

The Good News

Newsletter— March 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)

Can He Use Me?

There are people all over the world, in prison, in church, next door to you, on the street, just all around us, who are riddled with inner guilt for sins they have committed recently or just a few seconds ago. Some people even believe that they have done so much wrong that there is no way that God could accept them. But they are wrong. The good news is that some of God's greatest men committed some of the greatest sins. Just look at Noah. He was a drunk, but God used him to build the ark. Moses killed a man but God used him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Abraham's grandson Jacob was a trickster but God used him as His prince. Paul killed Christians but God used him as an apostle to establish churches throughout the gentile world.

If God can use them, God can and will use you. He said that He will not hold one sin against them or you. In fact, He said that He will not remember our sins any more. Now that is the good news. He will use you. Once you receive Christ as savior and repent of your sins, then you are ready to be used by God.

Sherwood B.

Testimony

I really enjoy the reading material that you send to me. I am going to use it at my Bible study. I really enjoy teaching, and it really sets me afire. God is so good. I'm learning to be patient, and I need to work harder on that part of my personality. It has gotten better, but I need to do more work on it.

I just try to let others see me do the right things in life. I used to do alcohol and drugs, but God has changed that. My life is all for the better with Him leading the way. No, I'm not perfect, but I am evolving.

Thank you for sharing the Word with me and for lifting me up. Pray for me, and I will continue to pray for you.

*Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-12

Fred Singleton
Flora, MS

“There's division among the churches who proclaim the name of Jesus; the true believers, the ones who proclaim Jesus as their lord and savior: Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Pentecostals and so on. Why is that? I'll tell you: the Enemy. Brothers, this prayer is about unification of the body of Christ. Paul tell us, “There's neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.” To the Ephesians he said, “There is one body, and one spirit. Even as you are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.”

In light of what was said, let us join with our Lord and savior in prayer:

Father, I have manifested your name unto the men which you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever you have given me are of you. For I have given unto them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given me; for they are Yours. And all mine are Yours, and Yours are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your won name these whom You have given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth. As You have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that You have sent me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom You have given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which You have given me: for You loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent me. And I have declared unto them Your name and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved me may be in them, and I in them. Amen. (Prayer taken from John 17:6-26).

C.O.G.
E.D. Moffett

An Observation

What people really want is to be well rounded, fine tuned, well balanced, and complete. They're always looking for someone to make that dream a reality. If they sense you are a complete model that they can sharpen or re-pattern their life for them they may choose you as the model for their life. Any life that dedicates itself to the art and perfection of God will have success. Indeed a picture is worth a thousand words. You won't have to speak a word to send a message that you are a model for the Lord. They will see it in the way you live your life. This is the non-spoken ministry of life.

David D.
Parchman

Do You Want To Be Great?

In Mark 10:35-45, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, contended with one another to obtain significance in the Kingdom. They considered that one of them over the other would signify their "greatness" in the Kingdom to come. I'm pretty sure that once they heard (from the lips of Christ no less) the Lord's only solution to this overreach agenda of theirs was servitude, they were not happy campers. Jesus promises to reward all who faithfully follow him. He also warns against having rewards as your only motivation for service. To be his disciple, expect a cross, a cup, and a baptism (vs. 39) for the servant is not greater than his Lord. It takes developing a servant's heart to ask "how much can I give?" We must know the magnitude of the Biblical meaning of the word "service."

The following meaning comes from the book "Horizontal Jesus" by Tony Evans. "To serve is to focus on others and to act for their benefit in the name of Christ. Service begins with a humble attitude and includes actively looking out for the interest of others. You become a true servant when you come alongside others and help them improve spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Or circumstantially, you serve when you make someone's life better." In advancing that the action of service is the true path to significance, I implore you to consider Paul's letter to the church at Galacia in which he wrote "you were called to freedom brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another" (Gal.5:13) people serving people - that is beautiful to our Lord, I ask again "Do you want to be great?" Serve.

Tony B
Parchman, MS
D.P.C.

You are Loved by God

(The following piece was inspired by the Word of God through Stephen Powers and written by a fellow brother in Christ. Stephen has suffered two strokes and presently has a bleeding aneurysm in his brain.)

Hebrews 12:6, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines." Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man."

