

The Good News

Newsletter— May 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)

The Grave

David C.

Parchman – Death Row

Robed in Jesus I feel so special. His hand binds me tight to his bosom. Thy truth showers accuracy to my soul whilst under this umbrella of death I stand alone. My lowly frame God has authenticated by grace tho for now it houses my earthly skin—the grave's mouth shall receive, but her arms twill my flesh never hold. Tho worms my body destroy, yet with my own eyes I shall behold Jehovah, Amen...

The billows of death row swell high—and deep the channels of loneliness flow, of the realm, open I mine eyes and see ought; tis only at the close of my pilgrimage in this life, that then shall I truly see. With blinders on and God's word in my right hand, only then dost I feel special; there are legions of people that abhor me or seek mine hurt—the worms voice of me, “Aha Aha, he'll soon be my fill,” and the grave sayeth of my soul “There is no help for him in God,” but by grace Jesus has victory over death— for even a cold blooded killer like me. The Father sayeth to my frame. “No umbrella fashioned against thee shall hold thee asunder, for I, even I, have dressed thee in my salvation cloak of the Lamb's Blood. I, even I, have called thee by name. Thou art mine.” -- Only in Jesus does my flesh live.

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Jesus and David C.
Parchman / D.R.

If You Were Arrested For Being A Christian, Would There Be Enough Evidence To Convict You?

(from a longer letter by Charles Crawford)

I read a book recently that asked this question and it has caused me to take a closer look at myself. Could a prosecutor convict you for being a Christian? Before any of us answers that question let's look at the "evidence" that could be used to convict us.

Most Christians regularly attend church but that is only "circumstantial evidence." If I were in a bank during a robbery, just because I was there at the time doesn't prove that I helped rob the bank. So me attending church without more information would be weak evidence to be used to convict me. The prosecutor would need more evidence.

What about your conduct outside of church? Matthew 5:13-16 tells us to be the light of the world. 2nd Corinthians 5:20 says that we are Christ's ambassadors, that we represent Jesus in our daily lives. The way we dress, how we talk, the things we do, who we associate with, our attitudes towards other people (of all races). All of these things are supposed to be in line with God's word. Ephesians 4:17-29. If you were placed under surveillance without your knowledge what would it reveal about you? If you were placed in a lineup would multiple people point to you and say, "That person is definitely a Christian. I see them around town all the time. Everything about their character and conduct points to the fact that they are a Christian."

As Christians we are commanded to spread the gospel of Jesus and try to lead others to accept him as their lord and savior. Matthew 28: 19-20: 2nd Timothy 4:1-5. This is not just a command for preachers. Out of the dozens of people that you come in contact with each day, how many of them do you witness to? How many of those people could take the witness stand and say, "That is the person who talked to me about the Bible and tried to convince me to accept Jesus as my lord and savior."

God's word tells us to love our neighbors, to share with others, and to help those in need. Leviticus 19: 18, Matthew 22: 37-40, Hebrews 13: 2-3, James 2 14-17. Could a prosecutor use your bank records to show that you gave help people in need? There are many ways that we can help people without donating money. Ephesians 5: 15-16 tells us to walk circumspectfully (carefully with a purpose) and to redeem the time that we have. Thayer's Greek Lexicon says the Greek word translated "redeem" can mean to "build up" here. "To make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good." Do you use of all of your time doing things for yourself or do you set apart a time to seek and help people who need it? Could a prosecutor put multiple people on the stand you don't normally associate with who could say that you sought them out in their time of need and helped them?

Transcribing Writer's Note: Charles goes on from this very interesting and enticing point to encourage us to become involved as faithfully as possible in our world to stand for Christ. While sincere and thinking Christians may have divergent thoughts on how best this may be lived out, it is this transcriber's desire to invite all who seek God's will to look to the example of our Savior as the ultimate expression of doing God's will. His love frightened the legalists of his day, his compassion staggered those Pharisees who were ready to "defend God's Laws" by killing a woman accused of adultery—all correct by their interpretation. It is in "Loving our enemies" that we will be known as true followers of Jesus, not as soldiers fighting back to rescue a God who is helpless without our muscle. Political and military strength have always been the attractive temptation that Satan uses on believers to entice them emotionally into acting like "the enemy." I also invite you to build a case for your conviction by *not* seeking "an eye for an eye" but sharing your light and your love. Tolerance indeed is not enough. Personal investment not with a "cause" but with a person who needs the healing transforming love of God is not often easy and could definitely get you convicted. --D.W.

