

The Good News

Newsletter— June 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)

A Little Prayer

Lord Jesus make us generous. Let us not discriminate against people because of their race or gender or value things as the world values them.

Lord look upon us with your grace that we may be changed, forgiven, and saved.

Give us the wisdom to know that everything we have is a gift from the Father and can never be ours alone.

But most of all, give us the deep trust in you, our loving Father, that lets us accept everything as good that comes from your heart.

Let us be assured that when our strength fails us and when no power on earth can sustain us any longer, you are there.

Amen.

-Sherwood B.

THERE IS NO FAVORITISM IN HIS LAW

James 2:1-13

Stephen P.

(The following was written by Stephen in 2001. He had two strokes and currently has an aneurysm on his brain.)

We as believers know that there is no favoritism when it comes to the true laws of God. We read in the book of Matthew (5:17-48) about how the Scribes and Pharisees had been teaching the people that God indeed did favor certain ones and that when Jesus came He taught them the right way that God does not favor religious leaders above others. As believers we see how people attempt to use God's favors and others in the world today. The Devil and his demons are telling us that it is all right to use the law for our personal goals and that it is all right to hurt others while we do it too. We as believers need to tell our brothers and sisters and everyone else that we meet to show love to one another when something happens instead of playing favorites. We should see our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior has no favoritism. Favoritism is a transgression of the law. If we can't live by God's laws then whose laws can we live by?

So let's be true Christians not showing partiality to anyone but showing them love no matter if they are poor rich, not bound or free, not in life or death. In the name of Jesus, Amen and Amen.

Awkward Questions

You have met them before. The person who asks "Do you believe in God?". The Question seems innocuous enough until the follow up of, "Why do you believe in something or someone you've never seen or met?". When you try to explain, you quickly come to the realization that the only reason for the question in the first place was to start a argument that will go on and on, ad infinitum.

How do we deal with those whose only purpose is to start an argument? Those arguments, to a Christian, can be frustrating because we have an experience that can not be explained, to any degree of satisfaction, to a non-believer. the deeper we get in to such argument, the more likely it is we'll say something we may regret later.

Sure, we want others to know what we already know but without the Holy Spirit influence, we are powerless. The old adage of "casting pearls before swine" comes to mind. This is not to say that non-believers are animals but they cannot appreciate the relationship we have with our Lord.

Jesus preached to many but not all accepted his message and even fewer believed he was truly the Messiah. We should follow his example and simply put the message of his sacrifice before those who question us. There's no record of him ever getting into prolonged arguments with those who questioned his role in salvation and sacrifice.

It has been said that "for those who don't, no explanation is necessary; for those who don't, none would suffice."

We can only answer provocative questions truthfully but not feel compelled to delve into pointless arguments. We can pray that one day, the questioner will have the truths that we know revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. until then, "I believe" is enough, just as our parents used to say "because I said so" when we questioned them.

- Richard J

THE POWER OF OUR WORDS

Words are full of power. We need to look no further to find the truth of this fact than God's Word. We are made in the image of God so it only makes sense to me that our words would contain power too. They have power to create (happiness, confidence, accountability, etc.) and the power to destroy when used directly. There can be no denying this because we have all been on the giving and receiving end of both kind and hateful, written and spoken words. We all know this, and while a reminder is always good, that isn't the reason I am writing today.

Have you noticed the unintended results of your words? I have said many times in this newsletter that we must be careful what we say because someone is always listening. I have written in the past as a reminder to watch our mouths so as to keep our testimony pure and stay out of trouble. That reminder stands and hasn't changed.

What has changed is my realization of just how powerful words are and how that power can be used to change our environment.

After being on institutional lock down for the last few months and prevented from going outside, it was with a sigh of relief to finally be able to go out for some fresh air, exercise, and touch base with other people. There are about eight of us men here on Death Row that enjoy gathering for "church" and Bible study when we go outside and manage to get next to each other in the dog pens we are put in. We fellowship for pleasure and the strength to fight the good fight another week. Since we can't always get next to each other every day I find myself mixed in with non-believers more often than not. I don't mind this because it gives me the opportunity to witness and promote Jesus.

