

The Good News

Newsletter— October 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)

I Need You To Survive

I tried things my own way but I walked
around in a circle,
A one-two-punch by the devil and my eyes
were black and purple.

He came out of nowhere and I just wasn't
prepared,
Beaten and battered, I became so frightened
and scared.

The devil told me that I could no longer
straddle the line,
That he was preparing a stronger army to try
and defeat God this time.

I see lights flashing all around me as tears
flow from my eyes,
Towards the Heavens I look and say: “Lord, I
need you to survive.”

I guess the devil didn't like my choice so he
took me out,
I was pronounced dead on arrival as I
flat-lined in route.

Now, the new man in me has necessary tools
for this spiritual flight,
When I walk, He's there guiding me into His
Eternal light.

With each step, I'm confident that my growth
continues to thrive,
I stand tall and I shout: Lord, I need You
to survive.”

-Justin Underwood

Life Lessons

The year is 1987, and winter is fast approaching. I am working at my brother's Lincoln-Mercury Dealership in Garden City, Michigan. I had called him and gone to work for him in January '87, as I struggled with sobriety and God knocking on the door to my heart. I was doing great job-wise. I had also started to see the United Way come to see my brother, and he called me in to say they wanted employees to get each citizen at the Senior Citizens Home in Royal Oak, Michigan, a present and set up deadlines to get the job done, just like the Angel Tree does each year for children that will not have Christmas unless goodhearted people step up. I and my brothers had lost our Grandfather on Dad's side at the young age of 59. I thought about it for five minutes and told my brother, "We need to do this, and I also set up a Christmas party for all of them, and passed out gifts."

As the holiday approached I went to the facility and toured it. One woman stuck out to me. She was vital, about 90 years old, and was Russian. I stopped by her room and Natasha spoke right up, saying, "Are you here to take me for a walk?" I was new (a rookie) there and didn't know I was to be put through paces. As she opened up to me, I learned that Natasha was a missionary in Russia during Lenin's days, had witnessed Stalin's tactics, and was steadfast in her missionary work. She got Bibles sent in so they wouldn't be seized, she witnessed to people who regularly saw neighbors taken away never to return, facts that were documented and part of the reason America was against Russia.

As we walked along the hallway to the front exit, Natasha all of a sudden asked me, "Will you take me to the restaurant down the road?" I thought, "Why not? Let's go!" Natasha had an arm band with a sensor and it set off an alarm at the exit, specifically because she had done this before to visitors. Everyone came running and looked. I was all red-faced, and realized I'd been played. The director told me Natasha had done this before. She has outlived her family; some of her family had cut off contact because she was a Christian. (I have begun to understand why the Holy Spirit has prompted me to write this, as these days I see men here on Death Row, including myself, who's families have backed away because of self-embarrassment.) Anyway, I spent a lot of time at the Senior Citizens Home, and as Christmas approached, I asked and was allowed to take Natasha to the restaurant. I told my brother about her, all the hard work she did, plus her vibrant smile and wonderful attitude. Plus you all know, she witnessed to me all the time. I would nod and eat lunch with her.

The day came, Christmas Eve morning and everyone met at Senior Home. Natasha was sad. I asked her what was wrong. She said, "I'm gonna miss you." But I told her, "I'm going to keep coming!" Well, being separated from my wife at the time, in February my girls called me and said, "Daddy, come home. Mom told us she will work out forgiving you." I had wronged my wife, so I told my brother that I was going home. I visited Natasha one more time and told her I would write and keep in contact with her. I got a call 45 days later and was told that Natasha had passed away in her sleep. In the brief time I knew her, she taught me that you can be right, yet say you are wrong for the greater good. She taught me to recognize what needs to be done and do it with great cheer. So, when I got the news about Natasha, I wanted to help. My wife and I flew up and had a short memorial at the rest home, cremated her, and surprisingly a lot of people showed up and spoke about how she had touched their lives—how she had visited them, reading the Bible to them and talking to them, a different one each day. I learned about her mission field into her 90's. My wife was shocked to see this side of me.

Remember the rest homes this holiday season. I am glad to have had these experiences to write about, and to hear about real missionary work in a country that was for years very hostile. I remember reading that missionaries were just going into Russia after the Great Wall came down in 1989. That was a big event, and had world-wide impact.

God bless all and thanks again for the avenue of outreach for all the men on Death Row.