A Forgotten Man: Family.

Timothy E.

Once upon a time, the men and women all over America looked at the Mudim i.e. Koran as part of diversity in what has made America great, the tragedy is that now by the false ISIS and radical terrorists have tarnished the Muslims in America, I personally know several who went about the American Dream – business owners who paid taxes, sent children to college, I saw their children go to college and graduate.

I remember a time, decades ago, I went through a similar situation with my second wife, a Seminole Indian in Florida. My own mother wouldn't come to our wedding nor two brothers of mine. I couldn't believe the action they chose. Previously I have written that my mother was distant. I wasn't the most well-behaved child, but I had hoped to start fresh. The action of all of them, including my dad (who wasn't really sharp on the idea either.) My fiance was dark skinned. That caused me to lash out at them which in turn left a large gap in my twin daughters' lives. On birthdays, Christmas, as they grew, I had sent them gifts thru the mail so they wouldn't know the problem, as we learned (as parents know) the questions came up. "Can I meet you, Mom and Dad?" Most children, even from divorce, know two sets of Grandparents.

It took a lot of thought I will admit. I sought my wife's thoughts and she told me about when she was young and the store wouldn't serve her. I hadn't first-hand witnessed that. Lucy said we needed to talk about it so in case it happened it wouldn't harm the children. As parents know, the harsh world that we try to protect them from must be discussed at an early age.

To my surprise Nichole, the brainy one, told us that the bus driver had asked her how they were blue-eyed Indians. My sweet little angel piped up to the driver, "Because my mommy is Seminole Indian and my Daddy is Irish American. He has the best eyes, don't you think?"

I went to the bus for the first time after that. Work had kept me from taking them before. So, I'm standing there and the bus pulls up. The bus driver is a white woman about fifty and I smile to her. She looks at me hard when my daughters told her who I was. I could see the look in her eyes—and that was the first time for me. My girls had already encountered what my wife had.

Our wedding was one-sided yet I solved that. I invited all our friends had we had a great wedding on the beach in Palm Beach, Florida. I look back now and wonder what effect the actions of bigots have. I am now working on opening a dialogue with my mom—who is now 85 and I haven't spoken with her in over 40 yrs. I have tried. I wrote her about the girls, offered to send her pictures, but she has closed herself in our face. We once drove to her door but she closed the door. My wife did not say a word when I came back to the vehicle. The girls asked, "What happened?" I answered, "Remember the bus driver? Same kind of person." My wife said, "Tim, it is not your fault, this is her fault, so she will continue to miss out on meeting two really great young ladies ." That was the end of that until one daughter went to college and she called leaving a message near Thanksgiving. My sister did respond. She met her at Pizza Hut and they are still friends.

One of the true down-sides of being here on Death Row is that my daughters will not talk to me nor write, hence the title of this piece. Somehow all these memories bring me to think of how Christians should show and help others who are different than they are. Example: "What must the Indians have thought of the first pilgrims on those boats that came to their lands who didn't want to worship King James of England. I'm going to close now. Next time you see someone different from yourself think; how do you want them to remember you?"

The Row – Tim E.

What Grieves Him The Most

Mark 3:5

“And when he had looked round about on them with anger being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said unto the man, 'Stretch forth thine hand.' And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.”

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

We as believers know that causing our Lord and Savior to grieve is not a good thing to do. It leads to trouble for our souls. We read it in the Bible that Jesus' disciples were grieved when he told them that he had to leave them for a while. And how they grieved when Jesus hung on the cross and died for us to be free of sin. We know that our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ grieves when we sin and don't obey his commands. We know that we don't need to grieve the Holy Spirit that is on the inside of each and every one of us. We need to tell everyone that we meet that when they do something that displeases Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior that it grieves him because they have done something that Jesus don't like. We need to watch out for the devil and his demons because they will tell us a lie that when we do something that it doesn't grieve Jesus because Jesus doesn't care about us anymore. Just as we are grieved over losing a friend or family member when they died, it grieves Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior when one of his loved ones disobey him or sin against him. We should not cause our brothers and sisters to grieve, but he shows them love. We as believers should not cause our hearts, minds, and souls to grieve because when we grieve Jesus Christ grieves as well, because we are made in his image. So lets tell the devil and his demons when they come to us telling us it is alright to grieve because Jesus doesn't care about us, we need to tell them that Jesus Christ does care about us and the ones that need to be grieving is him and his demons for the trouble the have caused in heaven and now down here on this earth. We also need to tell our brothers and sisters when they lose someone that they should not grieve, because they will see them again in heaven. So let's not grieve when something happens to us, let's rejoice instead. In Jesus Christ name Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ
Stephen E P.

