

The Good News

Newsletter— February 2017

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)

Ring in the New Year

There is a story about King Solomon that I haven't been able to get out of my mind lately. Once upon a time . . . King Solomon was getting married and his most trusted, beloved servant was so excited that he was running the king crazy with wedding plans and celebration details. The king needed a break so he decided to send his servant on an impossible task to get him out of his hair and humble him a little at the same time. Solomon sent him out into the world to find the perfect wedding gift. The gift had to bring him to tears whenever he was happy and bring him joy when he was sad.

The servant set out immediately to fulfill his master's wish. Months went by and the king began to worry that the impossible task he had set before his servant had led him to a bad end. On the day of the wedding King Solomon was very happy, even more so when he saw his trusted servant and friend return just before the ceremony. Before the king could embrace him, the servant bowed and handed him a tiny box; “The wedding gift you requested, my king.” Solomon opened the box and his joy turned to sorrow. His tears of sorrow quickly became tears of joy. Inside the tiny box was a gold ring inscribed with the words, “And this too shall pass.”

As I sit here on the last day of 2016 I have no idea what the next year has in store for me or those I love. There will be triumphs and set backs, tears and joy, highs and lows. People will continue to move into and out of my life fulfilling God's purpose for each encounter. By the time you read this I may not even be here, or I may still be working here on Death Row. Who can know? God knows. God knows. He tells us through King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 that he is the one in control and it is He alone who determines time and timing. I begin this new year comforted by the knowledge that God is in control. No matter what this new year brings for you, please remember that all things are in God's hands. If your life is going great—praise God—if your life is a struggle—praise God—and always keep in mind, “That This Too Shall Pass.”

Have a great month trusting Christ.
Peace is only Jesus,
Roger G.
Parchman, Death Row

Give Thanks

Heavenly Father,
You re powerful, patient and kind. You're King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Righteousness is in your hand, truth is your handmaid, salvation is yours to give. Father forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Father we thank you for 2016, for without You we never would have made it. Thank you for the trials and tribulations. It was through these we called on you for the blessings you bestowed upon us. It was by this we praised your name. Thank you for the answered prayers, for that is what helped increase our faith in you, for the unanswered prayer as well, for those are the ones we continue to wait patiently on you for. And thank you for the 2016 Good News letter for by which You ministered to sinners, uplifted a spirit, comforted a soul, encouraged a brother or sister, and so much more. And now it's 2017 and we get to do it all over again. In Jesus name Amen.

C.D.G.
E. M.

Will You Give God Thanks

(The following was written by Stephen P. and submitted by a brother in Christ. Stephen has suffered two strokes and currently has a bleeding aneurysm on his brain.)

Nehemiah 12:31; "Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that give thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the refuse gate."

As believers we should be giving God thanks everyday for the things going on in our lives, the good and the bad. It's easy to give God thanks when good things happen but how often do we thank Him in the midst of the trials and tribulations? For so long after I suffered the two strokes I was angry with God. How could I possibly thank Him for leaving me in this painful and debilitated state? It took me a long time to let go and stop blaming God, but once I did He began to cultivate a character in me that allows me to "count it all joy" (James 1:2). I'm supposed to be dead right now but our heavenly Father through his Son Jesus Christ made death behave itself in my life. Today, and every day I give God thanks for not only saving my life, but for giving me the Holy Spirit through whom I can now truly live. This does not mean I will not have anymore pain and discomfort, but it does mean I will be able to bear it, and this is a testament to the sufficiency of our Heavenly Father's eternal grace. When our Heavenly Father sees us persevering under our trials, looking to Him to work out His purposes through them, He is there as a loving father should be. It is when we look to Him that we gain His approval, and this sense of His approval fills us with hope. And for this we give thanks, for we know He is producing Christlikeness inside us. Everyday I pray the Lord will heal me from this aneurysm and pain but not before I thank Him for saving my life and giving me His grace that allows me to bear it.

Ask yourself, if tomorrow you only had what you thanked God for today, what would you have? I encourage you to start thanking God for everything He has done for you, I know I am. I Thess. 5:18 "...in everything gives thanks" in Jesus name we pray. Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ
Stephen P.
Parchman, Ms.

Faith Confession

In the name of Jesus, I am a believer. I believe in God's Word. I am what the Word says I am. I have what the Word says I have. I can do what the Word says I can do. In Jesus name, I render ineffective every negative word I have spoken, every negative thing I have thought, every word and thought that has been contrary to the truth of God's Word. From this moment forward I will acknowledge only the good things that are in me in Christ Jesus. I am saying it now: out of the good treasure of my heart only good things will come to pass.

I am the righteousness of God, a new creature, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus. I have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Dear Son. I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb—redeemed from the curse of the law; redeemed from sickness and disease, poverty and death.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am more than a conqueror. He never leaves me nor forsakes me. Since the Greater One dwells within me, I can overcome every situation. The faith of God resides within me and through it I have the victory that overcomes the world.