I met with a few believers yesterday and our conversation rippled through the dog pens causing all of the negative conversation to either stop completely or fade into the background. I had never noticed that before. Our little church was minding its business, simply talking about God's Word and our conversation changed the conversations of everyone around us. I am positive that the non-believers had no idea that the Holy Spirit had changed their day. The complaining stopped and even if they continued talking about negative things it was with hushed voices. I couldn't help but praise God as I began to see the power of conversation was having on all those around us. We were simply enjoying each others' company in the fresh air with a little light exercise and quiet debate over the Word in Jesus. Amazing! Had I not spent months without quality human contact and then my first week outside with a day here and there with un-believers and their conversations, I would never have noticed the contrast.

So now I want to encourage and challenge you all to pay close attention to the conversations you have this month, the words you say in prayer, and the feelings you have when overhearing what others say. Please keep in mind that this also applies to what you listen to on television and the radio. Words come from everywhere and possess the power to directly change lives even when heard indirectly. Pay attention and tell us what you discover.

Have a great Christ-filled month.

In Christian Solidarity,
Roger G.
Parchman Death Row

BIBLE STUDY

I John 1

What a blessed day that the Lord has made and bestowed the precious gift of life. Today, I had bible study with some of the other brothers in Christ and the atmosphere was serene.

It's truly awesome how we come together during exercise time to give reverence to God Almighty. -- Hebrews 12:28, Psalms 89:7. It's truly awesome how we uplift one another in His Word – God is good!

The lesson for the day was about the missing piece in our lives in this corrupt world that is necessary to receive the promises of God in every area of life. . . FEAR. Romans 3:18.

Today, we've become susceptible to all the evils of the world and we try to hide our ways by pointing a finger at others instead of acknowledging our own downfalls. There's a wise saying : “When you point a finger at others there's three fingers pointing back at you and your thumb is pointed toward Heaven telling all that we should practice true reverence to God.”

I Corinthians 3:16-21 We can't have a true reverence for God if we don't have a wholesome dread of displeasing Him. When we fear God, we acknowledge that He is in us wherever we go. His presence speaks volumes in some people's lives that their convictions of sins causes others to repent. It's not about how you talk but rather how you walk in your journey with God.

When I say that I'm a believer, I'm not portraying myself to be perfect or any better than anyone else. I'm telling the world that I need Christ to save me because I need him for salvation.

He'll fight for you if you're willing to fight for yourself but you have to take that first step and be sincere about it.

We have to let God be our consuming fire—Hebrews 12:29, and burn up the sin in our lives. Once we submit to Him, sin loses its grip on us and then we become polished. The old man is no longer and the new man takes center stage.

Yes, what a blessed day the Lord has made and our Bible study was lovely. Before the prison guard calls on us to return to our cells, we bow in prayer to Almighty God giving reverence to Him for our fellowship in studying his Holy words.

Thanks be to God for every day that He works within us and through his help enrich the lives of all mankind.

The decision you make today will determine the outcome of your life tomorrow—uplift others as you rise!

God Bless Everyone

I'm pressing . . .
for the blessing from the Supreme
One above,
Lord please . . .
I'm on my knees asking for your grace
and love,
I see . . .
parts of me continuing to turn in a
different direction,
All of me . . .
to some degree can see His spirit rising
in my reflection, I hurry . . .
to a flurry of words trapped in the
recesses of my mind,
Yet steady . . .
I'm ready to relax and meditate on the
lessons of the Divine,
Bible Study . . .
I'm muddy and mired deep in the soil of
His prolific Truth,
In fellowship . . .
His grip on my soul refuses to let
me loose,
Together . . .
As we weather the storm that rains upon
our rooftop,
The lesson . . .
stop stressin' and revere Him with everything
you've got,
With fear . . .
He's near to shield you from voices trying to
steer you away,
With love . . .
He'll hug you with blessings that'll brighten
your every day,
The end . . .
As we bend in our prayer thankful for fellowship
together as one,
To start . . .
my heart cries for my brethren as we give
praise to the Holy One.

