

# *the MAGNOLIA* Messenger

Volume 42 • Number 2  
SUMMER, 2020

*"Let us consider  
one another to provoke unto  
LOVE and GOOD works."  
(Hebrews 10:24)*

In this world we have our troubles,  
Satan snares we must evade.

We'll be free from all temptations,

## Where the roses never fade.

**SPECIAL TOPIC THIS ISSUE**

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**"Mississippi's GOOD NEWS" Magazine**  
Serving Mississippi, Louisiana, and Adjoining States



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# Meet the Messenger team!

*"From Dennis"*

It has been good to receive the encouragement of many in editing this great publication. I appreciate all your kind remarks, but please understand that this is very much a team effort.

In a real sense, it is the team Al Franks put together before his death.

Al had enlisted the help of Mark Bridges about four years before. This resulted in the outstanding improvements to the Messenger, making it one of the most attractive and professionally done publications in our brotherhood.

A few months before his death, Al had invited Glenn and Beth Beall to come to Kosciusko to get involved in the work of the paper. They were recently retired from church work in Louisiana and moved into the apartment in the dorm on the church property. Al and June visited them the night of his tragic accident. They both bring needed experience and talent to this publication.

A couple of months before his death, Al asked Greg Ledbetter to start writing a regular column dedicated to work and activities among our youth. This is a wonderful addition to Messenger.



*The Messenger Team from left to right is Beth Beall, Glenn Beall, Dennis Doughty, June Franks, Glenda Franks, Mark Bridges and Eddie Lewis. Not Pictured, Greg Ledbetter.*

Eddie Lewis began a few years ago as our "missionary" to North Mississippi. With support from the Germantown, Tennessee congregation Eddie has been visiting churches and reporting to our readers for the past nine years. He too was initially approached by Al Franks.

June and Glenda were already involved in the day-to-day work of checking the mail, and handling the contributions and

mailing list. Al and Paul both made great choices in their wives. During their great grief they have remained dedicated workers for the Magnolia Messenger.

In my situation, Al asked me to start writing for the Messenger about twelve years ago. When Paul's situation worsened, he asked me to get more involved. I had already begun proofing and editing some material.

All of you, individuals and congregations, are also an important part of this good work. This is a team effort from start to finish, Al's Team! **MM**

## *the* MAGNOLIA Messenger

**Church of Christ - Kosciusko, MS**

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*Editor's Note: The mention of a person or church in the Messenger does NOT necessarily mean that we either endorse or approve all the person or church may believe, teach and/or do. We do not (cannot) have full knowledge of every person or church mentioned in the 'MM'; furthermore, we do not believe that our role before God is to be that of a judge. We pray, however, that we will never lend encouragement to anyone or anything in conflict with, or not in harmony with that which is plainly taught in Scripture. Your comments invited and encouraged.*

(Dennis Doughty, Editor)

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## **FALL ISSUE: PRAYER**

*The special topic for the Fall issue will be on Prayer.*

**Preacher and writers, do you have some good material on Prayer?**

**Send it to me (600-800 words Please).**

**If you have had a special prayer answered let me know.**

**Send your response to me:**

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# *Fifth Annual* **PREACHERS' RETREAT**

*There is nothing quite like it !*



*Above: Kirk Brothers, President of Heritage Christian University  
Above to the right: Gary Hampton, Minister, Siwell Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi*



*Top: A great group of preachers and teachers who attended this years retreat and had a great time to bond with other preachers as two meals a day are provided*

For the past five years, a group of preachers and church leaders have been coming together the second week of March for three days of intensive Bible study. This year was no exception.

Let me tell you what we did. We gave an hour of study to each of the sixteen chapters of 1 Corinthians, taught by two of the finest teachers in our brotherhood, Gary Hampton and Kirk Brothers.

I have done a lot of preaching and teaching in 1 Corinthians over the years. But after three days of study under these scholarly men, I only thought I knew something about this book!

All who came left with a notebook full of teaching and preaching material! I now have a clearer understanding of what "being baptized for the dead" means (1 Corinthians 15:29). Don't you wish you had been here?

This is hosted each year by the Magnolia Messenger and takes place on the campus of the Magnolia Bible Center in Kosciusko Mississippi. Housing is provided in the dorms, and breakfast and lunch is provided each day by the Huntington St. congregation.