In Peace,
Timothy N. Evans

Cross Examine

At first I didn't know what got me to this point in my life, but now I know. This past Sunday morning, I was just sitting there on the side of my bed drinking a hot of coffee, when something kept nagging at me to turn my tv on. So finally I got up and turned my tv on and there was this preacher talking about cross examining your own life, so that you can see a clear picture of yourself. I can't say it or put it exactly the way he said it, but he said that God knows everything we do. He knows when we are lying to ourselves, and when we say, "nothing" is bothering us, and it is.

For example: I don't like him, because Leroy don't like him.

Now, you are mad, but you're not letting anybody see that you are upset, but guess what, God knows.

So this is one of my reasons for writing this piece for the Good News Letter. God knows my true heart and I want others to know, that no matter what anybody else thinks about you, "God" knows your true heart, and you are not alone in this fight. And that is what got me to this point in my life.

Reading the Book of Mark 8: 22-26, Mark 10: 42-52, Matthew 15: 10-20 and Luke 6: 39-42, gives a good picture of myself. In Mark 8: 22-26, it talks about the blind man who couldn't see. I consider myself a blind man, not physically blind but spiritually blind. My sight is blurry and I want Jesus to do to me what He did for the blind man. Touch my heart and restore my vision, so that I can see clear again.

I still have a lot of work to do on myself and it's going to take me sometime, but I'm going to get there. Believe me when I say that, this isn't an easy path. The devil is at work 24 hours a day, testing me with something or sending somebody at me testing my faith, trying to knock me off my square, because He knows that I am getting closer to God and the closer I get, the sharper my insight becomes.

Lord grant us the wisdom. Give us the insight that guided your life. Help us to guide our response to things not by our obligation alone, but by what will serve your purposes. Lead us to perform our civic and religious duties without accepting a handout. Let us never lose sight of the eternal plan of the Father which your life has revealed. But first and foremost, teach us to love as you have loved us. Amen.

by Sherwood B

Only What You Do For God Will Last

It hardly seems fair that he allows us to face challenges that are much greater than our ability to deal with. I've learned in the last 50 years that day by day God has worked his grace in my life to prepare me for "now". Every step has resulted in my becoming the man God created me to be. And in this, the deeper things of God reside: His nature, His characteristics, and His Ways. Knowledge of these attributes come in the reading and studying of His Word. There are no circumstances in life that He does not provide the wisdom and strength to undertake or should I say overtake. 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Philippians 4:13 both speak this truth. Beloved, rest assured life has its disappointments. When they come, abide in Him. Like the Psalmist in Psalms 84, "Make God's alter be to you what a nest is to a bird:" that is, a place of safety and satisfaction. There is nothing difficult about the Word of God. If there is a hampering of your understanding when you are reading or studying His Word, it could be something that needs addressing such as a lack of faith in God or some unconfessed sin. Doubting God's word to us will render us problematic to the circumstances of every day life that are right in front of us. His word provides the tools we need to relate to and combat these circumstances. His Word contains His promises for the road bumps of this life. Not knowing the Word, is an inroad for Satan to use one of his favorite paralyzing three-pronged weapons: doubt, unbelief, and a lack of faith. Dr. Charles Stanley, in his book "10 Principals for Studying Your Bible," relates the time that Moses spent on the backside of the desert for 40 years as follows: "Moses probably thought no one cared for him, but God did. He loved Moses with an everlasting and unconditional love. This is the same love He has for you and me. Moses, however, did not have the Holy Spirit or the Word of God(The Bible) to guide him. He had to rely on entering into God's presence and listening for his instruction." I encourage you to spend time reading God's instructions each and every day. Romans 15:4 tells us "For whatever was our instruction, that through perseverance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." What kind of hope? The kind that doesn't disappoint. Romans 5:3-5: May you allow the Lord to perfect a good work in you and through you today. God bless. Joshua 2:8; 2Timothy 3:16-17.

Tony B.
Parchman, Ms

New Life In Thee

There are three chapters to self's being: creation, the fall, and salvation...
On a crisp glorious morning, when death's watch in this life has ceased, an extraordinary land smiles - where the soul never dies. But for now, the past must live in the present death: the fall. Here on death row, a charge of execution presses this prison house, a state of ill roofs, the village within. Many are the grey haired subjects sitting in tiny cages bound, even the young, within the cloak of their skin are grey aged crowned. Death perfumes the air as humanity flees. The conversation pieces of the living dead are sports and politics. In prison there are no such things as friends, to each his own —trust no one. Inmates, sweet to the brow, are bearded vultures seeking a kill. The "row" is like a jungle, wild and harsher than any wilderness. Vanished from my family tree, abandonment resides in me. Two fold is my fleeting breath: a fold for hope and a fold for death's ease. But in Jesus I combine the two, and in one flesh I shall forever dwell.

