



## Newsletter— May 2018

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 Blessed Mother's Day*

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price  
is far above rubies  
Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice  
in her godly duties  
Her children arise up and call her  
outstanding and blessed  
A diligent woman that feareth the Lord  
is truly the best  
Affectionately treasured beyond the measures  
of any costly jewelry  
She stretches out her hands to unselfishly  
help those that are needy  
She opens her mouth with wisdom and her  
ways are mirrored in kindness  
Her beauty is so gloriously grand and gleams  
of His loveliness  
Honor thy mother: that thy days may be  
long upon the land  
We bow the knee praying that He forever  
hold you within His hand  
Let His joy comfort you every morning and  
His peace tuck you in at night  
Look up—Be still and trust thou in  
Christ thy Light  
To guide your future, as He has your past,  
faithfully in every way  
Stand forth dear mothers—we wish you a “Blessed Mother's Day!”

From: The Dog Pen Church

## ***How God Brought The River To Me***

***By: Roger Gillett***

Where do I begin? I was a wild – I should say WILD – young man who, through a lifetime of bad choices, ended up in a county jail, Hattiesburg, MS. I was charged with two counts of Capital Murder and the state was seeking the death penalty in both counts. This was in 2004. While I waited for trial, I was kept in solitary confinement; no human contact, no visits, no sun or fresh air, no books, magazines or newspapers, no TV or radio, no anything except a Bible. A BIBLE.

There were some men from a few local churches that would come to the lockdown unit a few Tuesdays a month and stand in the hall and “preach” at us. I was so – not anti-Christ per se, just anti – that I wanted to read the Bible so I could prove these Southern holy-rollers wrong about what they were selling. In a strange twist, I also wanted to be knowledgeable above everyone else so I could get the attaboys for knowing my Bible like a good boy. I was anti, yet craved the praise of men. That is a little glimpse into the situation I was in: solitary confinement and the psyche of a man under extreme pressure and spiritually lost. We'll unpack that craziness another time.

So I read the Bible cover to cover looking for holes in the narrative and contradictions between books. In order to find these seeming contradictions, a person must read the Bible, or any book for that matter, very carefully. I have lost count over the years, but during those first, let's say five readings, everything changed. During a reading one day, I realized that if the Bible was true, then there is just one choice in this life. We either accept that we are sinners separated from God in need of a Savior, or we are not. It seems so simple that I think people miss it; I certainly did not. My next through reading was of a different nature, and with no one to guide me I got on my knees – only because I had seen people pray that way and in my ignorance I thought it was the only way to pray – and I confessed that I was a sinner, king of the sinners, and asked Jesus to save me. My way of life obviously hadn't worked, so I was committed to try God's way. The lightness I felt is hardly describable.

Not much time passed before baptism appeared on my radar. I was told by a Tuesday “preacher” that baptism is necessary for salvation. The lightness I had felt after giving my mess of a life to Christ vanished, and an anxiety that kept me awake at night set in immediately. I went from fresh and clean, washed white by the blood of Jesus, to worse off than I was before my confession of faith.

I begged every Tuesday “preacher” (I use “preacher” for lack of a better word) to help me get baptized. Months went by until finally a man agreed to help. Remember, I was in solitary confinement charged with terrible crimes. One day I hear the door to the lockdown area open. I get up to look and it is the man! I begin taking off my clothes and by the time he gets to my door I am standing there in my boxer shorts with a goofy smile on my face. I'm so happy that I will finally be saved. Again, I didn't know that baptism doesn't save a person. It is quite early in the day, so as I watch this man walk toward me I take no notice of the small Styrofoam coffee cup he has in his hand. So he gets to my door, which had a four-inch gap on the side of the plate that made up the door, and stands there. I have my face pressed flat against the plate trying to see down the hall to the box that controls the doors. Four inches is plenty to see forward, but not so much to see anything peripherally, like down the hallway. When I don't see an officer at the control box, I ask the “preacher” man what is happening. He tells me that the Sheriff will not let me out to be baptized in a tub, but that isn't a problem at all. He says, “Are you ready?” Before I say anything he dips his fingers in the cup and dashes water in my face. “In the name of Jesus, I baptize you!” I was so stunned that this guy just splashed me with water out of his cup – twice – that I wasn't prepared for him reaching through the gap of the door, and with the same wet fingers, lifting my chin in the air and saying, “Now speak in tongues!” Huh? “Now SPEAK-IN-TONGUES!!... You can do it! You're almost there!”

After a minute or so I almost started gibbering just to get this lunatic away from me. He finally gave up and pulled his hand back, muttering something about un-confessed sin in my life, and left me standing there still in shock at the comedy that we had just acted in. Interesting enough, I felt so much better because I was sure the “preacher man”, as crazy as the play had just been, knew what he was doing. I'm guessing this was in the latter part of 2005.