It began when Al Franks attended the Preachers' Retreat in Columbia, Tennessee. While that event has not been offered the past couple of years, this event continues. It is the only such event in our brotherhood that offers several days of in-depth study of the scriptures. For those of us who attend each year, it has become the premier event on our preaching schedule.

So set aside the second week in March next year and join us as we do an in-depth study of Paul's Prison Epistles. *dd* **MM**



# BIBLE

## Questions & Answers

### MM Readers' ASK: Cecil May RESPONDS

#### QUESTION:

*You folks quote Mark 16:16 over and over to show US water baptism is essential to salvation, but you don't believe it yourselves. You believe, "Whoever believes and is baptized might be saved, if they stay faithful, attend church regularly, don't get drunk, etc., etc. (L.P.)"*

**RESPONSE:** We do believe "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Indeed, we believe, "Whoever believes and is baptized is saved," when "saved" is properly understood.

Another way to say that is, "Whoever believes and is baptized is in Christ." Scripture says, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). "In (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." So, among the spiritual blessings of being "in Christ" are "redemption" and "forgiveness."

Being "saved" has past, present, and future dimensions.

Those of us who are saved were saved at a particular time in the past. I am in Christ now, being redeemed and forgiven. I have the "hope and the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6) and the promise of a place prepared for me where I will be with God and Christ (John 14:2-3).

#### PAST

Many of us can date the precise moment in the past when we were saved. Others, like me, have trouble remembering any past occurrence by date, but I remember vividly the details. Since my earliest childhood, my family and I attended the Union Avenue church in Memphis TN, within easy walking distance of the house where we lived.

The Union Avenue preacher, and one of my spiritual mentors, was E. W. McMillan. Excitement was in the air because a gospel meeting with a well-known visiting preacher was scheduled to start in a couple of weeks and was being ex-

citedly promoted. I was 12 years old, at the age where I was considering seriously making a commitment of my life to Jesus Christ. I had quietly decided to respond for baptism as soon as the gospel meeting began.

At a Sunday evening service, brother McMillan emphasized the urgency of obedience to Christ, and

reiterated, as he frequently did, that he was not promoting a particular denomination nor asking us to join one. He urged us to believe the gospel, repent of sins, be baptized for the remission of sins, and to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). I signaled to my Dad that I was going forward, acknowledged his nod, and stepped out into the aisle to give my hand to brother McMillan and my heart to Jesus Christ. Having been buried with Christ in baptism, I was raised with the expectation of walking a new life in him (Romans 6:1-5).

#### WHAT IS YOUR MARKER? THE SINNERS' PRAYER?

For most of us, there is a specific time in the past to which we can point as the moment of salvation. For me, as I have testified, it was at the point of baptism. Most evangelicals have substituted "the sinner's prayer." On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, Peter "convicted" some of his hearers of demanding the crucifixion of their Christ and Lord. They then asked, "What shall we do?" Peter did not respond, "Repent, ask for forgiveness of sins, and invite Jesus to come into your heart." You can search the Scriptures from cover to cover, but you will not find any instruction like that.



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## ■ EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE

Read your Bible, especially Acts, which contains several accounts of non-Christians becoming Christians as directed by inspired apostles. What Peter actually told those on Pentecost who cried out, “Brothers, what shall we do?” was, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Saul, a leading persecutor of Christians, who was later to become Paul the apostle, was on his way to Damascus when the risen Christ appeared and identified himself to Paul. Jesus sent Paul to Damascus and sent Ananias to Paul to tell him what to do. Ananias said, “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

Jesus said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans and “When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12)

## ■ THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR

Examples abound. When Paul and Silas were led by the Spirit to preach the gospel in Philippi, they ended up in prison, in stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened.

The jailor, knowing that he, by his life, was accountable for the safe keeping of the prisoners, was about to kill himself. Paul stopped him, telling him, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.”

And the jailor called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (Acts 16:25-34).

The jailor, of course, had no idea what he was asking and no immediate understanding of the answer. The salvation he was contemplating likely had to do with escaping immediate physical death. He also did not understand the meaning of Paul’s answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.” There is no indication the jailor knew what to believe about Jesus or how to believe in him. He had no way to know anything about Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Paul and Silas, however, began immediately to fill in the gaps. “They spoke the word of the Lord to them.” They brought them to

full understanding of all they needed to know.

“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.” Washing their wounds implied repentance and immediate, after-midnight baptism, shows urgency.

“Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.”

Notice that it was after his repentance and baptism that “he rejoiced . . . that he had believed in God.”