Justin U

BE READY!

In the neighborhood I grew up in there was a corner store owned and operated by a man named Hawks. I cannot count how many times I went in and out of Mr. Hawks store over the years. A man with a gun robbed Hawks. I remember this because after this, Mr. Hawks put up a tempered glass partition—which was a good idea.

Christ is not something do when we face persecution. We must daily follow Christ. Following Jesus does not mean that we will not face hardship, but the Lord will be with us through the difficulties that come our way. Mr. Hawks could not wait to get robbed again in order to put up the partition. By then it would have been too late. We cannot wait to accept the Lord in our hearts. It is sad that so many Christians do not take following Jesus seriously.

Many believers fail to equip themselves for the hard times that come with following Jesus. If you are not spending time daily praying and meditating in God's word, you need to start. Hebrews 10:35 says, "Do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward." Faith is the only way we can stand in the face of adversity. Paul says we must walk by faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7. Jesus must be a way of life for us. A firm understanding of eternal life is essential to our lives as Christians. Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able, to separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39)

Kingdom Kid

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER: A PRAYING MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Matthew 13:1-9

The exercise of prayer cultivates the seed in those called the hearers (Em Bounds, 1835-1913). The Parable of The Sower is told In Matthew, Mark and Luke. In all three Gospels the word prayer is never mentioned. EM Bounds says the word prayer has to do with the success of the preaching of the word. EM Bounds further explains his statements on prayer, by quoting Paul's words from 2Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brethren pray that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Em Bounds emphasizes praying without ceasing, 1Thessalonians 5:17.

We are not only to hear the word of God, but we should follow what it tells us. The Parable of the Sower gives us several examples of believers in Matthew 13:1-9. The first example is the hearers of the words of Jesus. These believers take the words of The Lord and use them to grow spiritually, in word and truth. The way side hearers hear the word, but it is soon forgotten. This why prayer and supplication is important for our spiritual well being. Next are the Stony hearers and thorny ground believers who are both considered fruitless because they do not let scripture sink inside of them. "Take heed, therefore how you hear." It is needful that we continually give ourselves to prayer, Ephesians 6:18-19

Tony B
Parchman

THE ROSE GARDEN

Amid the chaos of death row grows a ROSE, His bloom sparkles salvation, and His bud is cloaked in the creed of baptism wearing a golden crown of morning dew dipped in the royal blood of the Lamb's Throne, towering above everything else in the garden, small or great, standing upon the stem of Jesse, grounded deep in the belly of the earth as though a ROD for a good STAY.

The bars of this ol' prison house sure vex my flesh yet temporal to the eye; the concrete and steel cage are stepping stones to another age, a new world, a holy dimension for those of us who choose to believe. Execution's lot is not to bereave me of my liberty but yet to union HE in which has always existed. These rusty chains I now wear clothe my skin but not one link touches my soul. The abandonment of all my family only deepens my strength of degree in the Lord. My loved ones spit on my brow with each pass wag their heads while scorning me as trash. Alone is my name yet ONE with me. By THE ALMIGHTY'S hand of mercy, His angels lift my wretched head as to fit a crown on a king. They square my lowly shoulders as a mighty warrior claiming much spoil to a battle already won, whilst eagles from the far east, bearing right from the Virgin of Zion, sing to me the victory melody of God, ordered by my FRIEND—THE LION OF JUDAH—for a victory dance already victored . . . so alone on my cross of death I am now chained.

I use the thorns of death and the stem of loneliness as a celestial ladder and though thorns pierce my hands and feet, I climb the path set before me, painfully and alone, to see the HEART of the ROSE, in the bosom of thy chamber I dwell.

A voice greater than many waters sayeth unto me, "My precious son, thou art not alone. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and I choose you to defeat this giant and claim her valley as thine own though it be the least of thine house."

So for now I shall sing the victory song of Eastern Eagles. Amazing Grace! In Jesus name, Amen.

By Jesus and David C. --Parchman Death Row

