

A WORD ON WORSHIP

REVIEW OF MESSAGE FROM MAY 4, 2014

BY PASTOR ANDREW KIKKERT, SUNRISE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Hear Sunday Sermons at www.SunriseTC.org

Philemon 10-13

"I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel..."



Philemon is Paul's shortest and most personal letter, written during his first imprisonment in Rome. Philemon, the main recipient of the letter, was a wealthy man from Colossae, about 100 miles inland from Ephesus on the west coast of modern Turkey. The letter was also addressed to Apphia, who was probably Philemon's wife; to Archippus, who may have been the pastor of the church there (some think he was the son of Philemon and Apphia); and to the entire church that met in Philemon's house. (There is no record of a church building until the third century.) Paul had not visited Colossae, although he hoped to do so soon. But somehow, perhaps during Paul's ministry in Ephesus, he had come into contact with Philemon and led him to Christ.

One of Philemon's slaves was named Onesimus. He had stolen from his master and run away. In the Roman Empire, masters had absolute authority over slaves and they often tortured or killed them for minor offenses or mistakes. So Onesimus was a fugitive slave, under a capital offense, running from a household where the gospel was proclaimed. But just as the Old Testament prophet Jonah found out, no matter how far Onesimus ran, he could not outrun God.

In his travels, God providentially led Onesimus all the way to Rome, where he crossed paths with the apostle Paul. We don't know whether he was imprisoned with Paul or how they met. But the Hound of Heaven was pursuing Onesimus. Although he had undoubtedly heard the gospel in Philemon's household, Onesimus ran from the place where he easily could have been saved. He traveled hundreds of miles to a large city where he happened to meet Paul. When Paul shared the gospel, God opened Onesimus' heart and he trusted in Christ. He then stayed with Paul and the two men formed a close relationship as Onesimus served Paul.

Maybe you once heard the gospel before without understanding, but suddenly God opened your blind eyes and it made sense. You never could hope to pay God back for all of the sins that you have committed. But you don't have to. Christ paid your debt on the cross. Everything that you stole and all the back wages that you owe were charged to His account. You put your trust in the Savior who paid the debt that you owed. You returned to the Master and willingly put yourself under His lordship. For the first time in your life, you were truly free. Now, you live to please Him and do His will from the heart. And to your amazement, the blessed Lord Jesus, who paid the debt you owed, is pleased to call you his beloved brother or sister, just as Paul refers to the slave, Onesimus!

Sunrise Community Church
Come acknowledge the Lord in our midst
EVERY SUNDAY BEGINNING AT 8:45 A.M.



Eritrea again persecutes Christians of officially recognized faith

BY MORNING STAR NEWS

[HTTP://AU.CHRISTIANTODAY.COM/](http://au.christiantoday.com/)

Eritrea is again persecuting even officially recognised religious bodies with the arrest last week of five Christians set to be ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, according to Open Doors.

The Christian support organization announced that security officials in the capital, Asmara, arrested Petros Yosief, Bemnet Tesfay, Aklilu Tesfay, Ermias Hadgu and Aron Mehretu. The arrests came shortly after the church announced on April 20 that they would be ordained for pastoral ministry.

"The arrests clearly show how even government recognised churches, namely the Catholic, [Eritrean] Orthodox [Church] and Evangelical Lutheran churches, are not free from government control," said an Open Doors source on condition of anonymity.

Authorities in Eritrea, where an estimated 1,500 Christians are languishing in prison for their faith, are holding the would-be Evangelical Lutheran leaders at Police Station Number 2 in Asmara, according to an Open Doors press statement.

"The arrest of these pastoral candidates reminds us of one of the greatest challenges churches in Eritrea face," said an Open Doors worker. "Due to the constant turnover of pastors due to arrest or threats, continuous and biblically consistent pastoral care for Christians is hampered."

In 2005, Eritrean authorities cracked down on the officially recognized Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC), persecuting those who supported a renewal movement within the church and who protested religious persecution. When Patriarch Abune Antonios, head of the EOC, objected to the persecution, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki arranged for him to be deposed, placed under house arrest and ultimately replaced by a government official.

It was the EOC that had reportedly urged the government to crack down on the other religions in the first place, resulting in making all other religious bodies outside of the four who registered in May 2002 illegal.

"Since then, many thousands of mostly evangelical Christians have suffered severely at the hands of a regime known for its human rights abuses, appalling prison conditions and widespread use of torture," writes Elizabeth Kendal of the *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*. "Even teenagers are not spared and must complete military service in military training camps before they can graduate from school. Separated from their parents, religious persecution in these camps is systematic and severe."

At its worst point, persecution in Eritrea resulted in an estimated 3,000 Christians incarcerated for their faith by the end of 2010, with most held in shipping containers in desert camps and others in underground cells, Kendal writes.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of State estimated 50% of the Eritrean population was Muslim and about 48% Christian; the Pew Research Center, however, estimated at that time that nearly 63% were Christian and 36.2% Muslim.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SUNRISE

May 2014

May 4	8:45 a.m.	New Study in the Book of Philemon
	10:30 a.m.	Sunday School
May 6	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study* in the Book of Philippians
May 9	6:30 p.m.	Friday Night Fellowship
May 11	8:45 a.m.	Mother's Day
		No Sunday School — Celebrate Mom
May 13	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study* in Colossians
May 16	7:00 p.m.	Game Night
May 18	8:45 a.m.	New Study in the Book of Ruth
	10:30 a.m.	Ruth 1:1-22 Best of Times, Worst of Times
		Sunday School
May 20	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study* in Colossians
May 23	6:30 p.m.	Friday Night Fellowship
May 25	8:45 a.m.	Ruth 2:1-23 Can Christian Mingle Beat This?
	10:30 a.m.	Sunday School
May 26		Memorial Day
May 27		No Bible Study – Wendy Post Operation
May 30		No Friday Night Activity
June 1	8:45 a.m.	Ruth 3:1-18 Undercover Operations
	10:30 a.m.	Sunday School
June 3	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study* in Colossians
June 6	7:00 p.m.	Game Night
June 8	8:45 a.m.	Pentecost Sunday
June 10	7:00 p.m.	Ruth 4:1-22 Gentile Redemption!
June 13	6:30 p.m.	Bible Study* in Colossians

*Bible Study is at the Kikkerts' home

The Hymns We Sing

COURTESY OF THE CYBER HYMNAL™

<http://www.hymntime.com/>



Sarah F. Adams,
1805-1848

Words: Verses 1-5, Sarah F. Adams, in Hymns and Anthems, by William Johnson Fox, 1841; verse 6, Edward H. Bickersteth, Jr.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to
Thee.

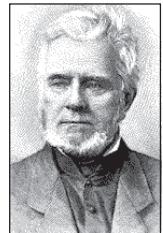
Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
Darkness be over me, my rest a stone.
Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God to
Thee.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto Heav'n;
All that Thou sendest me, in mercy given;
Angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to
Thee.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!



Lowell Mason
1792-1872

Nearer, My God, To Thee

<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/n/m/g/ngmtthee.htm>

http://www.hymntime.com/tch/mid/b/e/t/bethany_mason.mid

Music: Bethany (Mason), Lowell Mason, 1856.

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with
Thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
So by my woes to be nearer, my God, to
Thee.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!
Or, if on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I'll fly,
Still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to
Thee.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!

There in my Father's home, safe and at rest,
There in my Savior's love, perfectly blest;
Age after age to be, nearer my God to Thee.
Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!