## ■ THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL FAITH

Much is said about sole fide, “faith alone,” correctly meaning “faith” is the “only” condition of salvation. However, today, “faith alone” or “faith only” has taken on a new meaning, now defining a particular kind of faith. The biblical book of James says it is faith such as the demons have: “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder” (James 2:19). It is in regard to faith in that sense that James says, “You see that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:28).

The promise that, if people believe, they will receive a blessing is accompanied by an act of—choose your word—obedience, a deed, or a work—to show the reality of faith. For example, the LORD told Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abram went as the Lord had told him” (Genesis 12:1-4).

The blessings God promised Abram were dependent on whether Abram trusted God enough to do what God said. God said, “Abram, Go” (12:1), and “Abram went” (12:4).

Suppose Abram had not gone. We would surely agree that he would not have received the promised blessings. The more important question is, “If Abram had not gone, would Abram have believed?” When God says, “Do this in order to receive this blessing,” disobedience and unbelief become the same thing.

Nathan the leper was healed after he dipped in the river Jordan seven times, as the prophet told him (2 Kings 5). God told the nation of Israel to march around Jericho in a certain order for a certain number of days and its walls would tumble (Joshua 6). The New Testament says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled seven days” (Hebrews 11:30). The man born blind was healed after he washed in the pool of Siloam as Jesus told him to do (John 9). Biblical examples can be multiplied.

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.



# THE POST-CORONAVIRUS CHURCH

By Hugh Fulford

To paraphrase Amos, “I am not a prophet, or the son of a prophet” (Amos 7:14), nevertheless I have a few thoughts concerning some changes that I foresee coming in the post-coronavirus world and in the church of our Lord as to how we all might be forced to “do business.” Once again, I will remind the readers that these are only my thoughts and are not intended to represent the thinking of anyone else. No one must agree with me. And since I am not omniscient or divinely inspired, I may very well be wrong about some or all my observations.

In the everyday world of human interaction, there may well be a certain amount of social distancing that will continue to be observed. Large crowds in a single venue may still be unwise. Many people, especially the elderly and more vulnerable, may continue to wear masks when they go out in public. Seating arrangements in restaurants may be different from what we have been used to in the past. There may not be as much eating out as in the past, at least in the early stages of “rebooting.”

We sports fans may have to learn to get along without college and professional football, at least for a while. We may no longer have major league or minor league baseball, at least for a while. Basketball, hockey, soccer, and other sports may have to change. Musical concerts may not be possible for a while. The honky-tonks and bars on “Lower Broadway” in Nashville (and in the rest of the country) and the hotels and casinos in Las Vegas and Mississippi may not operate at full capacity. All of these changes will have a great impact on our economy and on the finances of colleges and universities.

Some of us may continue to use the shop online option. I now use the drive-through at our pharmacy to pick up our prescriptions. Telemedicine and the way we see doctors and nurses may undergo some changes, at least for some illnesses. How dentists and eye doctors may have to alter their practices yet remains to be seen.

As a result of the above, travel may be lighter. Older people may stay home more. We may learn that we do not always have to

be on the go somewhere. Many of us may decide that we did not really need to do all of those things that we thought we had to do or the way we thought we had to do them.

## What About Our Church Life?

With reference to the church, I can foresee some weak members becoming weaker and more spasmodic in their attendance at the public gatherings of the church. They will reason, “I did not have to go to the church building to worship God during the pandemic, so I do not have to go to the building to worship now that the pandemic is over.” Local churches will face the possibility of losing the “family feeling” that once characterized the congregation.

A certain amount of social distancing may still have to take place in the assembly. Handshakes and “holy hugs” may be a while making a comeback. Social fellowships (covered dish dinners) may be greatly altered if not completely curtailed. Very small congregations, especially rural ones, already on the brink of having to close their doors, may never make a comeback. That, of course, will be sad.

In the post-coronavirus world the church building may become less important and our Christianity may become less building centered. Some may even learn that the building is not the church! Elders and deacons may not spend an inordinate amount of time on the building, its upkeep, and its safety as some have done in the past.

Elders may no longer have the “luxury” of saying, “We have a nice, comfortable building, a good preacher, good Bible classes and good teachers; come to the building and be spiritually fed.” Elders may take on more of a true shepherding role and have more direct contact (personally, by phone, by emails, by texts, etc.) with the members (see I Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28) and less of a “board of directors” mentality when it comes to “overseeing the flock.” A replication of some of the features of the first century “house churches” may occur, especially with reference to Bible study groups and social fellowships.

