

## Sunday School Lesson

By Beattie Wilbon

### INTRODUCTION

"The church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one," wrote Thomas Campbell. Christ's one church consists of "all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct. The Bible gives abundant support to the idea of being one in Christ Jesus." It records Jesus' prayer that those who believe in Him "all may be one." (John 17:20, 21).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Colossae was a city in the highlands of Asia, a Roman province in western Asia Minor. Apparently most of the Colossian Christians were among those who had not seen the apostle Paul; but one Colossian Christian who had seen Paul was Philemon. Perhaps he had once lived in Ephesus, or possibly had been there on a business trip or a vacation when he had heard the gospel and had accepted it. Paul hails him as "our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer." (Philemon 1).

Paul came to Rome perhaps about four years after he left Ephesus. He was a prisoner, but was allowed to rent a house where he lived. A soldier stayed there to guard him. Visitors were allowed, and many came to hear the teaching of Paul. Among those who came was Onesimus, the runaway slave. He heard the gospel and became a sincere Christian.

Onesimus had a problem. According to law, he was a criminal, and Christians are taught to obey the law. Paul organized no "underground railroad" to help slaves get away. He advised Onesimus to go back to his slavery, and Onesimus consented. That was dangerous. Back in Colossae he would be only a piece of property. His owner could punish him severely, and it was not customary to be merciful to runaway slaves. Still Onesimus could hope for mercy because he carried a letter from his master's good friend, Paul. This is the letter in our lesson today.

### THE LESSON

"From Paul, a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. To our friend and fellow worker Philemon, and the church that meets in your house, and our sister Apphai, and our fellow soldier Archippus: May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace." (Philemon 1-3).

Sometimes Paul declared himself an apostle of Jesus. That indicated his authority to teach the truth and issue orders as an official representative of Christ. But in this case he chose to plead rather than to command.

Grace means special favor. Peace means well being in general as well as freedom from conflict. Paul was praying that God and Jesus would grant these to Philemon and his household.

"For this reason I could be bold enough, as your brother in Christ, to order you to do what should be done. But because I love you, I make a request instead. I do this even though I am Paul, the ambassador of Christ Jesus, and at present also a prisoner for his sake. So I make a request to you on behalf of Onesimus, who is my own son in Christ; for while in prison I have become his spiritual father. At one time he was of no use to you, but now he is useful both to you and to me. I am sending him back to you now, and with him goes my heart. I would like to keep him here with me, while I am in prison for the gospel's sake, so that he could help me in your place. However, I do not want to force you to help me; rather, I would like for you to do it on your own free will. So I will not do anything unless you agree." (Philemon 8-14).

Paul was an apostle, an authorized spokesman for Christ. He knew the Lord's will. It would be quite proper for him to enjoin or command Philemon. Sometimes Paul did not hesitate to give commands and to insist that they were the Lord's commands. But he did not want to command this faithful fellow worker whom he loved so well. He made a request instead of an order - but reminded Philemon that he deserved special consideration because he was getting old and because he was suffering imprisonment as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. Keeping up the pressure, Paul indicated that Onesimus was very dear to him personally - not just a friend or convert or fellow worker.

"It may be that Onesimus was away from you for a short time so that you might have him back for all time. And now he is not just a slave, but much more than a slave: he is a dear brother in Christ. How much he means to me! And how much more he will mean to you, both as a slave and as a brother in the Lord. So if you think of me as your partner, welcome him back just as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to my account. Here, I will write this with my own hand: I, Paul, will pay you back. (I should not have to remind you, of course, that you owe your very self to me.) So my brother please do me this favor for the Lord's sake; as a brother in Christ, cheer me up." (Philemon 15-20).

What happened when Onesimus gave this letter to Philemon? Did Philemon send him back to help Paul in Rome? Probably not. Paul was expecting to come to Colossae before long (v. 22). Did Philemon set his slave free? Probably not. Slavery was an accepted practice in that society, and Philemon may have had other Christian slaves. Did Onesimus remain a slave, but a happy one? This seems to be the most probable outcome.

We praise democracy, but an absolute monarchy would be splendid if the monarch were all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good. The Kingdom of Heaven is such a monarchy, and its weakness is the weakness of its people, not the monarch or the system.

Capitalism is not evil. It would work well if every one involved would follow the teaching of Jesus. It is beset with evil when greedy owners oppress workers, or when greedy workers make exorbitant demands backed up by strikes and violence. Even Communism would work beautifully if all the people in the system were what Christians ought to be: Its monstrous abuses arise because power is seized by people who are selfish and cruel.

Philemon had a problem when a runaway slave came back. Should he punish the runaway so severely that no other slave would dare to run? Paul advised a different solution: receive him as "a brother beloved."

# Shriners Launch "Help A Child Smile" Fundraiser

By Jalyne Strong  
Post Staff Writer

The "Help A Child To Smile" fundraiser sponsored by the Shriners of Rameses Temple No. 51 will kick-off on Saturday, November 30. On that date and in the succeeding weeks until just before Christmas, Shriners will appear throughout the city of Charlotte collecting donations for the needy children of this area.

"This will be the fifth annual drive for the children," comments Shriner Eugene Marsh. He initiated this program four years ago. Proceeds each year have been used to host a December 21st Christmas party for the children, most of whom live in public housing projects. The children are treated to lunch, entertainment and they receive gifts of clothes and new and used toys.

