

Zoom Sunday School 7 June 2020

The Holy Spirit did not just come in wind and flame and tongues for a dramatic moment. He came to stay and gradually, under his influence, the attitudes of those who became Jesus-followers began to change. There was a spirit of caring as the good news was meant for everyone. (Acts 2: 43-47)

So who was the 'everyone'?

***Men and Women:** Society generally ignored women then. Jewish men said a prayer of thankfulness each day that they were not women! But the Holy Spirit reinforced Jesus' attitudes. He had respected women and it wasn't an accident that he revealed himself after the resurrection to women before he spoke to the men.

***Jews and Non-Jews:** The use of various languages at Pentecost showed that all people were important and non-Jews were also welcomed. Up to that point Jews had been proud that they alone had been God's chosen people, and through them God's blessing (Jesus) had come. But now those who followed his Son were his 'beloved' people.

***Rich (freemen) and poor (slaves):** The people who owned the slaves, . No-one had ever thought of slaves as 'free' to accept God.

We see from a letter which Paul wrote later that the church changed the position of slaves too. By the time Paul wrote to Philemon he was old, and was under house arrest (lockdown) probably in Rome. Somehow he had met a runaway slave called Onesimus (his name meant 'useful'). However, Onesimus had been 'useless'! He had run away and possibly stolen from his master.

But Onesimus had come into contact with Paul and had become a Christian, like his master, Philemon. Although Onesimus was still a 'possession', he was equal before God. He had discovered that he was important to God. This meant that he was ready to be a really useful slave from then on, if that was what God wanted for him.

Onesimus had been helping Paul, but Paul knew he had to send him back to his master. Philemon could decide to punish his slaves for running away, so Paul wrote this letter to see if he could help Onesimus. The letter said that:

- a. Onesimus realised he had done wrong and would return.
- b. Paul would pay his debts.
- c. Philemon who was a church leader should act in a Christian way too.
Should he punish or free?

We don't know what happened but, because the church was for all, Philemon would have realised that they were brother-Christians now. I like to think that he freed Onesimus and that Onesimus worked for God for the rest of his life.

Weekly readings:

Monday: Acts 2: 43-47

Tuesday: Philemon vv1, 4-7

Wednesday: Philemon vv 8b – 12

Thursday: Philemon vv17-19a

Friday: Galatians 3:28