The finances of the local church could change. All Christians are to “lay by in store” on the first day of the week (I Corinthians

*In the post-coronavirus world, the church building may become less important and our Christianity may become less building centered.*



# ROME'S PANDEMIC

by Mike Benson

[Note: Three years ago last month, I was in Rome, Italy. Near the famous Colosseum there had been some archaeological work done. A sign listed some of their findings, including evidence of a fire dated around AD64. -dd]

It was a massive fire. It started around the merchant shops near the Circus Maximus on the windy night of July 19, 64 AD. The conflagration lasted nine days and destroyed more than 60,000 buildings, including 90% of all the homes in the municipality. In its aftermath, more than two-thirds of Rome was left in charred ruins.

Angry citizens blamed the maniacal twenty-six-year old Emperor for the blaze. To exonerate himself, Nero claimed Christians were responsible instead.

Sometime thereafter, the apostle Paul, as the veritable “firebrand” of the church (pun intended), was arrested, imprisoned, and awaited execution. He would be one of many saint-scape goats who were unjustly put to death for the city-wide fire.

Knowing his death was imminent (2 Timothy 4:6-8), and that his own demise would leave a void in the life of his beloved son in the gospel, Paul penned his last inspired words from “quarantine”, not to a congregation, but to an individual. As Paul “greatly desired” (ESV) to see Timothy (2 Timothy 1:4), we also long to be in company of fellow-Christians and to worship with them in person. What did Paul say and do for Timothy that we can emulate today (2 Timothy 1:3, 5)? Note:



MIKE BENSON

16:1-2). That command of God will not change, but if members become inconsistent in their giving, or if they become unable to give because of the loss of their jobs, there could be an impact on the amount of work a church may be able to plan to do locally, in missions, and in benevolence.

Churches with huge auditoriums, many classrooms, and large gymnasiums (fellowship halls) may find these to be a “drain” on the church’s finances. Evangelism may change from being “building centered” to something more intimate and effective.

What changes will our Christian secondary schools, colleges and universities, and Schools of Preaching have to make?

How will the work of the preacher change? During the pandemic many ministers did not keep regular office hours at the church building. Sermons were delivered, not to a live audience, but into a camera. Many preachers were dressed informally and sat behind a table or desk to deliver their message. How much of this will continue in the future?

No one has the ability to look perfectly into the future and to say what will or will not be and what changes will or will not take place. I may be wrong on every point I have touched on, and no one would be happier than I if at least on some them I am completely wrong. I have no sympathy for the prophets of “gloom and doom” or for conspiracy theorists.

We may all be able to return fully to life as it was before. If we are, may we do so with a bit more humility on our part, a lot more trust in God and His word, and a greater love for all mankind, especially those of the household of faith, the blessed church of our Lord. Hopefully, during this time of quarantine all of us have learned to have more patience and to develop a more God-centered perspective on life as a whole.

In the meantime, let us drink deeply of such passages as Proverbs 3:5-7; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 6:31-34; Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:35; Romans 8:31-39; Romans 12:1-21; I Corinthians 13:1-8a; Hebrews 1:10-12 (quoted from Psalm 102:25-27); Hebrews 12:25-29; I John 2:15-17; Jude 24-25. Read these passages, absorb their message, and resolve to spend more time in God’s Book. Come to know it as well as you know the players, coaches, and statistics of your favorite sports team or the names of the entertainers of the world! **MM**

- **We can THANK God for others in the church.** *“I thank God...as I remember you...” (v. 3). We can send an email or a card and let our friends know that we’re grateful for them and for how they bless our lives.*
- **We can PRAY for our brethren in distress.** *“I remember you constantly in my prayers...” (v. 3). We can lift their names before the Father’s throne and ask for His providential care during these uncertain times.*
- **We can REMIND our fellow Christians of their devotion.** *“I am reminded of your sincere faith...” (v. 5). We can encourage and boost the hearts of who have stood strong in Christ before and help them (1 Thessalonians 5:11) to remain so now. **MM***



# GOD'S PLAN

## *for Saving Me!*

by Ken Joines

I'm cruising on the lake when in the distance I see a man's arms flailing about in an unmistakable signal that he needs help. I turn the vessel in his direction with plans to rescue him, constantly assuring him that help is on the way. Coming near, I toss the life jacket to him with instructions of how to use it. One of two things is about to happen. (1) He gladly seizes the vest and I pull him onto my boat, or (2) he refuses to be rescued and drowns.