Without my salvation to worry about I started to put all my time into the Bible. I began to get spiritual books, mostly Kenneth Copeland stuff because they were strangely approved by the jail, and I found some

Bible correspondence courses that I eagerly devoured. I spent eighteen months, give or take, reading and learning “sometimes hard lessons about taking an author's word for what scripture means,” and growing strong in my faith. God was using me in that lockdown unit to lead men to Jesus right and left.

It was during this period of growth that I met a Christian named Roy. He was/is a Wildman, but his faith in Jesus Christ is to this day among the most unquestionable I have ever seen. We hit it off immediately. At the time I wouldn't have been able to say whether it was our common faith in Jesus or our wild and crazy lifestyles that brought us together. In hindsight, I now clearly see that God put Roy in my life.

Despite Roy being in lockdown, he was able to get contact visits from his preacher. Preacher was a term of endearment, and after all these years I can see why. I was starving for books, and so Roy asked his Preacher to bring us some books from the church library. I wrote him a thank-you letter or note, and when this Preacher wrote back a friendship, a kinship, was formed. God's hand is all over this. Try as he might, he couldn't get the jail to let him visit me. So we wrote and wrote and wrote letters.

Then in 2007, Spring I recall, a platoon of Sheriff's officers flooded into the lockdown unit and beelined to my cell. I had been in the county jail for nearly three years and had been subjected to countless cell searches and cruelties against my person. This time was different. I was stripped and pulled out of my cell, put on my knees by the unit door, and watched as every piece of paper and item in my cell was handled by officer after officer. At one point there were so many in my cell that they couldn't bend down to pick anything up off the floor. The Sheriff had obviously chewed up a behind and that rolled downhill. By the time the butt chewing made it to the jail staff it was quite severe. So there were officers crying for a spot to tear my cell, and mine alone, apart at the seams. I kept getting screamed at, “Where's the contraband!? Where's the phone?!!” You see, someone had called the Sheriff and told him that I was a kingpin running contraband through his jail, and I was using my cell phone to call and threaten witnesses in my case. Neither of those things were even remotely true. Needless to say, their search turned up zilch. Instead of being put back in my cell, I was put in a patrol car and transported to a different county jail to be held in a tighter, more solitary cell.

God was really working on my behalf. My behavior was irreproachable and after three years of being segregated and without a single privilege to speak of, I was allowed to go to general population. New jail, new rules, new Sheriff! I now had physical, unrestricted access to other people, so I began a group Bible study and with access to the jail library we flourished. I was able to get canteen, watch TV, listen to a radio, but most importantly I was able to finally get a visit from my friend, The Preacher, Dick Allison. I can't recall the very first visit, but we had been writing for enough time that it was like seeing a loved one after an extended absence.

I'm guessing that it was in June of 2007 that my Bible study group landed on the subject of baptism. I think a man had given his life to Jesus and was interested in baptism so we studied it together. I was horrified to learn that baptism is submersion and not sprinkling water into my face. The old anxieties came flooding back, and I ran to the phone in a panic and called Dick. I asked him to do whatever was necessary to get me under the water. He assured me that he would do what he could. That eased my panic, but my experience with a Southern Sheriff hadn't been good by any stretch of reasoning.

On July 16, 2007, I along with a young man I had been ministering to since my arrival in population, get called out of the building to the police parking garage where I see Dick, Phillip, and Brian – three “big deal” ministers in their own right, filling up a horse trough with water.

We had a quick Bible study on the meaning and significance of baptism and, after a confession of faith in Jesus, I was put under the water. I sit here writing these words with tears in my eyes. I was finally buried with my Lord and raised in newness of life. The confession and symbolic nature of baptism is so powerful it still, after ten years, affects me emotionally, I will never forget the hug Dick gave me, never!

But wait – there's more! If God had had me moved from one jail to another for the baptismal moment alone, it would have been glorious, but He is so much bigger than that. I don't have space to tell you all of the effects that day continues to have, but I want to mention a few that have to do with my love for, and friendship and ministry with, Dick Allison.

I was invited to be a member of University Baptist Church where Dick was a former pastor and Phillip was the current one. When the vote went my way and I accepted, I've been in ministry with UBC as my home church ever since. I've been blessed with wonderful relationships and acceptance by the members that

continue to this day and will continue until our Lord returns.

God knew I needed acceptance and love, but he also knew I needed Dick Allison. While 2007 was a great year for my Christian growth, it was also a year of heartache and sorrow. Dick was literally with me through it all.

