

The Good News

Newsletter— December 2015

A Publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of the Holy Spirit, to assemble and worship God, to love and encourage one another, to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to minister to all people, and to live in peace.

In a world where difficult issues remain, University Baptist Church continues its commitment to be a church where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

Children are the Future: Let's All be Children

Have you ever thought about the ages of the disciples Jesus first chose for the mission of world evangelization? They were youngsters. I recently read a wonderful commentary on the youth of the disciples that has me thinking about my own mission and my age (41). James E. Stewart, commenting on Mark 3:13-19, says: “Christianity began as a young people's movement...unfortunately, it is a fact which Christian art and Christian preaching have too often obscured. But it is quite certain that the original disciple band was a young men's group. It is not surprising then, that Christianity entered the world as a young people's movement. Most of the apostles were probably still in their twenties when they went out after Jesus. Jesus himself, we should never forget, went out to his earthly ministry with the 'dew of his youth' upon Him (Psalm 110:3 – this psalm was applied to Jesus first by Himself and then by the apostolic church). It was a true instinct that led the Christians of a later day, when they drew the likeness of their Master on the walls of catacombs, to portray Him, not old and weary and broken with pain, but as a young shepherd out on the hills of the morning. The original version of Isaac Watts' great hymn was true to fact: “When I survey the wondrous cross, where the Young Prince of Glory died.” And no one has ever understood the heart of youth in its gaiety and gallantry and generosity and hope, its sudden loneliness and haunting dreams and hidden conflicts and strong temptations; no one has understood it nearly so well as Jesus. And no one ever realized more clearly than Jesus that the adolescent years of life when dormant thoughts are stirring and the whole world begins to unfold, are God's best chance with the soul. When we study the story of the first twelve, it is a young man's adventure we are studying. We see them following their leader out into the unknown, not knowing very clearly who He is or why they are doing it or where He is likely to send them; but just magnetized by Him, fascinated and gripped and held by something irresistible in the soul of Him, laughed at by friends, plotted against by foes, with doubts sometimes growing clamorous in their own hearts, until they almost wished they were well out of the whole business; but still clinging to him, coming through the ruin of their hopes to a better loyalty and earning triumphantly at last the great name the Te Deum gives them 'The glorious company of the apostles.' It is worth watching them, for we too may catch the infection of their spirit and fall into step with Jesus.”

During the last year I had the opportunity and privilege to shepherd a small group of teenagers. We met daily for bible study and discussion. A lot of times our discussions revolved around applying the words of Christ to their lives. I was fortunate enough to be able to see the word of God through their eyes and experiences and was surprised to discover how different it looked. It isn't a set of rules to be pharisaically followed with punishments for the tiniest mistake. The Word of God is an open invitation to grow closer to our Savior. Jesus was calling them to Himself. I could hear and see it happen. I remain amazed at witnessing the Gospel work in their lives.

The questions I have on my mind today have to do with the way I personally hear and receive the Word. Our Lord tells us “that it is to little children that the kingdom of God belongs...whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” (Mark 10:13-16) Am I too rigid and set in my religious ways? Do I have the childlike faith and humility children and teenagers possess? Do you? I am positive that if more of us simply came to Jesus with the heart of a child then could change our world. Look what 12 young men accomplished. Make sure to support youth ministry. Who knows, you may learn something.

In Christ's love,
Roger G. – Parchman, MS.

A Miracle Makeover

My name is Christina Flowers. I was born on September 23, 1980 to very young parents. My mother was 16 and my father was 19 years old at the time of my birth. Being so young, my mother was afraid of letting her parents know about her pregnancy. The first attempt was to abort me herself by playing extreme sports in school and doing strenuous activities. She even went as far as to drink Clorox (my dad later told me) to lose me. Out of all of her attempts, which there were many more, she was able to still carry me to full term without her family knowing, and I was still born healthy.

As a result of not having proper prenatal care, I was born with a cleft lip. As years went by, I noticed that I looked different from the other children at school and at home. My mother and father had nine more children together and I always used to ask why was I different. My mother tried to look into and seek getting me corrective surgery, but it was way too expensive! My mother was a full time student, despite having 10 children and my father was a boxer. With 10 young children it was very hard to come up with the \$20,000 for a surgery, especially when I was needing more than one.