I thank you, Father, that I can have all these things. I believe it in my heart. I have released it with my mouth. So be it. It will surely come to pass, in Jesus name, Amen!

Romans 10:17

The Dog Pen Church in Christ,
Parchman, MS

The Gap

I've been trying to put this book of Luke 15:1-7 and Luke 18: 9-14 in my own words so I can express the way it makes me feel after I finished reading it. I think that I can say that most of you, if not all of you, can identify with the joy and happiness that comes after you finish reading God's Words and talking about what you just read with somebody. It's like I just read a script about my life in a movie. Just like in Luke 15:1 and 2. There are two different kinds of people. You have the sinners that know they are sinners and those who think they are righteous. Now stop reading this for a moment and just think to yourself and then ask yourself, are you like this? "Yes," most of us are just like the Pharisees who think they're righteous. You might not want to admit it, but you know just like God knows.

Now, let's get back to the point. The Pharisees said to the teacher, man look at this fellow Jesus. He welcomes sinners, but they did not even realize they were just as bad. Their sins were probably not as obvious, at least to them anyway. Now stop again and let this marinate in your mind for a minute. Are you getting my point? If not, then look at it this way. "You can always see somebody else's wrongs, but it's harder to see your own wrongs. Now do you get it?"

Let's get back to business. Jesus sets them out by telling them a parable. In verse 4 of Luke 15 Jesus leaves them (the sheep) in their lost condition "the wilderness" and goes to find the Lost Sheep that not only knows He is a lost sinner, but trusts Jesus to save him. In verse 5 Jesus lays that lost sheep "now saved from the wilderness" on his shoulders and takes it home. Now in verse 7 He tells the Self-Righteous who think they don't need saving that it is the one sheep that admits he is lost that gets saved, not the ninety-nine who don't.

I am just like that Lost Sheep, but I'm trying to get saved. Everytime I get one foot out of the wilderness the Devil pulls me back. It takes humility to repent, to admit that we can't save ourselves is hard on our pride. In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus gives us another chance to compare the two kinds of people. One guy is self-righteous and lifts himself up by comparing himself to the one who knows he is a sinner. That guy can't even look up toward God because he sees how bad a condition he is in. The sin of comparison can be deadly. It is easy to look down at someone that isn't doing as well as you or me and compare ourselves to them in order to lift ourselves up. This happens every day at work, at church, on the street, everywhere. We must only compare ourselves to Jesus and that will always show us just how rotten we are. This then should humble us or bring us to our knees like the man in Luke 18:13 or harden our heart and bring us to hell. Just remember, you can't talk about somebody without talking about yourself.

By Sherwood B.
And the Good Help.

Answers

In times of adversity, life can sometimes seem so bleak and dark that I feel like giving up—especially as those around me offer negative thoughts. Then I am reminded of the words, of Tony Compallo: "It's Friday, yet Sunday is coming," meaning we all know who has the victory. Our Lord's birthday has just passed and I am reminded that Jesus went to the cross for me. Who am I to give up? I learn to live and see like Jesus everyday as the Holy Spirit touches and teaches me. The story of Paul in Acts 16 is a good example of the work of the Spirit. The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he escorted them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the message of the Lord to him, along with his household. He took them the same hour of night and washed their wounds, right away he and his family were baptized. He brought them into his house, set a meal before them and rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household.

I have witnessed the change in men here. I have also watched the opposing force try to stop men here from change. I wanted to walk into the New Year with a clear showing, and I have learned so much. Yet, I also saw where men have been working on learning. Men receive Christmas card—the cheer they brought reminded me of whose birthday we celebrated. Let us remember to continue to reach out to the lost. Your walk with Jesus is a choice that will change you, challenge you, and create a growing burden for others. Thank you for your ministry UBC. God Bless All!

Timothy Evans
Parchman, Death Row

One Out of Many (a proclamation of strength)

Today's politicians take a problem and do two things with it. First, they try to make people in the public arena afraid of the problem. Then they try to blame the problem on the other side. This is now a regular procedure of both political parties and is the theme of most political campaign advertising. While most people say they are disgusted with negative advertising, the data shows that these ads work. They also bring an increasingly diminished respect and trust for politics and politicians from the public, which is now at its lowest ebb in many years.

The paragraph above is from the book On God's Side by Jim Wallis. Mr. Wallis seems to have his finger on the pulse of society as it stands today. His writings reveals a man passionate and sincere about the Word of God and the commands to love one another. The excerpt is taken from Chapter 8 titled "Conservatives, Liberals, and a Call to Civility." He suggests the need for a deep reflection on the ways we speak to and about one another. He also asks the following: "How do we create the environments that help peace and civility grow or that allow violence and hatred to enter?" As believers, we have an absolute monumental stake in the answer to that question. Mr. Wallis also gave the following analysis: many of us, as Christians, would never have considered violence of the fist but have been guilty of violence in our hearts and with our tongues. We need to be able to relate to others with whom we disagree on important issues without thinking or calling them evil. The words we say fall on the balanced and unbalanced, stable and unstable, the well/grounded and the unhinged alike. The immensity of ground covered in that statement, For "Believers," should be nothing short of spiritually earth-shaking (Matthew 12:38b).

