

The Good News

Newsletter— December 2016

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)

ALL SAINTS DAY (a page from my daily journal) November 6, 2016

Today was ALL SAINTS DAY, and it was beautiful in every way at University Baptist Church--Sunday School, Worship--the music, the sermon, communion, followed by fellowship on the lawn while eating Topher Burgers, listening to the jazz band, and enjoying the beautiful weather. (Jane was the Lay Reader for the service, and as always perfectly beautiful!)

Yet the most overwhelming spiritual experience for me in a long time happened this morning, not "at church" but at Forrest General Hospital. I'm on call today, and just as Jane and I were getting ready to head to UBC, I got a call to come to the hospital to see a patient who is a prisoner and is actively dying. He could easily die before the day is over, but almost certainly at least within the next two or three days. Interestingly, I didn't even find out his full name because he is listed as a private patient. I'll call him Bob. He needed to talk with somebody about his faith--specifically about assurance. For me and I believe also for him, this was an "a-ha" moment! God loves Bob, God loves me, God loves the two security guards sitting in his room, God loves the nurse who walks in and out of this room while we talk and pray. We don't have to beg God to love us--God loves us before we yield to that love and God loves us all just alike! What we need to do is yield unconditionally to that love--that's what repentance is all about!

I'm praying for Bob as I write--praying with thanksgiving that he is resting in that Love, just as he was early today. I'm also praying that people in the "criminal justice system" can hurry up and let his family know what's happening so that they can see Bob and he can see them before he goes to see Jesus face to face.

Thank you, Lord, that possibly my very last emergency call-back as a staff chaplain was with your beloved son Bob!

Dick Allison, retiring staff chaplain

I Will Pray to the Lord

“I will pray to the Lord, and He will answer me from His holy mountain.” Psalms 3:4

Do you ever feel lost? Lonely? Pray to the Lord. Do you ever feel angry? Frustrated? Wronged? Pray to the Lord. Do you ever feel confused? Confounded? In need of guidance and counsel? Pray to the Lord.

The Bible tells us exactly how and Who we should ask for guidance. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God. He is generous and enjoys giving to all people, so He will give you wisdom” James 1:5. But there is one condition. The Lord doesn’t like doubters. “But when you ask God, you must believe and not doubt. Anyone who doubts is like a wave in the sea, blown up and down by the wind.” James 1:6

It never ceases to amaze me that most of the time people, Christians, too, use God as a last resort. When they have a problem they ask around for advice, but they neglect the primary source: God.

They go to their family: What do you think?

They go to their friends: “What do you think?”

They go to their bosses, teachers, or co-workers: What do you think?

It is only when all other avenues are exhausted before they finally say, “Oh, yeah, God what do you think? I need guidance!” It is as if we forget about God and where wisdom comes from. “Only the Lord gives wisdom; He gives knowledge and understanding” Proverbs 2:6. It’s pretty clear Who gives the best advice: “Only the Lord.” Instead of using God as a last resort, let’s get into the habit of coming to Him first. We can use the full spectrum of questions in this regard.

Who? That one is simple. God—first—every time.

What? Present the situation to God as you see it. Ask God to show you His perspective. Ask Him what needs to be done, then...

How? “How God?” Ask God how you can honor the Savior; how you can bring glory to His name; how you can lift Him up.

When? Ask God to reveal His timing—not yours. It has been said that God moves at a pace of 3 miles per hour—the pace of a human walking, not running. So often we want God to “get a move on.” We want what we want now, now, now. But God is all-knowing. His foolishness is wiser than our wisest. Wait for the Lord’s timing...

Where? Look to see where the Lord is working, and follow. Ask God to reveal to you where He wants you and then go there.

Why? We don’t need to ask this question. It doesn’t matter why. It’s irrelevant. God said so, that’s why. We know that God works all things together for our good. We know that the outcome will ultimately be good so “why” doesn’t matter. What does matter is that we come to God first before anyone else. We need never forget to pray.

As for me, I will pray to the Lord and He will answer me from His holy mountain every time.

The Bondage of Bitterness, Or The Freedom of Forgiveness

" No one truly forgives without accepting and suffering the pain of another person's sin " - Neil T. Anderson from his book: The Bondage Breaker.

