

The Good News

Newsletter— February 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)

“As The Hart”

(Read Psalms 23: Psalms 139)

As the hart of the forest doth pant for the brooks,
As it seeks for refreshing stream;
So my soul panteth after the Almighty God
who doth fill me and make me clean.

Living water is found in the brooks of the Lord;
we must ask God to lead us there.
Cool, refreshing they sparkle, the soul doth satisfy
As we draw from those waters clear.

There is bread for the soul which doth long to be fed
In the truth of God's sacred Book.
But for us to enjoy hidden treasure therein
we must search every day and look.

Oh, for the living Word which doth satisfy,
Hungry souls which long to be fed.
For Thou, O Lord, will provide waters rich and sweet,
As we daily by thee are led.

By: Gloria M.

So Am I

To wear the yoke of God be blessing unto my soul, this ole wretched clay already cracked weighs none the less heavy for toils placed upon me, however, of thy BONE so am I – in thee my strength draws firm – the steps of this life are laced with pain, grief and sorrow, and of the already laden – in addition, weighs heavy these ole chains – I asked not to be birthed, but still, the knees pressed me into life – on a lone valley floor called Death Row I for now dwell. The shadows of the past loom over as a stormy sky hung above to dry - at the foothills hope does lie – just one more step , the mount be of the faith and the summit christened with salvation, the uphill battle I'll never give up less I flounder – these ole bones of mine be brittle, yet as my savior, so am I – not one broken; so, as this mountain top pass I trod to victory, the pass no doubt be blessing yoke itself for us as in thy strength I draw to bind over my weakness - though hung low are clouds of misery and neglect that for now capture sight and the difficulty of Death Row only presses the issue of death is not yet to be – I fuel my vessel with the might of the Holy Ghost in hopes succored by His word of one day the scrolls of heaven will thus split from East to West and shine of Jesus' countenance a safe passage through, where HOME lies my heart dwells – the pass of this cage is the valley pass of salvation to me – for through the cliff of ROCK, in Jesus I now cleave, my cloak be much torn by passing thorns my sandals wore near gone and my flesh hangs off my frame from loneliness of days spent, but the Fire still burns strong He does, and the drenched in the rain of the pass, it weighs to my bone no heavier than the already yoke, for nigh to God I draw and cloud by day He leads – so I much be pleased in this storm, for led by cloud and fire this summit I soon achieve – for by grace the abyss holds no favor to me, when Gabriel blows Thy Trump, this issue of pain will cease and as the scroll's split, in God's Hand I shall be translated into gorgeous glory girdled in bliss birthed of no mans eye – I shall trade in my gaunt being and become sleek in view, pure thru and thru, but for now, the death row pass I must travel, for as so did my God, So am I. - In Jesus' name – Amen.

Jesus & David C.

Parchman Death Row

“Yes, You and Me”

(Read Ephesians 4: 1-16)

O' will the Lord return tonight
To get those who have continued the fight?

Yes, you and me
together as one in unity
For true beauty.

Let's pray that we all may catch the light;
Let's pray that we're all strengthened by His Might.

By Micah

“The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, And the Pride of Life”

“And when the woman saw the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Genesis 3:6

As Eve, having allowed her mind and emotions to be influenced by Satan's suggestions of doubt and pride, continued to gaze at the forbidden tree, it's fruit seemed to become more and more beautiful and desirable all the time. It is remarkable that the particular attributes of this fruit that seemed so tempting are the same as the overt characteristics of practically every form of temptation we face today. To her it seemed that the tree was: (1) “good for food” (that is something appealing to the physical, bodily appetites); (2) “pleasant to the eyes” (that is something appealing to the emotions – the aesthetic senses); (3) “desired to make wise” (that is appealing to the mind and spirit, and to a person's pride of knowledge and spiritual insight). This threefold description is perfectly parallel to the outline of 1st John 2:16 “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of this world.” These temptations may be directed against either the body, soul, or spirit – or as in Eve's case, against all three at once. The source of the temptation is said in James, again stressing all three aspects, to be “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). One day of course the second Adam would come into the world and He would also have to be tempted in all points like we are (Hebrews 4:15). At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry “He was led by the spirit into the wilderness, being tempted forty days by the devil” (Luke 4:1-2). The temptation again was of the threefold scope: (1) appeal to the physical appetite: offering bread when He was hungry; (2) Appeal to the covetous and aesthetic emotional desires: offering possession of all the world, (3) Appeal to spiritual pride: offering worldwide recognition as the one of highest intellectual and spiritual eminence, under the special protection of the holy angels (Luke 4:3-12). It is significant that the Lord Jesus overcame the wicked one (1 John 2:13-14) as we can do also by reminding both Himself and Satan of appropriate instructions and promises in the Word of God. Believe and obey God's Word. Do not question, do not doubt. Do not modify God's Word to fit Satan's lies because ending up rejecting God's Word in favor of the temptations to body, soul and spirit is a very real and dangerous possibility.