***"I am the way,  
the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the  
Father but by me."***

**John 14:6**

I give you this scenario to establish the fact that a rescue of any kind involves two factors: a willing rescuer and a victim who wants to live.

Such is the case with the human race. God created man and placed him in a perfect place. But man listened to another voice, disobeyed, thus breaking fellowship with his loving Father. This breach is highlighted thusly in Isaiah 53:6 ESV "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Any other than a loving Father would have, at this point, written us off, zapped us, and started over. Yet, in the style of a good father, God devised a scheme to redeem mankind and—not just allow—but plead with us and urge us to return to him. He sent forth his son, who lived a perfect life, laid our sins on him, and accepted his vicarious death and the price for our salvation.

At this point, I remind us of the boat, the drowning man, and the offer of rescue. In a similar way, God did his part by offering his son, but lost humanity also has a part to play in this. We must receive the offer of salvation by conforming to the Father's commands. Simply put, you and I must with thankful hearts accept God's offer of redemption and comply with whatever he asks of us, thus restoring fellowship with him—being saved—if you please. We often correctly refer to this as God's "plan of salvation".

I invite you to come with me now as we look at what God asks of us. It is important for us to observe that when we obey God's commands, we are in no way earning our salvation. Salvation is God's free gift, but this gift is contingent on my willingness to "take hold of the life jacket and be pulled into the boat", so to speak. We do this when we obey the gospel of Christ. In the heart of every human lies a yearning for peace. Peace! There's an emptiness screaming out for fulfillment. And the Lord knows we've tried them all—New Age Crystals, Scientology, Psychic Friends Network, angels, and all kinds of religions—and still we come up empty. But many of us reading this now have discovered that a relationship with the living God is the missing piece we searched for. We desperately need to hear the call of God. We hear the call when we open and study his word. He says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28 ESV) It goes without saying that hearing this call is the first step in coming home to God. We have to know that God wants us to come home, even after making such a mess of our life. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6). In effect, he says, "If you want to go to heaven, be sure you listen to me for I am the way. So get in and follow me."

There's an awful lot of confusion about how to become a Christian. Ask the average person and you're apt to hear—among other things—"Live a good life, give to good causes, do enough good things to collect enough extra points. That should do it." Ask your parents and you may hear, "Don't worry about it; we had you christened as a little baby....that was taken care of.....you're automatically a Christian." Another may say, "Some are born Muslim, some Jewish and others Hindu. You were born Christian."

Even the churches today are of no help. Many of them just muddy the waters, saying, "Kneel down and pray, sign a card, pray the sinner's prayer." So you see, we need a clear presentation, NOT of what people or churches tell us, but of what the

Bible actually says! When you study the Bible, one of the first things you'll learn is that becoming a Christian has nothing to do with being born that way, or being christened as a baby, and that becoming a Christian is a decision you must make and no one can make that choice for you.

## WHAT TO DO?

"You see, becoming a Christian begins with an inside job where, in your heart, you begin to take fledgling steps in a thing called "faith." Not the kind where you say, "OK, I believe. now I'm saved. I'm a Christian." It is a belief and trust in a person, a Savior, the one who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). This is a bold allegation, but it was made by the only one who ever said he was God, then died, was buried and after three days, walked away! He is God in the flesh, not just a carpenter who could preach.

When we really absorb who Jesus is, when we realize that this is doing an inside job on us, transforming the very way we think, we know that becoming a Christian involves change! This is what repentance is: an about-face, a change of direction, where we admit that we need a new compass, a new direction for our life. I have seen what sin has done to my life and now I want to travel another road. This is repentance. It is along about now that if we listen carefully with our heart we can hear God saying, "My child, isn't it about time to come on home?"

When we trust Jesus by faith and come to believe that as God's Son he will save us, and when we turn away from known sin and start walking a different road, we need to come full circle and express that faith in obedience to his command. The Bible gives us two ways to express what is about to take place here: (1) Confess your faith with your mouth, and (2) be baptized with your body. It is significant that this process of conversion involves the whole person: we believe with our heart, repent with our mind, confess his sonship with

our mouth, and we're baptized with our body! Simon Peter confessed him: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) This confession solidifies my personal decision, is an inspiration to others and is a natural expression of thanks for what I'm about to receive in baptism. Simply said, it is a public affirmation that Jesus is who he claimed to be—the Son of God.