One day, my mother took me to see a specialist with hopes that he would do the surgery much lower than the other doctors she had talked to. Well turns out, that he ended up being impressed with how smart and gifted I was. I could count to 40 at the age of one! He told my mother that he would perform my surgeries for free, no matter how many I needed! Today, I am 35 years old, 6 surgeries later, and you cannot tell that I was once disfigured, talked about badly by my peers. Now, I'm often told that I have the most beautiful smile that anyone has ever seen. Thanks to the angel God sent me when I was a child, Dr. Adams. God always has a image and a purpose for everyone he creates. He makes you how he has envisioned you.

The Reason for the Season

I was conversing with a fellow Christian about deadline, for news articles, who is far more advanced in his Christian walk. I am a new man, he is advanced, even though I age him by 20 years or so. He told me, "Christmas is Everyday." (i.e. walk with Jesus in your heart.)

Though I walk daily,
through the lost world, once
myself, the most lost, least & lonely,
the brightness of truly knowing,
that Jesus wept for me, for you, for all
of us. That we all enjoy the new found
freedoms, the joy of salvation, and peace.
Hard fought for some; rough roads traveled.
When you read this, know angels are singing,
As you sing cantatas, caroling together, remember
the least, the lost and the lonely. As we pray for
All. Thank you to all those out there for
your prayers, your cards of fellowship and joy.

In Jesus Christ,
Timothy E.

What Can God Do With a Stone?

Early in my Christian walk I started praying for God's will to be done in my life and, as often happens, a wiser than I fellow believer cautioned me not to pray that way. His reasoning was, "You leave yourself open for things you may not want." Being the kind of guy that I am, I ignored him and expanded my prayer to include a promise... "God, if you open a door, I will do my best to go through it." And so, with this article that you are reading I walk through another open door and begin a new ministry at Cedar Lake Christian Assembly. Who knows where God will take us.

So, what's the deal with the stone? Remember that story about David and Goliath? As Scripture tells us, when David went into battle against Goliath he was just a boy but upon his shoulders rested the fate of Israel. What I find interesting is, David carried five stones into battle but he only needed one to secure the victory. By the power of God, a boy and one stone defeated a mighty enemy.

Most of us have at one time or another prayer, "God use me for your glory" and then, as He spoke to our spirit, we added, "But God, I don't have the skills to do what you are asking me to do." And, with that, we sat back down and waited for God to give us more options. In truth, we missed an opportunity to serve God because we doubted our ability to do what he was asking. I have learned that God already knows what we can or cannot do before he calls us. He knows what kind of stones or talents we are carrying in our bag before we do. All that is required of us is to trust God and be obedient to his call. His desire is for us to grow in faith, to walk in the fullness of his gifts.

As a young boy, I struggled in school. In fact, I was lucky to graduate from high school and college was like quicksand. In two years of college, I spent a good deal of my father's money and achieved a D+ grade point average. Throughout my school years, my most dreaded subject was English for I was never taught phonics and was an extremely poor speller.

As I began to walk with God, he continued to push me into the field of teaching until one day I discovered that I had a passion for teaching others. Give me a room and some warm bodies and I'll teach something. Then one day in 1985 a guest speaker challenged me with this question, "If you had only six weeks to live, what would you do?" To my utter amazement, I said, "write a book." The kid who hated English really did say, "write a book." God knew the talent that was hidden deep in my soul and he had a plan. My duty was to learn to use the talent and then wait for him to open a door.

So, what have I learned? I have learned that God will use us for his glory if we will just obey his calling. All that is required of us is to use the stones or talents we already possess. You see, God started preparing me for my new adventure in writing back in that 1985 classroom. He polished my writing stone and when it was ready to be used, he opened a door.

I pray that these thoughts of mine will be a blessing and that they will challenge us all to a closer walk with God. We don't need to be college graduates or captains of industry to be of value to God. All we must be is willing to trust him and follow his leading through the doors that he opens in our lives. God has already prepared us, when he calls us by name. For the glory of God, try the open door.

Lord, I pray that you will use me for your glory. May I have the courage to follow your leading.

Only One

Though the gallows hang before me – victory in God my eyes shall see – the taste of death, nor her sting, frets me none. This passage must clearly be drawn to full circle to complete the Master's plan in me. Pressed days lay waste; worry, anxiety, and trivial matters, for it's all naught before the eyes of faith, for they all be threads to thwart one's soul. The toxic venom of this realm be a variety of veritables but the root lies in doubt. The naked eye sees no mar of the flesh of God not yet translated, but of parchment I read him into sight.