May you let the Lord keep you and lead you every day and in every way. God bless, Joshua 1: 8-9

Tony B.
Parchman, MS

Writer's Note: Appreciating this fine article on temptations as they attack our human weaknesses and God's ultimate victory over those temptations, we must remember to be mindful of how we read God's deep truth in the scriptures preserved for us. It is our desire to learn, and openness to God's Holy Spirit, that allows us to grow in understanding. When we were young we thought as children with an appropriate obedience without question, but as we grow, seeking honest maturity, we question in order to better understand. When Jesus, who is himself the living word, interpreted scripture in a way that seemed inappropriate to the Scribes and Pharisees, they were trapped in their traditional interpretations which they considered unquestionable. God's presence in our lives demands we not lock out His ability to lead us into greater perspectives and understanding. As a humble transcriber of our contributors' letters I offer the thought that all of God's Word is best seen in the perspective of it's clearest focus, by studying the life of Jesus.

D.W.

Sometimes I Cry*
(Tupac Amaru Shakur)

“Sometimes when I'm alone
I cry because I'm on my own
The tears I cry R bitter and warm
They flow with life but take no form
I cry because my heart is torn
And I find it difficult 2 carry on
If I had an ear 2 confide in
I would cry among my treasured friends
Who do U know that stops that long
to help another carry on
The world moves fast and it would rather pass U by
than 2 stop and C what makes U cry
It's painful and sad and sometimes I cry
and no one cares about why.”

* As I read this poem for the first time I had to stop and take a minute to see my life in prison and my transition off of Death Row for what it is actually like. I was startled to realize that there is no one to hear me cry. I can scream and there isn't anyone to hear it. If there isn't anyone to hear then the scream doesn't exist. Is there anybody out there?

How many of us in this hyper-connected world, inside and outside of prison alike, are surrounded by people but utterly alone? When was the last time any of us stopped for one minute to hear the cry of another? I mean truly the cry. I am convinced that other people can hear and see us only when we have looked for and seen them.

God is watching, listening, and loving us all the time. Let us reflect on that and strive to be the Christians He means for us to be. We are not in this world alone even though it may feel like that more often than not. So, my friends, I promise to love you, rejoice with you, pray with you, and hear your cries. (Romans 12:9-12) Will you stop and see what makes me cry? Please.

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

“Maybe I Wasn't”

Maybe I wasn't the son you loved and adored. The one that you brought home from the hospital in your arms. And maybe I wasn't the student that made straight A's in school, that the teacher rubbed on the back and said good job to. Or maybe I wasn't the son that said no to drugs and the streets when it came knocking at my door of life. And maybe I wasn't that son that fell in line with the expectations of the world. Which may explain a lot of my right and wrong decisions in life. Or maybe I wasn't the older brother you looked up to. And maybe just maybe, I wasn't the one who strived to be the best in a world that's filled with nothing less. The kid with no dreams or ambitions to achieve what life had to offer. Or maybe I wasn't the father I should have been to my kids in a time when they needed me. Maybe I wasn't the son that made my mother and father proud. The kid that finished school and went to college to play football. Or maybe I wasn't the kid who told you I wanted to be a doctor, or the next president. And, just maybe, because I wasn't is the why I am who I am today. A better person.

by Sherwood B.

Blessings for 2016

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and Jesus our Lord”
– II Peter 1:2

This writing was sent to me by a wonderful person on a beautiful card and I wanted to share it with everyone to start the new year of 2016. This is for everyone who lost someone in 2015, for all the loving people that are still a part of our lives, and for all friends, family and loved ones that need uplifting.

“Sunshine for the Soul”

Like the sun, that comes to shine on our days, beaming its light though any clouds, so are the thoughts of people who are special to us.

We may be at work or play, but with one thought – one memory – our hearts float away to those happy places, those golden moments we've shared together, and we are blessed by them all over again.