And my baptism is an act where God allows me to symbolically re-enact the death, burial and resurrection of his Son. The reason that baptism is essential before I can be forgiven is that, in effect, I'm going with Jesus into his grave. In the words of scripture, we are "baptized into his death", "buried with him", and "raised to walk with him" in a new kind of life (See Romans 6:3-6). Baptism is where my sins are washed away by his blood. To deny the necessity of baptism is to deny the very atonement of Jesus Christ! It is his blood that saves, and it is in baptism that we reach his blood in his death. It is in baptism that we "put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

Baptism was the pattern of the early church. Read about all the conversions recorded in Acts 2, 8, 10, 16 and 22. They all began with faith in Christ and they all ended with the people being baptized. Not a single exception!

Maybe it's time for you to make your decision and say, "Alright, I believe Jesus is God's Son. I am turning away from my life of sin. I want to be baptized. This is my own decision, not my parents', but mine alone. I hereby turn my life over to God and will allow him to direct me from this day forward."

What are you waiting for? **MM**



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## MM - MISSION REPORT

## GTO - Mexico Missions

*How COVID-19 Has Affected the Churches of Christ in Mexico*

By: Fernando Arroyo H.: Director of GTO missions

The churches of Christ in GTO - Mexico missions find ourselves in need to suspend worship services, this is to safeguard the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the brothers of the church of Christ. The recommendation that the federal, state, and municipal governments has given us is to stay home and keep the protocols that the Ministry of Public Health (MPH) is giving us. For this reason, several Churches of Christ have suspended the worship service for public worship and have suspended Sunday school. I inform you that there are brothers and sisters who unfortunately are very afraid at the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19; other brothers are discouraged because they cannot have contact with other brothers in the Church; some others are having problems in their faith due to the economic situation they are facing, as some have been fired from their jobs and others have been sent to rest at home without pay.

But it is not all bad news, although the COVID-19 is causing problems in health, emotions and spirit. The good news is that our God continues to work through his servants to continue sharing the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The worship service is transmitted through Facebook, Zoom, WhatsApp, and other social networks.

Thank God that by transmitting through social networks we have brothers and sisters who are living outside the country of Mexico who are connected to live broadcasts to participate in the worship service. For example, the Church of Christ in San Miguel de Allende has an average of 35 to 39 people who connect live to the broadcasts of worship on Sunday, and investigating in each home are around four to six people watching the worship service

live. So we reach an average of 160 people who are receiving spiritual food. Brothers are also connecting with us from other states, for example, from the city of Puebla, from the city of Querétaro, from the city of Cholula Puebla, from the city Ensenada, and the city of La Paz, Baja California Sur. We also have brothers who are connecting from the United States, for example, from the state of Louisiana and the last time a brother who is a truck driver was connected from the state of Kentucky.

We are receiving requests from non-Christians so that we can accept them to the Church's Facebook page so that they can receive the worship service on Sunday. During the week, Bible classes by the Skype platform are evangelizing several people.

The second good news is that there are brothers and sisters who are longing to rejoin the Church. Finally, there are brothers and sisters who are already reading the Bible with greater dedication. There are brothers and sisters who are giving of their financial resources to help the needy financially.

In the month of April 2020, the GTO mission team in Mexico baptized 10 people. To our God be the honor and glory for these souls that He has added to his kingdom.

We thank God for the life of all of you brothers and sisters of the Church of Christ in the United States because through your financial support, we continue to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Receive a hug and a holy kiss from your brother in Christ Jesus, Fernando Arroyo H, Missionary of the Church of Christ in San Miguel de Allende and Mission's director GTO - Mexico. **MM**

## ■ UPDATE ON VENEZUELA

God continues to 'open doors' for helping us send help to Venezuela! The photos of these sweet children tell the story of just how important these shipments are. The Venezuelan effort is under the umbrella of the Pegrum Church of Christ in Pegrum, Tennessee.