"Their needs are important," stresses Marsh. "Many of these children would not have a Christmas if not for the Shriners. The look on their faces show me that this program is valuable to the community."



Eugene Marsh  
.....Project director

Marsh will appear on WBTV's "Top of the Day" program on Friday, November 29, and Mayor Harvey Gantt will give a proclamation on Saturday,

November 30, to officially announce the beginning of the fundraiser.

"Our goal this year is to raise \$10,000," Marsh points out. Specifically, the Shriners, says Marsh, are looking for monetary assistance from the black churches of Charlotte to help supplement this program. Besides financing the children's Christmas party, the money collected will be used to help families with payments of rents, utilities and purchases of food during the holiday season.

Businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals are also urged to do their part in donating clothes, food, toys and dollars to "Help A Child To Smile" this Christmas.

"The Shriners are expecting to welcome a little over 200 children to the party this year," predicts

Marsh. "They'll come from Dalton Village, Piedmont Courts, Southside, Fairview Homes and other areas. William Simmons, the housing director, provides the names."

Make your checks out to "Help A Child To Smile" and mail the tax-deductible donations to Rameses Temple, 119 E. 8th St., Charlotte, N.C. 28202.

In another important matter, Marsh was recently elevated to the 33rd degree in Shrinedom, in Washington, D.C. There were 318 Scottish Rite brothers, candidates from 22 states and three foreign countries, elevated to the 33rd degree at that time and Marsh was elected their class president. The class is named in honor of the late Henry A. Dove, past grand master of Washington, D.C.

## New Mercy Foundation Directors Announced

Seven new directors have been elected to the Board of Directors for the Mercy Hospital Foundation, Inc.

The new members are: Dr. Robert L. Albright, president, Johnson C. Smith University; David Scott Andrews, M.D.; Cy N. Bahakel, president, Bahakel Broadcasting Company; Jeanne Z. Bohn, director of community affairs, Carolina Broadcasting Company; Paul R. Leonard, executive vice president, The Crosland Company; Robert E. Shirley, M.D.; and Stephen R. Walsh, president, The Walsh Corporation.

The Mercy Foundation's primary goal is to improve the skills of staff members through the foundation's professional development program. It's administered through the hospital staff and has as its goal improving patient care by helping staff members - from the most experienced medical person to the maintenance staff members - learn the latest in medical technology.

The foundation also helps Mercy Hospital purchase important diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, keeping the hospital up-to-date with constantly changing technology.

The Foundation's other Board of



Dr. Robert Albright  
...Receives new honors

Directors members are: Harry J. Grim, John B. Stedman, James G. Babb Jr., E. Reed Gaskin, M.D., Charles L. Grace, Jack B. Hobson, M.D., Larry H. Patterson, Richard G. Robb, Donald Schumacher, M.D., Theodore B. Sumner Jr., and William K. Van Allen.

## CPCC Winter Schedule Published

High school completion, business and career training, and liberal arts all will be taught at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) when winter quarter begins.

The complete schedule of classes will be published in the Sunday, November 24, edition of The Charlotte Observer, and in the November 28 edition of The Charlotte Post. Or a schedule can be picked up after that date on campus or at CPCC's

learning centers in Pineville, Matthews, Cornelius, and Freedom Mall.

Tuition for most classes is less than \$20. Registration for new students will be December 9-12. Winter quarter classes begin in January and continue for 11 weeks. For more information, call 373-6687.

Of the 1,219 community colleges in the U.S., CPCC recently won recognition as one of the top five community colleges in the nation for teaching excellence and student success.

## Counseling Session

The counselors of South Mecklenburg High School Student Services Department in cooperation with United Family Services will be offering a group counseling session on "Family Stress," December 3 at the high school's media center. The session, entitled "Family Stress," will be conducted by Irv Eddlestein and Terry Healey. They will focus on stress caused by separation, divorce, the blended family and loss of parent through death.

## Christmas Toys

The Junior League Wearhouse is having its annual Christmas toy sale on Friday, December 6, and Saturday, December 7. A variety of both used toys in good condition and some new toys will be on sale. The Wearhouse is located behind Bush Stationers at Park Road Shopping Center.

Store hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Proceeds help support the Junior League community projects.

For more information, call 523-8159.

# Pick 'n Pay Shoes® Thanksgiving Sale

Save on our best selling dress shoes.

**\$12**  
your choice  
Reg. \$16.97

• Coordinating clutches & shoulderbags...\$6

**\$16**  
Reg. \$22.97

**\$10**  
Reg. \$14.97

• Select group of women's knee socks...25% off

**\$8**  
Reg. \$12.97

**\$19**  
Reg. \$26.97

**\$13**  
Reg. \$18.97

Men's active casuals at special savings.

**\$15**  
Reg. \$19.97

• Sport socks for the family...2 pairs for \$3

**\$12**  
Reg. \$19.97

**\$12**  
Reg. \$15.97

**\$19**  
Reg. \$29.97

• Select group of men's socks...\$1

Shop these Charlotte area stores...

- 2648 N. Graham St. (Hutchinson Plaza)
- 1324 Central Ave. (Central Square)
- 6345 Albemarle Rd. (Loehmann's Plaza)
- 3121 Freedom Drive
- 5823 South Blvd. (K-Mart Plaza)
- Belmont Abbey Plaza (Hwy. 273, Belmont)
- Matthews Plaza (Hwy. 74 & 51), Matthews

Sale prices good thru Sun. MasterCard, Visa or Choice. Open evenings & open Sun. 1-6pm.