And I, as well as Mr. Anderson and probably a few of you reading this, fail to see the 'fairness' in that. But rest assured there is fairness there, as well as justice. There? At the cross. There enters that which makes forgiveness, morally, as well as legally, right. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states (God) " Made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him ". We so very, very often end up suffering the temporary negative consequences of the sin of others. Get over it. It is a harsh but simple reality of life. Romans 12: 19-21 reads, " Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, " Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, " if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. By returning good for evil we will "heap burning coals on our enemy's head." There were personal times, even after I got saved, that that sounded like music to my ears! Sad, but true. Paul wasn't suggesting that literally be done. To a believer that would be against the entire spirit of that passage of Scripture. The late Adrian Rogers states, "The person who receives your kindness in response to their sin is shocked into awareness. Your kindness to them makes them see the absurdity of their selfishness and helps awaken them to the blessings of relationship." You can overcome evil when someone enacts it toward you, but not by returning evil to them. That could very well set thing into perpetual motion.

As Christians we should never wait until the other person asks us for our forgiveness. Jesus didn't. WWJD? Luke 23: 34 states exactly what He did. He petitioned the Father by praying, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." Do not wait until you "feel" like forgiving. Remember, forgiveness from the heart is "choosing not to hold someone's sin against them. Forgiveness towards those who have hurt us is not a suggestion from God to be mulled over. It is a command from Him. Hesitate and you will regret it. I speak from experience. Neil Anderson put it this way, " Once you choose to forgive, Satan will have lost his power over you in that area, and God's healing touch will be free to move." Freedom, right then, will be gained. Even if you don't immediately change in feelings. Do not bypass the difficult, sometimes, gut wrenching, hard choice you have to make. In complete obedience to Him say, " Lord I choose to forgive."

"Those that refuse to forgive burn the bridge that they must one day cross over."

Tony B.
Parchman, MS
D.R./D.P.C.

Aware
Read I Timothy 4:10-16

As men and women, we have to be aware of the fact that other people are watching us even when we don't have a clue that they are. So many people look to others as role models even when you're not looking to be a role model. Just that thought alone should make you want to do better and be a better person.

When I was a kid, I thought my father was the coolest man in the world. Everybody called him Uncle Joe in our neighborhood and most weren't even related to him at all. I wanted to be just like him. I even went so far as to sneak one of his Koal cigarettes out of his pack. I waited until everyone was asleep and then I snuck into the kitchen and lit the cigarette. Before I could get a good puff, my father had grabbed me by my feet and pulled me from under the table. He told me that he'd kill me if he ever caught me trying to smoke again, and I believed every word of what he said. I've never tried to smoke again.

As parents and as adults, both children and other adults imitate what they see others doing. As men and women of God, we have to walk and talk in ways that our Heavenly Father would be proud of. We must be a positive example for others in hopes that they will follow and be a better person than whomever they look up to. None of us are perfect and each day is a work in progress toward what we should be. The mere fact that you're willing to work on being better makes me proud to be your brother.

Be aware yourselves of who you are and what impact you have on others around you. As I always say, God is watching you and He's watching over you. He's not going to stop following you so get used to being watched, being followed, and being blessed by Him. God Bless All!

Aware

Aware of all the possibilities
I thank Him humbly 360 degrees
In the quiet
Face down on my knees during the riot
Peace comes at a price
Angered at circumstances but I remain (J) nice
Aware of my chances
His beauty has received glances
In everything
I tug repeatedly to let free-spirits ring
Upon every mountain top
He's following me around nonstop
Aware of the consequences
Undying persistence
In hope
Watching through the lenses of life's telescope
I see
He's still following me...
Following all
Never late to homeroom class for roll-call
Your humble servant here
On the front line another year
Aware of the fight
On my knees every night
Thankful for the tools to survive
Blessings to all for two-zero-one-five (2015)!
Amen.

-Justin Underwood
Parchman, MS

Call to Prayer

Dear Friends,

By now everyone has come to terms with the results of the most unbelievably bizarre and divisive Presidential contest in our nation's history. Whether the person you supported is in the White House or not, the work for us Christians here in the United States is just beginning. I am writing to remind you that we have the power to change the world today. It doesn't matter who is in the position of power. One of the greatest privileges and most important responsibilities we possess is prayer.