One of the ways we as believers know God loves us, is not only by His discipline, but by the very fact that He has given us commandments. Think about it, a Father tells his son, "don't touch the stove because it will burn you." He is giving this command because he loves his son and does not want harm to come to him. If the son follows the command he will be blessed in that he will not get burned by the stove. James 1:25 tells us, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." God gave us His commandments because He loves us and He requires us to keep these commandments because he loves us. In keeping them, we will be protected, blessed, and the glory He is due will be given as a result. Matthew 5:16 tells us, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." You are loved by God and His commandments show us how much.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen and Amen.

Brother in Christ,
Stephen Elliot Powers
DPC

40 Days of Fasting

Man! It has been a very long time since I last fasted. Anybody that knows me knows that I love eating so this was no easy deed for me to do. I have heard His voice many times telling me that I need to fast in order to evolve more into spiritual exercises and less into worldly distractions.

I'm reminded of John 3:30: He must increase, but I must decrease. My own selfish desires have come up with excuse after excuse for why I shouldn't fast, but none are legitimate if I'm honest about it. So, how can I love the Lord as I say I do and continue to ignore His voice? He's always talking to us, but are we always listening? How can I love the Lord and not put my desires aside when He's given the ultimate sacrifice for us in the name of love (John 3:16). As Christians we're always critical of others when they go against God's ways, but are we any different as believers when we turn away from His voice? (John 18:37). Having said all that I have decided to listen and to let the Good Shepherd lead me in the way He sees fit for me to go (John 10:4). I started a 40 day fast on December 1, 2016, and ended it on January 9, 2017. From 6am until 6pm every day I abstained from food water, TV, radio and I participated in no worldly events. For those 12 hours every day I prayed, studied scripture, meditated, read other spiritually enlightening books, and slept peacefully in His powerful arms. I must admit that I was lost for the first couple of days, but I let go and let God and he strengthened me throughout the rest of my journey.

I am proud to share this experience with you and I am humbled in the wisdom and knowledge that the Holy Spirit shared with me. You'd be amazed at how clearly you can hear, see, and understand His purpose once you submit and allow Him to manifest Himself in you. Everyone has a different route that they have to take and He will tell you if only you'll listen to Him. It's beyond beautiful to be in His presence. . . it's heavenly (Psalms 27:4, Psalms 90:17).

* "After Fasting" coming soon!

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

God bless everyone,
Justin H. Underwood

40 Days of Fasting

*40 days of fasting—

Spiritually hungry for the Bread of Life everlasting
In prayer, in meditation, and in study of His Word
Cutting layers from the old so the new will be holy and superb

*40 days a slave—

Bound, shackled, and chained to avoid the devil's cave
A willing servant in the prowess of His righteous ways
Abstained from the world 12 hours a day upon days

*40 days refined—

Polished and waxed with a Heavenly spit-shine
Necessary to wash away the specks of dust obscuring one's gleam
Humbled to be in the beauty and presence of the One Supreme

*40 days ago—

While praying, I received a message: "I'll
Lead and you follow."
So I began this journey to nourish my
body, spirit, and soul,
less of me so the more of Him I
will behold
Of the Truth that I'm so privileged
to know,
All because I fasted for the Lord
40 days ago.

Attention New Believers: You Reap What You Sow
Sermon at The Dog Pen Church-Parchman

Re appropriating scripture and using it outside of its contextual meaning is often a dangerous and ill advised practice. It has caused so much harm through the centuries that I don't recommend anyone to do it lightly. There are times, however, when we can use scripture in ways that don't change its meaning as it is written but instead convey different biblical concepts. With that said I want to use the garden metaphor in Galatians 6: 7-10.

In context Paul is talking about the way we treat God's people. If we are selfish and use our resources on the things of the flesh we will be paid in kind. In contrast to that, resources used to help God's people and promote the kingdom will bring the blessings of the Spirit in whom the work is accomplished. God sees everything so you need not worry that your good deeds, or your selfishness, will go unattended or unrewarded.

While we could study and apply Gal.6:7-10 in context everyday and never exhaust it, which we should, I want to use the reap/harvest what you sow/plant truth in a new way.

One of the missions of the Dog Pen Church is to make disciples. When done correctly this is an intensive and time consuming process. Along the way there will be bumps on the road and pressures from both inside as she/he and the flesh realizes its death, and from the outside as people are doubtful or hostile toward the newly made confession of faith. I have experienced this after time in my life and with others. My friends and family simply couldn't believe that a sinner such as I once was could be changed into a new man so quickly. Most everyone thought I was using religion as a way to get what I wanted and to manipulate people. It is a valid concern and one I want to address today.