An Inspirational Message

Beontae B. / California

Remember to recognize your obstacles and challenges and replace the negativity with simple trust in God. Nothing can stop you from excelling towards your highest aspirations. Only the mind hinders us from reaching our best.

It is important to remain in an atmosphere of complete surrender to God. Just because I am incarcerated doesn't mean my circumstances will define who I am, for this created a blessing for me reaching my life's destiny.

Never lose heart or focus on what's real. You have the alternative answer to the challenging questions that you have; and remember, God is a god of emotions and feelings that move for different people.

“THE LORD KNOWS MY NAME

Jerome E. / Washington

You may call me a pauper, and I've often been called a fool.
I long for no riches and I've no kingdom to rule.
I don't need a fortune, honor, or fame –
I'm just content with the fact that the Lord knows my name.

It's been written in blood, in the Lamb's Book of Life;
On the cross of Golgotha my Lord paid the price;
Enduring the scorn, the pain and the great shame.
What a cause for rejoicing, because the Lord knows my name.

I wandered in darkness where my sins did abound;
on the broad way to Hell was where my steps could be found.
My heart was deceitful, it brought me great shame;
But my Lord has compassion as He wrote down my name.

This road isn't easy, that saints have to walk;
they watch my behavior, my expressions, and my talk.
They find fault so often in me – because I'm always to blame,
But what a great consolation – the Lord knows my name.

God Will Not Let Me Fall

His arms are open wide.
To hold me.
That is why I abide in him.
And he lives in me.
He hears my every cry
In the midnight hour.
His love sustains me.
When I thought all was lost.
He cleansed me.
Even though I'm locked away.
He told me it was only for a season.
For he has the final say.
The Lord wipes away the tears from
my eyes.
In my sorrow, I praise him...
still.
I know he will not let me fall

-Nazareth Lewis / Arkansas

SPRING CLEANING

It's the 1st day of Spring. It's time to do a little spring cleaning. God created the seasons and the spring is a time of re-growth and renewal. So while you are cleaning closets and beating rugs don't forget about your spiritual needs. Take time to evaluate your soul. Get a trash bag and throw away anything that is preventing you from being the person that God wants you to be. Start with 51:10 and ask God to: Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Then take an inventory of the past year. what are you going to do if you find that there is:

* envy, greed, deceit, covet, fear, insecurity, laziness

*gossip

*Are you pissed still because someone hurt your feelings?

*that red velvet cake you know you didn't need

*look at the people around you. are you letting them hold you back? are they a blessing or a hindrance?

*Whatever is stopping you from being the vessel that God wants you to be..

Trash It.

Dead weight holds you down. Deep clean inside and out. Are there hidden sins? Pull them out and thrash it. Psalm 32:3-5: When I kept silence, my waxed old through my roaring all day long. Hebrews 12:1 also tells us: Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Don't forget to clean out your mouth. Bad language, negative talk and pessimistic thoughts contradict the word of God and faith. Stop complaining and do and stay positive. Luke 6:45 tells us that: A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which good: and an evil man out of the evil treasures of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

After you have cleaned your spirit, it doesn't mean that it's time to sit down. You should now be ready to run. Your tune-up should have you ready to shout "halleluiah, praise the lord" and not only be ready to receive blessings but be a blessing. Romans 12:2: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and perfect that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

I'm Still Digging!

It's always tough when you're incarcerated in prison and this starting year has been no exception. Being on lockdown for much of the year has left many without the bare necessities and without ways to contact family and friends. It's during these trying times that we have to lean on one another and trust that God gives us the strength, the patience, and the resolve we need. Psalms 28, Romans 5:1-6. We have to keep digging each day and not let these circumstances and situations change the complexion of one's inner self—I'm still digging!

I once told someone that I was digging each day, and they asked me if I was trying to escape! Hahaha! I could only laugh and that laughter helped to bring some peace to my day. For all that don't know, I'm still digging is a spiritual term used to regard my journey of my inner self—my spirit in this world.

We all at times want to give up on or during many aspects of our lives, but we have to keep digging within ourselves to find those treasures/gifts that God has bestowed upon us. It's only when we surrender ourselves to His will that we truly start to see a different life and a different way of living. No matter what we go through, it doesn't matter because we can trust that He will make a way—regardless of anything and everything.