Though the grave holds her hand out before me I shall not be affright, for God's charity hath deemed me whole. The charge of this life is explicit with valleys of impurities, slack of integrity, yet still I hold firm my torch toward the East awaiting my king's arrival.

Though execution has my number and the belly of the earth smiles before me; through the gate of death I shall see the Heavens bust open in an array of divine art wrought of only – the arrangement of angels singing from the sky – it is then that I shall truly live.

Inspired by Jesus

David C.

Parchman Death Row

God Knows My Heart

We often will say, in an attempt to vindicate ourselves saying or doing something wicked, “I know I say this and do that but, God knows my heart!” Well according to the word of God, so do those around you. In Matthew 12:34 we learn this truth, “You brood of Vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For out of the mouth speaks that which fills the heart.” The heart will express what it is filled with. A heart filled with wickedness will express itself in blasphemy, bitterness, hate, filth, and abuse; all the things contrary to the spirit. (Galatians 5:17-21) A heart that is filled with the righteousness that is Jesus will be evidenced by the words we speak, and ultimately in the way we live. This is the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22, Matthew 7:17-18) The word heart in v. 34 comes from the Greek word *Kardis*. Which is where we get the word *cardiac*. It is used figuratively in the New Testament to reflect our thoughts and feelings. The heart is the seat of the desires, feelings, affections, passions, and impulses we have. “For out of the mouth speaks that which fills the heart” i.e. that which fills our desires, feelings, affections, impulses. Remember the old saying “You are what you eat”. If we fill our hearts with filth, whether it be through people, places, or things, then it will be evidenced in the things we say and do, but on the contrary, if we fill our hearts with the word of God, prayer time, and seeking relationship and recreation with people, places and things that are not profane and sinful, then this will be evidenced in the things we say and do. “Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals” 1 Corinthians 15:33 It is inevitable, the people, places and things we partake will affect us. Which is exactly why we are warned “Do not be partakers with them” Ephesians 5:7 Instead of keeping company with darkness we as Christians must keep company with light, Jesus. “For then we will be adequate, equipped for every good work” 2 Timothy 3:1-17. We were born to manifest the glory of God but if we are not adequate and equipped how can we manifest the glory of God that is Jesus Christ.

In getting to the next part of this piece I can't help but think about the ugly truth in the saying “God Knows My Heart.” It is so true. God does know our hearts, which is why, out of love, He sent his son to die for it. (John 3:16 Genesis 8:21) So it can be sprinkled clean and renewed in the spirit of righteousness that is Jesus (Hebrews 10:22) The purpose of this piece is not only to point out that our words and actions are a reflection of our heart but to encourage you to keep your eyes on Jesus. In Matthew 11:28-29 the word tells us “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and lean upon me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.” So what is the word telling us? Let's start with “Come to Me”. Here Jesus is inviting us to believe and receive the gift of salvation which is Jesus. “Take my yoke upon you” This means we enter into the control of the spirit. Next He says, and this is key to the life of a believer, “Learn from me.”

As we give Him control and acknowledge His lead in our lives, spending time in the word and prayer, building the relationship, He teaches us His ways. (Deuteronomy 13:4, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 143 10-11, Proverbs 3:5-8 Ephesians 4:20-24, Colossians 3:10) This is the renewal of our hearts into the likeness of God's glory, Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:18) and finally we cross the finish line “And you shall find the rest for your souls.” This eternal rest is found only in Jesus Christ as we receive him His spirit of righteousness. Eternal rest cannot be found through the desires of the flesh and the temporal things of this world. Jesus loves you and wants to be with you in eternity but you have to come to him. He will not make you love Him for that for that is not true love. It's up to us to choose. This Christmas I want to encourage you to accept the gift of salvation that will give you the love, hope, joy and eternal rest that He has promised. May you have a Merry Christmas and it is my prayer that you choose to let Jesus hold your hand and walk with you into 2016. God bless.

Song of the month:
“How Can It Be” - Lauryn Dajegel..

1 Corinthians 16:23-24
Kingdom Kid

Why Can't We All Just Love One Another?