As a rose to its bud tenders new birth, so shall my broken body in Thee be robed in a tunic of new life; I shall this earthly house shed and exchange it for glory sight. While my soul to The King prostrates through the grave's gate, and as the death dew, my body chills, my flesh shall see Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

By Jesus and David Cox
Parchment, Ms,U.S.A.
Death Row

God Cares For His Fallen Servants

(The following piece was written by Stephen Powers through a fellow brother in Christ Jesus. Stephen Powers has suffered two strokes and currently has a bleeding aneurysm on his brain.)

" Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31.

As children of our Heavenly Father we know that nothing happens outside His Sovereign hand. He cares for each of us, even when we fall and turn our back to His grace. As a servant to the Lord Jesus Christ I strive, in His eternal grace, to be what a good and faithful servant looks like, even when I fall. You see, a fallen servant is still a servant. Since I suffered those two strokes my life has never been the same. And with the bleeding aneurysm, and other physical ailments, there are very few days I don't have to suffer through pain. Notice I said suffer through. I know the devil tries to use these things to turn me away from God, to get me to blame God for allowing this to happen to me. But I know better, am I not of more worth than a sparrow? Never in His eternal grace will we ever suffer alone. Psalm 46: 1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

The love and grace of our Heavenly Father is what strengthens and comforts this good and faithful servant when he has fallen. Through this I am able to strengthen and comfort other fallen servants that fall on hard times of pain, fear, anger and any other test the Lord allows us to endure as we test the sufficiency of His unconditional love and eternal grace. It has taken me many years to learn and lean on these truths. Like so many of us, it wasn't until I was fallen that He showed me my worth and purpose as a child of God. I'm asking you to place your trust in Him like I have, and you will see how God cares for his fallen servants. May you live in the grace of our Heavenly Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ
Stephen Elliot Powers

Confession for a Healthy Lifestyle

- I commit to live a healthy lifestyle this day. I prepare healthy foods for my family and myself. I treat my body well and don't misuse it. My body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, I come out from among foods that deplete my body of essential nutrients. I separate myself unto God and I eat that which is good, healthy, and nutritional and that will provide the building blocks to restore my body and bring me to the state of optimum health.
- I exercise regularly and my body is strong and limber, has excellent muscle tone and endurance. I have entered into God's rest and have ceased from my own works. My life is balanced according to God's perfect plan for me. I get sufficient rest, sleep, and recreation to rejuvenate myself regularly so that I begin each week refreshed and ready for Kingdom building.
- I keep my body under and do not allow my flesh to control me. I cancel all destructive cravings for food and substances that threaten my health and well being. I speak to all junk food that comes into my presence. I decree that you have no power to control my desires or my appetite. I am free from bondage to unhealthy food products. I draw from the wisdom of God to direct me to prepare and shop for healthy foods and to manage my time properly so I don't fall back into bad eating habits.
- I command my body to obey me and my mind to focus on the image of health. I see myself with a daily regimen and lifestyle that positions me for a high level of anointing and productivity to fulfill the dream and vision God has placed in my heart. I walk in the spirit and do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

The Dog Pen Church in Christ
Parchman Death Row

Seek and You Shall Find

I hope this past month has found all of you well and growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior more every day. Grace to you and peace. I am writing today in order to encourage everyone to pray and search the scriptures for answers to any questions that may arise, and I am writing to encourage you to check for yourself what someone else has said a piece of scripture means. We can't afford to take at face value a person's word for the meaning of scripture. We must diligently look into the Word ourselves. When Paul and Silas were in Thessalonica they taught the Jews that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that He suffered and rose again. They used the Old Testament scriptures to teach. When the pair traveled to Borea they gave the same message and the Jews there "...examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so." (Acts 17:1-4, 10-12). These men didn't take the words of Paul and Silas to heart until they confirmed them through diligent, daily Bible study. In this day and age we must be even more committed to searching the scriptures for answers. There is a lot of false teaching and misunderstanding/misapplication of God's Word all around us. Ignorance of what the Bible teaches will cause everyone a host of problems. I want to talk about uncertainty being at the top of that list.

I was accosted by a duo of heretical, Pentecostal missionaries today. Our conversation went very well until they told me that being baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is not good enough. In order to make their point that it is only in Jesus' name that we are able to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and have our sins forgiven, they asked if I had ever spoken in tongues. I have not. I have heard it done once (maybe) but since there wasn't anyone to interpret it was gibberish and suspect. Once these two men heard that I have never spoken in tongues they set out to save my soul. May God bless them for trying, however misapplied their zeal may be.