I've learned that He puts no more of a burden on our shoulders than we can bear, 1 Corinthians 10:13. So, whether I believe it's unfair or unjust that I'm here on death row or being punished for things that I didn't or haven't done doesn't matter. Through it all, I have to trust that God has my best interest at heart and that He wants me to keep on digging for a better tomorrow—a better me (us). Psalms 40:1-11.

I'm still digging for you and for me so that we all can share in His glory forever and a day. Be blessed everyone and remember that He's with you every day—every step of the way.

Strengthen me Lord as I'm still digging
For your every treasure,
The precious gifts you've bestowed
Beyond any measure.
My arms are so tired but you've kept me so strong,
You've guided me to the fertile ground
I need to build on.
I'm still digging in places I've never dared to search,
Places so deep inside of me filled
With pain and hurt.
My heart aches because I know I
Haven't always done my best,
My soul is weary yet my soul
Refuses to rest.
I'm still digging through the dark and
Into the sunrise,
I can see his smile and the twinkle
In His eyes.
Shine upon me that others may continue
To still dig as well,
It's within our hearts that your trueness
Will forever dwell—
Forever dwell together as one in spirit
And love eternally,
Please continue your journey in his righteousness
And keep on digging with me!

-Justin Underwood

Fishers of Men Cont.

In a previous article I submitted, “Fishers of Men.” I shared my testimony and experiences in witnessing for the Lord in prison. It can be a dubious task. At the time I submitted that article, I’d felt that not stepping out of alignment with the Word when faced with rejection by those we witness to was a sufficient ending to a situation ripe with potential hostilities from Satan. And not just from the stance of the unbelievers. Do not fool yourself. 1 Peter 3:15-16: read, remember, repent! The sufficiency of God’s grace takes us much further than just “settling.” I was recently handed a copy of Mark Cahill’s “One Thing You Can’t Do In Heaven.” Revelation time! God showed me what would and should have been a more biblically sound ending to my article.

Mr. Cahill described a summer he spent as a Christian counselor at a camp in Missouri. During a nightly culmination of prayer and devotion (something I’ve adopted myself since reading this book), the Lord laid on his heart to talk to the group he counseled about the subject of witnessing. Mark thought this strange at the time as he wasn’t one to share his faith a lot. But as I’m sure he has learned, “When God begins to lead, it is best to follow!” Being led by the Spirit he asked the group, “what are the only three possible things that can happen when we share our faith?” The correct answer they gave was 1) the person accepts Jesus 2) the person rejects Jesus 3) a seed is planted. After discussing each of these, the group defined the three possibilities like this 1) accept = good/winning 2) reject = bad/ losing 3) plant seed = good/ winning. In looking at this, the group concluded that over 66% of the time we share our faith, it is a winning situation. Aren’t those pretty good odds?!

Most of the time we share our faith, we literally can’t lose. The biggest fear most of us have about sharing our faith and witnessing for Christ, is the fear of rejection. The next day the Lord laid something on Mark’s heart while he was reading 1 Peter 4:14. This would change his life forever: “if you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” On their part He is evil spoken of but on your part He is glorified. Think about that. When we get rejected, and we will get rejected, in the name of Christ, we will be blessed and the glory of God will rest upon us.

We and every believer should want that as much as possible! One way that will happen is when we are rejected in the name of Jesus. Right now, before we continue, read Luke 6:22-23—yes, right now! Now, do you realize that when you get rejected in the name of Christ, God has rewards waiting for you in Heaven that will make any earthly reward seem like chump change? Amazing! Rejected in His name? Press on! Do not be more concerned about rejection than about our reward in heaven.

The next nightly devotional Mark began by revealing this 66%. Mark admitted that he misled them. And I must admit my own negligence by omission. I did not know this connection, nor did I make the connection to scripture in my article. Apologies all around church! Mr. Cahill finished his discussion with the correct definitions of the three possibilities. 1) accept = good/winning 2) reject = good/winning 3) plant seed = good/winning. I’d said we had a 66% chance of winning we share our faith, but after the Lord revealed the truth to me, I realized that’s not true. In just those two verses we learn that every time we share our faith we are winning! Never again do I have to worry about Satan trying to talk me out of witnessing because the Word of God says I can’t lose doing it. It is a win win and in the name and power of Jesus, I’m all in! All glory to God. Philippians 1:21. God Bless.

Tony B.
Parhman, MS