John 4: 1-42 1st Corinthians 13

God loves us all and says in His word that he's not partial therefore hate is not any good for anyone or anybody. Most of us have hatred or dislikes for others based on something that happened among others. Most cases, it's something very silly or ignorant to begin with. When we read John chapter 4 we are reminded of a poor relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. It is often said that there are angels amongst us so you should always be loving to everyone. Here, the Samaritan woman was amongst the Savior who asked her for some drinking water. There was no bitterness or anger in their exchange with one another even though they were both aware of the history amongst their people. Jesus revealed to her his knowledge of her all in all and offered her the living water that springeth up in the everlasting life. He revealed Himself as the Christ that she believed one would come and tell all things. Jesus knew who and what she was and that she wanted what he had to offer. She went and told all that would hear and many did believe.

Jesus gave his love freely to all those that believed that he was Christ and it didn't matter that He was a Jew and that they were Samaritans. We, as followers of Christ, have to always love, to forgive, and to always embrace one another. We have no other option when we say we are His followers. We have to pray for those who hate, dislike, or show prejudice against others and we have to hope that those with that character learn to put God's love on their hearts.

Pray for me as I will pray for you and all the other brothers and sisters that have found the Lord and also those that are lost.

Love ya,

Frederick S. -- Flora Ms.

I recently ran across this definition of sovereignty: "The biblical concept of God's kingly, supreme rule and legal authority over the entire universe. God's sovereignty is expressed, exercised, and displayed in the divine plan for and outworking of salvation history." Living here on death row for the last 13 years, as a redeemed child of the Living God has offered heartfelt insight into lives that hate (not an exaggeration) God. The majority of these individuals think they are too intelligent (wordsmart) and sophisticated to believe the message of the cross. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 expounds the wisdom and power of God (Christ). It's true, we are smarter than we have ever been, but we aren't wiser. And human wisdom will not now nor ever lead us to God. He counts it as foolishness because it leads us away from the cross. You can hear mind numbing stories of crime and debauchery (real and imagined) and the overpowering desire the tale bearers speak of it all day long. Mention Jesus and you're talking an unspoken language. The apostle Paul said, "All such boasting is sinful apart from the cross because the cross of Christ is the only means of salvation. Salvation is in the cross alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We come back to Paul's declaration, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe: (1 Corinthians 1:21)

A fatal blow to human pride is what the preaching of the cross delivers. It reveals our total and complete unworthiness to receive the grace of God. So, when you tell people that there is nothing they can do to save themselves and that they are going to have to be saved by the crucified Christ and the blood of the cross alone, that leaves no room for pride. And that is a thorn in the side of many people today. "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,'" declares the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24. May you allow the Lord to guide you and keep you always. God Bless.

Tony B. – Parchman, Ms.

Obedience Renders Blessings

Isaiah 43:2 - "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

Nothing in this life is easy. Finding work is not easy; raising children is not easy; and certainly, being a Christian is not easy. Apastor-friend of mine, Jim Burke, says, "Being a Christian isn't easy, nor is living the Christian life difficult... It is impossible on our own strength." We must rely completely on God. I say it all the time, there is only one thing I can do perfectly with God: Fail. But ever since I became a Christian, my eyes have become open to the Truth: the sovereignty of God. All God calls for is our obedience, not our ability. Simply heed His call, and He will provide the ability. For God will never leave us or forsake us, and He will complete the work of which He started.

Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac in obedience to God. Joseph remained obedient in Egypt in prison for 13 years. Moses led the nation out of Egypt in obedience to God. Daniel refused the food of the King in direct obedience to the Law. And Jesus remained obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And each of these men received innumerable blessings from God due to their obedience.

When we "swear an oath" to someone and they don't believe us, we "swear to God"-as in we put up God as our collateral backing. Whereas when God makes a promise, He does so on Himself. For there is no higher backing. And God cannot lie. Furthermore, brothers, rejoice! For the God who cannot lie, has promised us eternal salvation if we but confess and accept Jesus Christ (Romans 10: 9-11). All God requires of us is our obedience, and He will provide us the ability, and with the ability, blessings. To strive to have the mind of Christ is to achieve the character traits of peaceableness, gentleness, love, joy, kindness, and things of the sort (James 3:17; Galatians 5:22), which are blessings in themselves. To be "filled with" something means to be controlled by that something. To be filled with anger means to be controlled by that anger. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. And it is a blessing in itself to be filled with the Holy Spirit, therefore, our actions ought to be holy and righteous. Obedience to Christ, after first, of course, acceptance of Christ, entails allowing Him to be Lord of your Life. Complete Surrender. Allowing His Goodness, His glory, to shine through you.