These two preachers ran into a problem that I am not sure they encounter in prisons often. Me and my kind. I, my friends, am super saved. I am filled with the Holy Spirit. I search the scriptures daily and have a solid grip on the fundamental teachings of the New Testament and an ever-growing understanding of the Old Testament. My kind can not allow false doctrine to be fed to us.

Now I do not want to misrepresent the Pentecostal faith as a whole, I am just sharing the two points these men were selling for the cost of my peace. The first is that Jesus is God. When they said that I actually sighed with relief. Jesus is God. They wanted me to believe that Jesus is the Father and Jesus is the Holy Spirit. They hadn't lost me yet because in a very real sense He is. Where I begin to feel the rift between our beliefs is in their understanding of Jesus. These men do not believe in the Trinity. When they said that Jesus is the Father they meant that the Father is actually Jesus. Jesus is also the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Spirit are named Jesus. I know. So when Jesus prays, He prays to Himself. When He sent the Holy Spirit He (Jesus) sent Jesus. We broke down when I asked about Jesus going to pray early in the morning while it was still dark in a deserted place (Mark 1:35). They said that He was out there talking to Himself as an example for us on how to pray. One of these guys asked me, "Haven't you ever talked to yourself?" That actually made me smile since I have been in solitary confinement for nearly thirteen years straight. Of course I talk to myself. I'm a great conversationalist! Their point being ridiculous, I couldn't let it slide. I read them scripture after scripture regarding Jesus' prayers to the Father including some where He actually prays using "Father." Two shining examples are John 11:41-42 and Luke 22:39-46: "Father if you are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not my will but Yours be done."

At this point they asked what Bible translation I was reading out of (NRSV). You must picture the scene. I am standing face to face with these two men with my Bible open and I am reading it to them. Everything I am saying is coming from the Bible. These guys had their spiel and their go to verses but their Bibles were merely a prop. Only one man opened his Bible to read to me and that was to read a single verse. When it was time for them to leave they ran away. They didn't say good bye or offer to pray with me even though they had made it a point to pray at every cell before mine. It would be quite funny if what they were pushing wasn't so dangerous.

Cont. next page

As a minister and evangelist myself I see trouble here. Suppose a person is new to our faith and has just been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (We've hopefully all been there. If not, contact your spiritual advisor). It is a wonderful feeling of relief to know that we are forgiven and have been adopted into God's family. This feeling only grows stronger as we begin to understand the sights and freedoms we possess as God's children. Then here comes these two guys – Zealous and Charismatic. They have their Bible in their hands and are spouting scripture verses from memory, never opening them. They convince the newly baptized Christian that their baptism isn't valid because s/he must be baptized in the Name of Jesus to receive the Holy Spirit and have their sins washed away. After all, Zealous and Charisma reason, it wasn't the Father or the Holy Spirit that died on the cross, so why would you be baptized in them? Now this new Christian is uncertain of his/her salvation. That is a worrisome state to be in. So s/he gets rebaptized by these men in the name of Jesus and then doesn't speak in tongues. These men preach that tongues are the outward sign of the Holy Spirit. They will then tell our newly baptized Christian that s/he must have some unconfessed sin in their life that they hadn't been forgiven for. This is what I was told. So this new Christian is going to be even more uncertain of their salvation and forgiveness after being rebaptized in Jesus's name and never speaking in tongues. Does that sound like a condition our God of love and peace would subject his children to? No! This teaching is unscriptural and very, very dangerous.

We must know what the Bible teaches about the foundational truth of salvation, forgiveness, and Jesus. If we do not, we will be tossed every which way by anyone with a few out of context verses and a whole lot of charismatic zeal.

Please don't think that I am disparaging the entire Pentecostal denomination. That is the furthest thing from my mind and misses the point of this article. I look forward to understanding the beliefs of others but we must always hold our beliefs firmly in the grip of God's Word. "...So I say to you, ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you..." (Luke 11:1-3). I encourage you readers to respond to this. Please enlighten me if I have gotten this warning wrong. There can be no growth or positive change without prayerful dialogue. Have a great Christ-filled month.

In Christian Solidarity,
Roger G.
Parchman, DR

A Note to the Writers of Good News:

Due to copyright issues, we are not able to print stories or writings submitted from other published works. However, we can print personal stories that contain shorter quotations within them.

Thank you.