Read 1Timothy2:1-2. So many of our politicians have ridden the wave of popular opinion to their political heights and forgotten God. Godly civility and reasoning (Isaiah1:18)are no longer, or never have been important issues. How soon the lesson of Matthew 4: 8-11 is forgotten by politicians who run for office with so called Christian values. Now the question is: how did we get here and what do we do about it now? Well the basis for that question and the answer to it comes from God a long time ago and is as follows: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). How can God be more specific than that?! How can one call themselves by Gods name and be filled to overflowing with so much evil and wickedness. "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessings and cursing. My brethren these things ought not to be," James 3:10. The time for finger pointing and belittling one another has come and gone.

I'm sure you will agree that there is enough blame to go around even in the unified body of Christ, the church. Mr. Wallis related to this issue this way: "I am a Christian, and we must always say that while we Christians are politically diverse, we are united in Christ." Too often the Church has reflected the political divisions of our culture rather than the unity we have in the body of Christ. The Church should be able to offer a message of hope and reconciliation to a nation that is deeply divided by political and cultural differences (John17:22). We can disagree but how we disagree with one another is a question of our witness for Christ.

In closing, read Ephesians 4:32-32 and remember that even though you are incarcerated, what you think ,as a Believer can transfer or influence those you love on the outside. Take no opportunity for granted. Your obligation to the Lords Great Commission demands it. See the world through what Pastor Rick Warren calls "Great Commission Eyes" which is the inside world and the outside world. Send us around the world with the news of your saving power and your eternal plan for all mankind (Psalms 67:2). God Bless.

Tony B.
Parchment, Ms
D.P.C.

Faith in God

Blessings to everyone this new year 2017. Today is January 3, and I just finished having Bible Study with my brothers in the Dog Pen Church in Christ. This month of January, I have been designated as the prayer warrior to kick-start each of our studies. Brother Moffett brought the message today, and it was about faith. We had a wonderful discussion, and I'm always in awe, seeing the presence of God in the midst of us. I pray for all the fellowships in Christ all over the world – especially in the prisons.

I want to delve deeper into the discussion and break down the focal point of faith:

Focus continually on the promises of God (Matthew 21:21-22).

Acknowledge that God's promises are possible for you all the time (Hebrews 13:5)

Insist that God's promises are coming to pass in your life (Psalm 139:15-16 & Jeremiah 1:5)

Think and meditate on God's promises (1Timothy 4:14-16)

Hold onto your confession of God's promises (Romans 8:16-17 & 10:10-11)

The very foundation of our lives must be established upon these very principles of faith (Mark 11:22-26). We have to believe that God is and that He always will be. He must be our number one priority in life. Our lives must be built upon God and his word. We have to be totally dependent upon Him. We have to commune with Him at all times and continually cultivate a relationship with Him. When situations or difficulties come our way, we must have faith in God that He will strengthen us (Philippians 4:13, John 15:5, 2Corinthians 12:9). We can call upon Him every day for His strength, and it is so very important that we walk by faith in the steps he has for us. It's so very important that we acknowledge His presence and allow Him to be our sustainer all the days of our lives. When we do, we will see the hand of God manifest so many wonderful and heavenly things in our lives. All we have to do is have faith in Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come before you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are thankful through Christ for your love, grace, and mercy. We thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit to comfort us in our time of need and suffering, to guide us in the way of your righteousness, and to protect us from all the wiles of the devil. We thank you for your presence within us all and through us all as we are vessels to spread your word and channels through which your blessings flow. We pray for all souls lost and found and we ask that your mighty hand touch the hearts of all mankind to renew a kindled spirit that all may be refreshed in your goodness. We thank you for every blessing and for the daily bread to nourish our minds, bodies, souls, and spirits. We thank you for all things through Christ Jesus, Amen.

Justin H. Underwood

Faith in God

Faith holds me high in the air
without suspensions
Every day God is revered as my
honorable mention

His name resonates daily from my heart and
flows from my mouth
trusted and true without any such
reason to doubt

Faith strengthens me for my journey both
near and far
Glowing brightly within me like the beautiful
Twinkle of the North Star

So important for every step that he orders
me to take
So important to acknowledge His glorious presence
for my sake

Faith cultivates and empowers the meek to
inherit the earth
Broadening the shoulders of the weak to carry the
measure of one's worth

Quickening the mere souls of all that are
dependent upon Him
The foundation of our lives is established up
absolute faith in Him