We are told by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy (2:1-2), "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." The great prayer warrior, E.M. Bounds, furthers Paul's point. He said, "As a special class to be prayed for, we may mention those who have control in state or who bear rule in the church. Prayer has mighty potencies. It makes good rulers and makes them better rulers. It restrains the lowless and the despotic. Rulers are to be prayed for. They are not out of the reach and the control of prayer, because they are not out of the reach and control of God. Wicked Nero was on the throne of Rome when Paul wrote these words to Timothy urging prayer for those in authority. Christian lips are to breathe prayers for the cruel and infamous rulers in state as well as for the righteous and the benign governors and princes."

I know some of you may feel like we are heading in the wrong direction as a country. I certainly see it that way. You may feel like you are powerless to change anything, but prayer changes everything. We must look beyond our own desires and biased views and strive in prayer to see the hand of God in the outcome of these elections. We must think deeply about the people around us that have been impacted this year by the last hundred-plus years of U.S. policy and ask ourselves (in prayer) if we are a part of the problems we see. We need to ask ourselves if we are part of the problem because of our pride in wanting our own way perhaps, or if we can be a part of the bigger solution that prays from the heart, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

I am in no way saying that we should compromise our morals. They are set in the stone of God's word. What I am urging you all to do is to let God handle this world. Our job is to pray. Pray, pray, pray! If you don't like the way this country is going; if you feel outrage at the lack of morality; if you feel happy and everything is going your way, whatever it is, I beg you to pray. Try to see God's will in everything and listen to His voice in prayer. He will ease your mind and guide us into the service He has set out for us. Don't despair. God is in control.

Have a great prayer-filled month,

Roger Gillett

Parchman, DR

Why Are You Robbing God?

The following was written by Stephen Powers with the help of a fellow brother in Christ. Stephen has suffered two strokes and currently has a bleeding aneurysm on his brain.

Malachi 3:8-9: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me! But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offering. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.”

When we were unbelievers we were robbing our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ by the poor choices we made. The words we used, our selfish ways, our neglect for the very things He has given us stewardship of. But now as believers we must stop robbing God and instead be better stewards of His time, His money, His people, His property, everything. We need to understand that it is the devil who comes “only to steal” (John 10:10), and if we allow him the opportunity, he will do just that.

As believers we need to understand that robbing God will cost us dearly in the end, and it will also rob us of some blessing now. Another reason why robbing God is so wrong is because when we rob God we are also robbing our neighbor whom we are called to love. By being good stewards of all He has given us we will in turn be a blessing to others—in the body and in the world. To rob God is to rob those whom we are called to love and help and this is also why it is very bad to rob God.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ,

Stephen Elliott Powers

D.R./D.P.C.

My Celestial Dream

I have a dream. I dream of majestic species, celestial beings of illumination to the sight, and sight of Golden Winged Eagles for the touch to prove. Jesus, the Christ, will be cheered by many. Yet, only a chosen few keep the faith. Only then will self truly live... trading in wilderness billows, cultures' balm, and shunning the characteristics of this life for a blissful balance in Glory Land.

My case of past issues no longer will be of consequences held, nor shame my frame daily dress. I shall in death's belly trade the standards of this realm for established life with Jesus Himself.

Times hour piece is a small care in the charge of our Lord's hand, but to me, one day on the Row is as a millennium in the furnace of dross.

In this life I am as a vagrant seeking the pilgrim way. I look yonder for the EMBLEM of no blemish, adjoining beauty with full salvation, flowing in silver valleys of noble peace, orchard groves of live trees singing salvation belongeth to the Lord. Snow capped mountains bending the knee at His NAME, evergreen meadows filled with pearl winged turtle doves dancing to the harp's tune, teeming rivers of royal water carved by the cross' blood, glaciers of God's grace and the constant sound of THY VOICE in sight. But for now, a death sentence drives the hours from my life... from Jacob's seed, concluding Benjamin's tribe—into David's house the fadeless rose was born. Thus come liberty through THY MYSTERY, and among the new song of triumph sang, one could clearly hear the myrtle trees clapping their hands to the melody of Good News that tickled the chosen ears of God's elect.

There is salvation in no other NAME than the sweet and lovely NAME of Jesus Christ.—Jesus let me last word be.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

By Jesus and David Cox

Parchman, D.R.