Just thinking of that special person warms our hearts and puts wind in our sails. It's an easy, breezy way to brighten the day. – author unknown

submitted by: Justin U.

(The following was written by Stephen P. in 2002. He's had two strokes and currently has an aneurysm on his brain. Submitted by his friend and brother in Christ.)

“Are We Remembering to Say Thanks?” --Psalm 100:4 *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

Many people that live in this hateful world today only tell the Lord thanks when things are going their way and get mad at Him when things go wrong. But we as believers and children of God need to tell them no matter what happens, whether it's good or bad, to always thank Him. For we need to be thankful to Him and bless His name all the days of our lives. We need to watch out for the devil and his demons for they do not want us to thank the Lord Jesus Christ or be thankful for whatever happens in our lives or the lives of the people that we love whether it's good or bad. They want us to be selfish and not caring and not to be thankful to Christ who has given us everything to be thankful for by dying on the cross for all of us, including the world, to be saved. We need to keep our minds, hearts, and souls full of thankfulness all the time no matter what happens in our lives. We tell everyone that we meet to be thankful in all things. In Jesus name we pray Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ, Stephen P.

“The Catfish”

We all encounter people that cause us stress, grief, pain and anger. Just about everyday we will encounter someone, or something someone has done, that gets us worked up to some extent. And often times it's a person we have had to deal with before. If not the actual person, then it's the problem they caused we have to deal with. It could be a friend or a coworker. You're stuck in traffic and already late, or in my case, the kitchen keeps shorting me on my issue. I'm sure each person reading this has some problem they could add that was caused by someone in life, which is very true as most of our problems can be traced back to someone in one way or another. How many times have we thought, even said, “My life would be a lot better if this person wasn't in it.” I'm sure we could all smile at that truth.

This is not the solution it appears to be. True, by removing someone they will no longer be the cause of your trouble but in time someone else will be. There are two points I'd like to discuss. First, people are not really our problem. And second, the people and problems we encounter have a purpose. I know for some there's a small voice saying, “Yeah they have a purpose alright, to piss me off!” For those of you hearing it I encourage you to rebuke it. To the first point, the problem is not us and them, (oh yes, best believe you and I have been or are someone's problem!) it is the force behind. “The spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) Satan's “go-to” deception is to take your eyes off the cause of the problem and put them on the effect it is having. In doing this he keeps us thrown off as we wage war in the flesh and away from God our solution instead of waging war with the cause in the spiritual through the Word and prayer. We become instead entangled in the effects, resorting to what the flesh does best—make a mess.

Whenever we encounter someone or something someone has done that gets us worked up we need to remember “we walk in the flesh but do not war according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 10: 3-4) Then, having realized this truth, allow it to change, not just your perspective but also your process. Instead of acting a fool, go to God. He tells us “Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33) Albeit the context of this passage is talking about the necessities in life, the fruits of the spirit definitely qualify.

Now to the second point. I want to use what I recently learned about the catfish and the codfish. The codfish is a bottom dweller that lives mostly in the North Atlantic. Aside from being a bony fish they are real tasty. Like most fish the fresher they are the better they taste. The problem with the codfish is when you take them out of their natural habitat and place them in a tank until you are ready to filet and cook them, they become very dormant and still. This causes the meat to become mushy as they need to move to stay healthy. This is where the catfish comes in. You see the catfish preys on the codfish as it is also a bottom dweller. So by placing a few catfish in a tank with a bunch of codfish it creates a problem for the codfish and keeps them on alert and moving. Now the codfish, like a lot of us, only sees the catfish as the problem but as with our problems there's more to it. Just as the fishermen use the catfish to preserve the quality of the meat, the Lord also allows people, and their problem, to refine us and help us to conform more to His image. Even though it may not always be apparent. Often times when we encounter problems that cause disappointment, frustration, tragedy, heartache and suffering we wonder what good can come from it. This is where the truth in Romans 8:28 gives us not only the answer but it strengthens our faith and hope in the sovereignty of the Almighty God. Whatever God allows in our lives is to fulfill a greater purpose - His glory in our lives. Our lives are not controlled by luck, choice or fate but by our wonderful sovereign God, who is too loving to be unkind and too wise to err. So the next time a catfish comes along remember the fight is spiritual, as is the purpose. God bless James 1: 3-4 Romans 5: 3-5m

Song of the month: Jackie Hill “I Just Wanna Get There”

1 Corinthians 16:23-24
Kingdom Kid

“Uncle Dan” (Read Luke 10:30-35, 37)

Uncle Dan was a different Man;
my memories are but few
He lived alone, cared not to own
what other people do.

