



STAYING CONNECTED

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR MCIVOR CHURCH FAMILY

JANUARY 28, 2024

WORSHIP - POWER OF THE CROSS CASTING CROWNS

*The past that held regret
Over my head is gone
These chains are ashes now
That once were rusted on
I was a runaway now I am finally home*

*My mind was a ghost town
Haunted by yesterday
Until your hand reached down
Pulled me out of my grave
Into the freedom found only in Jesus' name*

*I am forgiven, no longer lost
Now I am living in the power of the cross*

*The Father gave His Son
So I could be set free
And now the scales are gone
My eyes can finally see*

I'll tell the world of all Jesus has done for me

*I am forgiven, no longer lost
Now I am living in the power of the cross
Goodbye to sorrow, welcome my joy
Now I am living in the power of the cross*

*And on that cross, His love held true
Through sacrifice, the old made new
This life I live, I live in faith
Now in Jesus name*

*I am forgiven, no longer lost
Now I am living in the power of the cross
Goodbye to sorrow, welcome my joy
Now I am living in the power of the cross*

*Thank You, Oh God I thank You
Jesus I thank You, thank You for the cross
Praise You, Oh God I praise You
Jesus I praise You, praise You for the cross*

PRAYER FOCUS - A SLAVE TRANSFORMED

"I always thank my God when I pray for you...because I keep hearing about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. And I am praying that you will put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ. Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people."
Philemon 1:4-7

"...Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them...This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 17

SERMON - PASTOR MIKAYLA

Philemon is Paul's shortest letter in the Bible, written during the time of his imprisonment, addressing Philemon, a dear friend of Paul. Philemon was a Roman citizen and a follower of Jesus and his conversion is attributed to his encounter with Paul during his missions.

Paul is speaking to Philemon about his slave, Onesimus. Onesimus had wronged Philemon in some way and this led him to flee to Rome in order to avoid punishment. While in Rome, he encountered Paul and became a follower of Christ.

Paul had grown close to Onesimus, saying, "I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you."

Paul did not want Onesimus to leave him, as he had become an important part of his work while Paul was in prison. But he also knew that Onesimus running from problems and that the unresolved conflict had to be dealt with.

Verse 6 says, "I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ."

The use of the word "partnership" (often translated from the Greek word koinonia as "fellowship") is important, because Paul is making his appeal to Philemon based on their shared brotherhood in Christ. This now includes Onesimus as he has also been grafted into the family.

In a book called "Pray without Ceasing" it notes, "The Greek noun koinonia occurs 119 times in the Bible. It is variously translated into English as 'communion,



*"I was one way and now I am completely different.
And the thing that happened in between was Him."
- The Chosen*

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community, and fellowship.' But these singular nouns do not quite capture its richness or range of meaning. Biblical passages that speak of our participation in Christ, or of our having a share in Christ, point to what is meant by koinonia."

As we read these words of Paul, we see how he is petitioning to Philemon on the basis of shared community in Christ.

Koinonia is shown through mutual participation in Christ. It's not just an idea, but something demonstrated in a relationship. It is recognition of Jesus' followers as equals who share in God's grace and love, meaning that koinonia is an action.

Paul writes to Philemon as equals in Christ, as someone who has seen the transformation in Onesimus. In verses 17-19 Paul says, "So if you consider me a partner (koinonia), welcome him as you would welcome me."

Referring back to the sermon title, "A Slave Transformed," koinonia is a huge part of Onesimus' transformation and that of Philemon and Paul as well. Koinonia and transformation go hand in hand. When each of these people meet Christ, their life is forever changed for the better.

Onesimus, a slave who wronged his master, who ran away from his wrongdoing, is transformed by the power of Christ. He went back to his master, even though there could have been serious consequences.

Philemon, a man who became a believer after encountering Paul, is said to have forgiven Onesimus upon his return. Philemon's transformation in Christ showed a countercultural way of treating a slave and even elevated him to be equals.

Paul's transformation is well known. He was once a man who persecuted Christians, who approved of the stoning of Christians, but Christ's intervention on the road to Damascus led to one of the most significant transformations.

Transformation is central in the book of Philemon by the koinonia/fellowship/partnership that is shared. A fellowship that is petitioned for by Paul and eventually comes to fruition, even after Onesimus wronged his master—an offence that could have been punishable by death. This transformative thinking could only come from a God who wants His people to be in harmony. God wants that sense of koinonia, where the vertical relationship we each have with Him, to reflect our horizontal relationships with others.

How can we read this story of koinonia, community and transformation, allowing it to inform and shape our lives?

God can and will transform the lives of people we least expect. There have been times when we have this attitude that they are beyond transformation. Sometimes I find my heart to be hard towards people who live without Christ. I try my best to love them, but I don't have much hope for them.

But who would have thought that Saul would become one

of the biggest torchbearers of the faith? Who would have expected Onesimus to turn his life around and go back to his master, knowing that there could be consequences? Or Philemon, who encountered God and hosted church in his home.

And so I ask myself, why do I only expect the expected? Since I have a heavenly Father, a Creator that designed each thing I can and cannot see, since I know of such a power, there is no reason to see these transformations as impossible!

If the Lord can work with these men, there should be no doubt that He can soften the hearts and minds of those around us today. Lets pray for those who are searching and even for those who are not yet searching.

My hope is that, as we allow God to refine our lives, the natural outpouring of this transformation is koinonia.

The beauty in this book of Philemon is that as Jesus' family, we are a new humanity, we are transformed. As Paul writes in Colossians,

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

FAMILY NEWS

Please pray for Karin and Vern Friesen and her family as they mourn the passing of Karin's mother Martha Tielmann on Tuesday January 23 with her family by her side. The memorial service was held on Thursday. Read her obituary: <https://memorials.friendsfs.ca/gertrude-thielmann/5364355/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, 7pm – Youth Group and Kids Club
Thursday, 9am and 5pm – Harvest Manitoba Food Bank
February 9, 7pm – Young Adult Worship Night
February 18, 11:30am – Family Fun Day Outreach
February 25 – Spring Finance Meeting and Lunch

WAYS TO GIVE

We accept donations by cash or cheque, as well as e-transfers to mcivor@mcivorchurch.com or via credit card on www.mcivorchurch.com. To arrange a gift via Direct Deposit, please contact the office at 204.339.1691.

**** Church office hours are Tuesday to Friday 9am to 4:30pm. ****