Literally? Yes. He had been approved for a night visit (God!) and was in the room with me when my attorney breezed in and said, "I was told by Jim (my lead council) to drive here and tell you that your Grandfather is dead." He then turned around and walked out. God knew what was going to happen and put the pieces in place, Dick being right there with me, so I wouldn't have to be alone.

It wasn't the only time God used Dick to help me. A month after I received the news of my Grandfather, I received two death sentences in spite of the fact that Dick testified on my behalf. He was with me then and he has been with me the entire time. We have been partners in the Gospel and God has bonded us as close as a father and son.

When I was asked to write what my baptism meant to me at the time it took place and what it means to me now, I jumped at the chance. My baptism meant, and still means, that God is in control of our lives and works for our good if we allow Him to. He will put the experiences and tests to you, and in His love He will put people in your life to help in those times of need and rejoice with you in times of triumph.

Thank you Heavenly Father for giving us Your Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you for the tests and trials which strengthen our faith and dependence on You. And thank you for putting an old preacher into my life as a living example of what living in Jesus looks like. May Your name be blessed forever in Jesus, Amen.

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### *Armor of God*

We ask ourselves why we still fear  
Why do we let the devil whisper in our ear?  
Saying there's no salvation, that we are lost  
that there's no eternity, that there's no cross  
that living for Christ is a choice unwise  
that being a Christian is for too high a prize  
The devil whispers these words in our mind  
saying there's no Christ, no help to find  
That's why we need to arm ourselves  
Take up the Word that is our sword  
Abide in the Holy Spirit, He who dwells  
in our bodies, the spirit of the Lord  
With the breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith  
With loins girded with truth our Lord keeps us safe  
Having shod our feet with the gospel of peace,  
the devil is defeated, his ruling's gonna cease  
Strong in the Lord and the strength of his might  
With His full armour on we are ready to fight  
And with the Holy Spirit assisting us to pray  
We will resist the devil in the evil day  
Thus we must tell ourselves not to fear  
Cause Christ is with us, our Lord is here

Jenny Ekström

## *The Darkest Depths of Despair*

My arrival on Death Row was met with a myriad of thoughts, chief among them was the thought, “I’m not supposed to be here!” A firm believer and proud proclaimer of the Lord Jesus Christ for a solid three years, Death Row wasn’t even on my list of rational possibilities for my future. Proverbs 16:7 says that “when people’s lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them.” Ever since my conversion to Christ in 2014, I have been singing His praises and lifting Him high to anyone who is willing to listen. I have led daily prayer circles and Bible studies on every zone I have been on. Several inmates have been led to Christ. I was doing everything that I could think of to please the Lord-yet my enemies were far from that promised peace toward me.

Verse 18 of the same chapter also says that “pride comes before the fall.”

I had it all planned out, what I was going to do in prison. I was going to attend Bible College and become an inmate religious assistant. I was going to step up my proclaim-game and reign down righteousness on the men in darkness. This was God’s will...only it wasn’t.

It was *my* will, and I was asking God to stamp his approval on it. I failed to mention that I also had a laundry list of wants that I was putting on God’s to-do list. Only God doesn’t want us to fill out a wish list of goods and services and send it to Him for His signature. He wants our John Hancock on a blank check, lifting it up to Him: “God I don’t know where you need me, but I’m ready for anything.” (Matt 26-4) (John 6:38).

We get excited and want to do great things for God to sign off on our plans, without any thought to: Is this really what God wants? Not that ever one has the hidden motive of gaining glory, but God sees the heart-He knows what’s for Him and what’s for us. And He does not put up with pride(Prov.6:17-18) unbelievers can get away with pride (for the time-being), but the Lord chastens those he loves(Heb.12-:6).

All of this took me a few days to understand, and in those few days I dug down into the rabbit-hole of despair. I was mad at God. I took Job’s wife’s advice (Job 2:4) and cried at God. Accusations. Frustrations. Isolations. Desperations. Deflations.

Those days away from God were the darkest and loneliest days of my life. I realize that, after all my outbursts of anger, God was still with me. He had never abandoned me. He was right there beside me with open arms. His love never fails (1 Cor. 13:7)(1 Cor.1:9)

But I had to be chastened.

I had to be reprimanded and reminded that my situation could have been worse. God reminded me that Job once had it pretty bad(Job ?). Paul experienced a few discomforts (2 Cor. 11:23-33); John the Baptist lost his head (Matt. 14:10); Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:54-60)); Jesus Himself died for me(John 3:16), each of the apostles were brutally martyred; and Christians through history have suffered intolerable fates. Besides all this, Paul remarks that what we’re experiencing now is nothing compared to the glory we will receive in heaven (Rom.8:18)!