He came and went with shadow bent;
he lived his simple way.
He crossed the street with wandering feet
and died the other day.

Did people pause from business calls
to nod to a life now spent?
Did someone kneel, did someone feel
for this man who came and went?

Yes, Uncle Dan was a different man;
and I wish that I'd been there
to guide his feet across that street
and some small blessing share.

It won't be long till we are gone
like Dan there on the street.
Let's do and dare, let's pray and care
for all the Dans we meet.

By Gary M.

I am waiting to be murdered. I know that it is coming, but I am helpless. My death certificate will state that my manner of death is a homicide, but no one will ever be charged. My family will have to pay for an autopsy to be performed before they can bury me even though my cause of death will be obvious. My name is Timothy Rank #141817, a Death Row inmate in the state of Mississippi, and I am waiting to be executed. I am one of over a thousand in this country.

If I, or my family, were wealthy enough to afford a lawyer for my trial, I would not be here today. If I was in any other state or country, I would not be waiting to be executed. Instead, I am here wondering why. We say that the United States is the greatest country. That we are a leader in and model of human and civil rights for the world. How is it then that we still execute innocent men and women every year because they could not afford competent legal counsel? How is it that millions of men and women are forced to live in conditions and endure treatment that is in direct and blatant violation of the Geneva Convention Mandela Rules? Why does the United States get to do this with no fear of repercussion but is able to tell others how to govern their countries and treat their citizens? If you have the answers to any of these, please let me know because I do not have any answers. If you don't have the answers, keep asking till you do.

Timothy Rank
Parchman, MS

FORGIVENESS

As I was sitting here thinking about another year coming to an end being separated from my family and friends this topic came to mind. I know it's something very hard for most of us to do, but it's something we have to do if we ourselves want to be forgiven for our own sins.

Most of the time at least in my case I had only thoughts of revenge. After studying God's Word on this matter He showed me a different light. Revenge is an uncontrollable desire that keeps coming back and forth until we finally stop it with "Forgiveness". John 8 tells the story of an adulterous woman who was forgiven for her sin. In verse 7 Jesus says, "If anyone is without sin let him cast the first stone." How many of us would have been able to cast that stone? None of us could because we all have sin in our own lives. Take time to read this story and meditate on it. God will show you that we all need to acknowledge that all sin is equal in God's eyes. There is no big or little sin, as some seem to think.

We have to remember also that Satan will also be there saying, "Why are you forgiving that person once again?" At that moment we need to remember Matthew 18:21-22 where Peter asked Jesus, "How many times do I forgive my brother? Seven times?" But Jesus replied, "Not seven but seventy times seven!"

The Lord's prayer also says, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us." 1 John 1:9 tells us to confess our sins and He is faithful to forgive our sins and purify us. He forgives all the sins we have committed or ever will, when we come to Christ.

As I close, I want to leave two more scriptures with you. "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him" (Romans 4:8). "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If He can forgive the ones who were beating, spitting, plucking His beard and making fun of Him, we can surely forgive the things done to us.

Let's all pray for each other that we can all have forgiving hearts.
Bless you all!!!

Your brother in Christ,
Mark Hollimon
Forrest County Jail

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.

Ray Hinton, AL

Ray Hinton was released from Alabama's death row April 2015 after nearly 30 years behind bars. Hinton "was misidentified by a witness who picked him out of a mugshot book" and convicted in the murders of two men. Arrested at age 30, Hinton has spent almost half of his life in isolation. Last year the US Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Hinton had an ineffective defense following new testing that showed the weapon found in the investigation of the case was not the murder weapon. Hinton states, "Thirty years ago a judge proudly stood up and said, 'I sentence you to die.' Thirty years later no one had the decency to say, 'Mr. Hinton, we sorry for what took place.'" Hinton was released and all charges were dropped, but he has received no help from the state that kept him locked up for all these years. "60 Minutes" reports, "And that is where many states are failing the growing number of exonerated prisoners. It turns out in Alabama if Ray Hinton had committed murder and was released on parole, he would have been eligible for job training, housing assistance and a bus ticket home. But most states offer no immediate help to the innocent who's convictions can be embarrassing because of misconduct or incompetence by police or prosecutors." Luckily, Hinton had a friend who promised to take him in. He is still getting used to living outside of death row.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-life-after-death-row-exoneration/>