In every aspect of life we are to ask ourselves this question with two distinct possibilities: Does this bring glory to God or not? If it does, we are to perform such action immediately; if it does not bring glory to God, we must abort immediately. The virtue of holiness, of righteousness, may only be achieved through obedience to God and His will. Incidentally, that is also the way toward receiving blessings. And that is the one road to true joy.

By: Steven Matthew Wilbanks

The Privilege of Prayer

While studying the first of the seven penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), I came across a poem by Richard Chenevix Trench:

Lord, what a change within us on short hour
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all – the distant and the near –
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others – that we are not always strong,
That we are sometimes overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be.
Anxious or troubled, when with us in prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

This poem spoke directly to my heart and has reminded me of the last year in which I spent doing the Lord's work in the most unfavorable conditions I have experienced to date. I was forced to rely on God to supply all of my needs and it was only through prayer that my true needs, as opposed to my wants, were revealed. I know that sounds a bit confusing. What I mean is that I often didn't know what it was I actually needed so I couldn't pray for or about it. How can you pray for healing if you don't know you are sick? Right? God first led me to my actual need and then promptly answered my prayers by filling that need. I am still amazed at the conversational nature of these prayers. God helped me to talk it out and see what his Spirit saw. Amazing! (Romans 8:26-28).

We not only have unlimited access to the creator but confidence that He understands what we are, or should be, asking for. He knows and wants us to know too. Why hadn't I been taking advantage of this privilege more often? Why haven't you?

Our Heavenly Father loves us, knows what we need, and wants to open up His heavenly treasury to us. This requires a relationship and relationships take time and effort. This is easily something that can be built through prayer. Pray without ceasing in good times and bad. I promise he is listening and will respond. I am praying for all of you.

In Christ's Love,
Roger Gillett
Parchman, MS

P.S. I want to give a shout out to all the people that God put in my life in Forrest Co. To the men, both prisoners and staff at the jail, I say, "Keep the faith and be the example. You will be rewarded." To all of the people that wrote to me, visited me, prayed with me, and supplied me with the emotional and ministerial support I needed to do my work, I say in heartfelt, tearful sincerity, "Thank you! I couldn't have survived without you." May God bless you all in Christ Jesus.

*This article was accidentally omitted from the November issue of the Good News

Say to Our Mountains be thou removed. 9-28- 01

Mark 11:23: "whoever says to this mountain be removed it will be cast into the sea. He who does not doubt in his heart and believes in him thy will be done."

* The Following was written by Stephen Powers in 2001. He has since had two strokes and currently has an aneurysm on his brain.

We know our mountains can be problems and bring trials in life. The troubles we face are not only physical but spiritual. As believers we need to do what Jesus' word says. When we are faced with trials in our lives, we need to get help from others and help them with their mountains too. We should always encourage one another to believe in Jesus. Our mountains can stand in our way when we hold something against some one. We must forgive as Christ forgave us. The Devil and his demons do not want us to remove the mountains. In fact The Devil wants us to carry these mountains with us. As we learn to love and trust in Jesus. Jesus showed his disciples how to remove obstacles in their lives, we can too. We need to learn from him and not make mountains in our lives. We may feel that our mountain will never be moved. We know that Jesus said that all things are possible : for those who believe in him . Amen

Brother in Christ Stephen Elliot Powers

The Good News will begin posting facts, stories, or writings about the death penalty on this page.

If readers and contributors would like, we invite discussion in the form of articles or prayer.

Thank you.

THE DEATH PENALTY

I sought you out because I wanted
to meet you,
I shook your hand because I wanted
to greet you.
They call me the Death Penalty but I'm
Very much alive,
In the so-called name of justice, I'll fill
your veins with my jive.
I stand anxiously behind a curtain so you
won't see my face,
I'm disguised as a needle to mask the entity
Of disgrace.
I'm working for the states exclusively so
please don't tell God,
The death I bring and the life He gives
coinciding would be odd.
Nonetheless, I'll kill you without any regret
or chances for mercy,
I'm not ashamed of the condemnation or
all the controversy.
I am the Death Penalty so don't you ever
forget my name,
Death and destruction of His goodness is
the reason for my fame.
If another family gets torn to pieces over
all my chaos,
It's not my fault; your governing state
Is my boss.

STAND   AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

by: Justin H. Underwood