I need a pep-talk like the one we read in Job 38:1-42:6, and I needed to rest in God’s love (1 John 1:9). And I needed to rest in God’s love (1 John 4:8). Now that I’ve done these things, I can rest in God’s peace (Phil. 4:6-7).

My mind is less self-centered and more God-centered. God had to lower my self-esteem, so that He could raise my God-esteem. Now, through Christ, we are able to accomplish anything (Phil. 4:13). Namely, His will.

By : Matt Wilbanks

*It Was Time*  
**Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**

It was 3:00 a.m. on a Thursday morning—March 15, 2018—and it was time for me to rise up off my bunk and get down on my knees in prayer to jumpstart my day. I looked out my window only to see that the heavenly skies were darkened as the world around me sleeps. Before I start the day off with my Bible studies, I walk to the sink area to wash my face and brush my teeth.

As I looked into the mirror, I saw a lone tear streaming down my face. This day is exactly one week since my dear and beloved grandmother—Mrs. Willie Pearl Palmer—passed away. It was just (46) days ago when my family and friends of the family, celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2018. That is a very long time to live in today's world. Especially when so many are lost to murder and death—whether by health reasons or naturally.

I've lost a lot of loved ones while in prison, and I can honestly say that it doesn't get any easier. What has changed for me is how I look at each death and how I react to each death.

The lone tear was for me, and the smile that came afterwards was for her—the beautiful woman that she was before Almighty God and the world around her that rejoiced in the light she had emitted to everyone around her. --1John 1:5-7.

As time passes on, it's time for me to go outdoors for recreational activities. When I walked outside, I was met with the bright orange-red sun slowly rising from behind a grove of trees off in the distance of Parchman grounds.

It was so magnificent and full of splendor as I stood there in awe of its beauty. As it continues to slowly rise, the darkened skies began to lighten up and awake a world that seems to be still sleeping. --Mark 13:32-37.

It reminded me of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was crucified on the cross, rising from the dead to give eternal life to a world of believers in Him. --John 3: 14-21; 1 Cor. 15: 20-23; Col. 3: 1-4

It's His Light that shines through the darkness of our hearts in order for us to see brighter days. Isa. 60:1-2; Matt. 4:16-17; 2 Cor. 4: 6; Eph. 5:14-20

With every death, new life is born whether it be a natural life or the spiritual life. To me, it was a blessing to see my grandmother live such a long and prosperous life. I can only hope and pray that Almighty God is as gracious with me. But regardless, I'm just thankful for every opportunity to see His beautiful face—Deut. 5:24; psalm 34:1-10

The End

by: Justin U.

### *It Was Time*

The hands on the clock move around and around  
With each tic given, the tick makes a sound  
A treasured timepiece; one that's top of the line  
Gently kept with God's hand and delicately refined  
But one day the clock stopped at half past nine  
Almighty God had finally spoken  
It was time...

My dear and beloved grandmother; she was truly a gem  
A beautiful masterpiece moulded and created by Him  
She had love for everyone going miles in every direction  
Blessed was every soul that received her tender affection  
Forever in everyone's heart and especially in mine  
100 years caressed, Jehovah God said it was time ...

I looked up toward Heaven hoping to see her shining star  
Only to say goodbye while standing from afar  
As morning comes and a lone tear lingers in my eye

I'm greeted with the orange-red sun slowly rising in the sky  
Ms Willie Pearl Palmer- peacefully laid to rest in the hands of Thine  
You'll be forever missed as we all know it was time

Justin H. Underwood

### ***God Has Spoken***

... the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:21

Today is a very sad day for me as someone very special to me has passed away. Ms. Willie Pearl Palmer was with us for so long, and I wasn't ready for her to go, but Almighty God has spoken... Glory be to Him!

I took the chance a long time ago to tell her how I felt about her and what she meant to me. She knows that I loved her, and I know that she loved me. She played a big part in my life. She always gave me hope, and she never made me feel bad.

One of her favorite sayings was: "If the Lord says so!" When she would say that, I knew things were going to be fine, and I was uplifted. I thank God for allowing her to be a part of my life and for using her as an instrument of His love, grace, and mercy. (1 John 4:7-21).

I was a crack cocaine user. I was lost and could not find my way, but Ms. Palmer helped me to find my way. God is great. Because of Him, she loved me and helped me to understand how to love Him, to love myself, to love her, and to love others. (1 John 3:18-21).

We have His word and He left us a comforter. I know that His word is true. (Isa. 61:2-3; Matt. 5:4; John 14:15-20). The truth of His word is strength for me.

She is gone, but the memory of her beautiful smile will live on forever. God has spoken... Glory be to Him!

By: Frederick Singleton