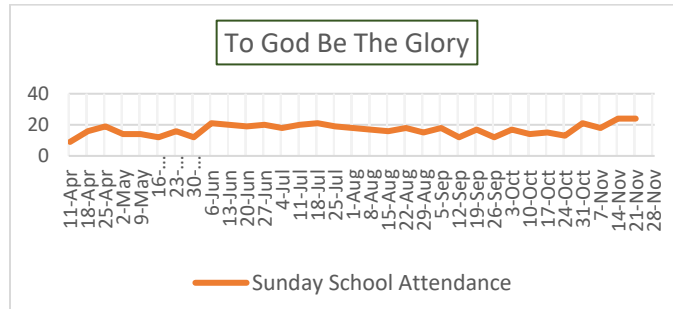


Last week's Sunday School attendance = 24



Introduction

This week we conclude our Fall Quarter with a lesson from the book of Philemon titled “Restoration.” Paul likely wrote the short letter of Philemon around the same time he wrote Colossians, and the two letters were apparently delivered in Colossae at the same time by Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9). Philemon is the briefest of Paul’s letters, consisting of only 25 verses.

The Primary Characters of Philemon

Philemon was a wealthy Gentile slave owner, who likely came to Christ under Paul’s ministry (Philemon 19), and in whose house the church in Colossae met (Philemon 2). Onesimus was Philemon’s servant who possibly stole from his master (Philemon 18) and then ran away, ending up in Rome where he met Paul, and subsequently became a Christian (Philemon 10).

The Message of Philemon

In this letter Paul asks Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus “*Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved*” (Philemon 16). In this regard this brief letter reveals how our relationship with Christ affects all of our other relationships, changing how we treat others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Philemon 1-7

¹Paul, a prisoner of (for the sake of) Jesus Christ (imprisoned in Rome for preaching the gospel), and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, ²And to our beloved Apphia (possibly the wife of Philemon), and Archippus (minister in Colossae and possibly the son of Philemon) our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: ³Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here Paul opens the letter with greetings of grace and peace from God the Father and Son to Philemon and the church that meets in his house.

⁴I thank my God, making mention of (remembering) thee always in my prayers, ⁵Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; ⁶That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. ⁷For we have great joy and consolation (comfort or

encouragement) *in thy love, because the bowels (hearts) of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*

In these verses Paul thanks God and praises Philemon for his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and toward his fellow believers. He lets him know that he often prays for him to prosper as an evangelist and grow in the fellowship of faith. In this brief opening we see Paul's respect and appreciation for his Christian brother Philemon who is faithfully serving the Lord.

Conclusion

This letter reminds us that we are all equal before God. All of us are sinners (Romans 3:23), in equal need of a Savior, and like the prodigal son welcomed into our Father's loving arms when we give our hearts to Jesus.

*⁴But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ⁵Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ⁶Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; **Titus 3:4-6***

*¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. **Romans 8:1***

This past week we celebrated Thanksgiving. While we thank God for all He has done for us, let's remember to give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ who often provide comfort and edification (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and exhort us in our Christian walk (Hebrews 3:13). This is one of the strengths of our church, and I thank God for each of you.

Praise be to God for the great joy and encouragement of seeing many returning to church and Sunday School. Please prayerfully consider meeting with us this week for 10:00 am Sunday School as we study God's word together from Philemon 8–21. Brother Craig Pleasants will be leading our adult study this week. We also now have children's classes for early Elementary and Teen ages.