I loosely define Jailhouse Religion which is by no means confined to the jailhouses as: "Confessing Christianity because of emotional distress and using superficial prayer to obtain a temporary desire." Once that desire has been met, or not, as the case may be, then the person abandons any trace of the faith.

I remember when I was in the hospital with a broken neck making all kinds of deals with a God I didn't know. "If you will only let me walk again I will change my ways." He did. I didn't. Men in jail say something just like it. "If you will only let me out I will change my ways." He does. They don't. This happens so frequently that we call it Jailhouse Religion and prosecutors use it to attack defendants in court. It is a bad state of affairs when a person can be penalized in a court of law for confessing Jesus while in jail.

This is a complex issue with many sides. The part I want to touch on is the misconception some new believers have that all of their troubles and problems will go away once they accept Jesus as their savior. This couldn't be further from the truth and is often the reason that people fall away.

A man is arrested and has everything taken away from him when he is thrown in a cell. In his emotional state he bargains with God. "If you will let me out then I will go to church and do right, I promise. I've learned my lesson." This man gets a bible and everyone sees him with it open. He answers every question with "God is good!"

One of two things is about to happen here. The man gets out and quickly proves that his profession of faith wasn't genuine by returning to the life he was living. He goes back to jail and cries that he was doing right and even went to church once. It isn't his fault. He blames God. The other thing that may happen is that the person doesn't get out of jail and abandons the faith because God didn't do what he wanted and let him out. Again he blames God and refuses to take responsibility.

God is not a genie that can be rubbed out of the lamp of prayer whenever a person wants something from Him and the put back so the old life can resume. Psalm 139 tells us that our Lord knows our thoughts, is acquainted with all of our ways, and even before we utter a word knows it because He sees the motivations of a heart.

Now before we were Christians we planted seed after seed of unrighteousness. The weight of this cycle of planting and harvesting bad seed is what eventually broke my heart and is usually the case with most people. Once we become Christians with a truly open heart for Jesus the seeds we begin to plant are good seeds of righteousness. By seeds I mean the things we say, do, and even think. It is a universal truth that we harvest what we plant. If you put a corn kernel in the ground you won't be expecting a tomato to grow. Gal. 6:8 makes this point. "If you sow to your own flesh you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit."

The absolute truth of this garden metaphor is that everything that is planted will grow and bear its fruit before it can be cut down and burned or harvested as a treasure in heaven. Just because I became a Christian doesn't mean that the decades I spent of sowing sin just goes away. This is the point of this message and one we must be upfront in telling new believers. Christ will save you and forgive you for your past sins but the harvest of our past will come in. Now it is my experience that our merciful Lord will often stunt the growth of the evil plants in our past life so that they don't overwhelm and destroy us. He will instead use the disaster of our past choices to teach us the foolishness of our actions apart from him. Our harvest becomes one of discipline and teaching as opposed to one of terror and death.

The bright spot, and one we must always remember and convey to people around us, is that once the evil plants of our past have been harvested they are gone forever. They are gathered up and thrown into the fire. Since we began planting good seeds once we became Christians then eventually it will be almost all good seed we are harvesting. This process takes time and endurance and is what must be stressed to new believers/disciples so that they will be prepared for the tough times ahead. As mature believers we are duty bound to offer encouragement and help carry their burdens until they are able to give those burdens to Jesus.

I would like you to look through your Bible and notice how people reaped the good and bad of their choices. Keep in mind that different seeds mature at different rates. Some may come to harvest immediately, while others may take a lifetime or even lifetimes!

The choice to disobey by Adam and Eve had some immediate consequences and some that we are paying for today. Pharaoh (Exodus 7-11) made choices that brought consequences. What were some you see? Joshua and Caleb planted good seed (Numbers 13-14), the Israelites, bad. How long did it take for their harvest? What was the outcome for each? How long for the harvest? What do we see about the seed of complaint in Numbers 21:4-9? In 1st Samuel 13:8-14 King Saul disobeys God and loses his kingship. Why do you think it didn't happen immediately? In 2nd Samuel 11-12 King David sins multiple ways and the seeds are harvested at once and over time. Why do you think?

What examples can you think of from your own life? What seeds have you planted that still in need of harvest? Pray to the Lord of the Harvest that he protects you from the impact of the wicked garden of your past. Pray that He puts a guard over your heart and mouth so that you don't replant bad seeds over again. And pray for the new believers and teach this truth so that they will not be caught by surprise and fall away.

God Bless you all in Jesus,

Roger G.