In March, approximately 3,750 lbs. of supplies were mailed from the Pegrum church and these children are enjoying what God is doing. This shipment brings to total sent over the past year to approximately 12 tons. We are amazed at how God is allowing

this to happen, and the growth of this work as we continue to find new people who want to help. The supplies are now being sent to 5 churches, 5 hospitals, many desperately poor neighbors, and a pediatrician and his team serving the poor in the mountains of western Venezuela. Our recipients are also resourceful and show such commitment to helping the sick, needy and those who work in the hospitals. We keep close contact and are assured all boxes have arrived safely! Due to the COVID19 and shortage of supplies, we were not able to send boxes in April, howev-

er, we were able to send some funds which our workers used to buy food from the markets before they were closed. Several fixed lunches and delivered supplies to those in the hospitals. Through the hard work of a few dedicated people at Pegrum, our supply



*There are a tremendous number of mission efforts around the world supported by churches in the south. The Magnolia Messenger is pleased to report about these works. Like the mighty Magnolia tree, which grows in seven of our states, Central America, Asia and China, the Messenger is proud to report on the "Good News" being spread around the world. -dd*

## *A Book Review by Ken Joines That Will Help the.....* **MAGNOLIA MESSENGER**

**ATTENTION:** Elders, preachers, Mission Committees, and those who love the Magnolia Messenger! Be inspired by a successful mission program spanning more than 50 years. Buy this book and all profits go to the Magnolia Messenger! Bill McDonough has been supported solely by the Sixth & Izard (now Windsong) congregation in Little Rock for 51 years. Learn from them the value of concentrating on your work and sticking with it across the years.

Several years ago, Bill published a book—essentially a memoir—titled, “THOSE WHO MAKE US WHAT WE ARE” and readily sold over 1,000 copies; these sales have repaid him the expense of publishing the book. He appreciates the Magnolia Messenger and shared with me recently that there are 1000+ copies remaining, and he will donate all proceeds from these sales to the magazine. What a blessing this will be and at the same time give readers a new appreciation for those who have devoted their entire adult lives to sharing the gospel in dangerous places. A while back Bill sent me a copy and when I

room is now full and ready for a May shipment. We are waiting for news from our shipping company regarding the availability of gas for deliveries.

The need is great and the dire situation is getting worse. Do you want to make an eternal difference serving children like those above? If so, please contact Steve Watson (706-207-9513/[steverwatson8@gmail.com](mailto:steverwatson8@gmail.com)). Please keep us in your prayers as we work in this amazing field God has called us to. **MM**

*Steve and Jane Watson*

began reading it, this material so gripped my attention that I read nothing else until I had finished.

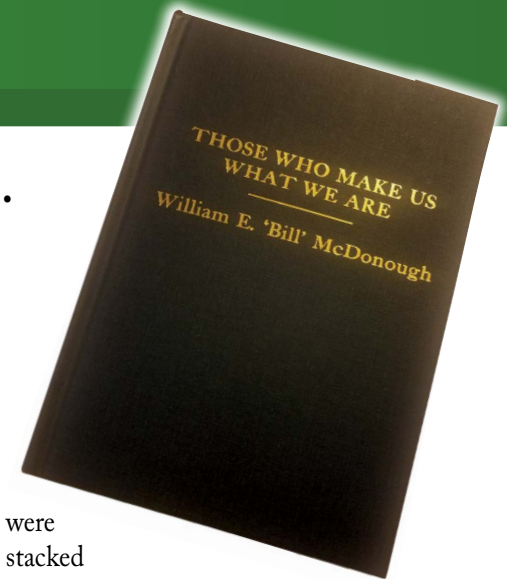
I have known a lot of missionaries. A couple of them inspired and encouraged me by their sheer determination to get the message of the gospel where it was not known. They did this at great personal cost;



even sacrifice. But I do not know of a man who has traveled farther, stayed longer, and walked into more frightening situations than Bill McDonough. His work has been concentrated in Eastern Europe's Communist

bloc nations, and Asia. But while there, he has answered calls for his service from Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Haiti, Rwanda, Japan, England, Italy, Spain, Moscow, Ethiopia, Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Romania, Ukraine, Cuba, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, to name just some. Read this book and experience the chilling stories of:

- a 50-truck convoy delivering food to help starving Christians in Poland.
- Crossing borders into Communist countries when it seemed impossible; guards pointing their AK47s and machine guns right in their face; issuing traffic fines at will.
- Obtaining legal recognition for the church in unbelievably hard places.
- Walenty Dawidow who “feared no one but God”, who was beaten, jailed, held in medieval prisons for six months on a concrete floor with only a blanket in -30F temperatures.
- Starvation so widespread that bodies



were stacked at street side to be hauled away.

■ In Hanoi, a Christian brother who had been imprisoned for 18 years, but who insisted, “No, I didn’t have it hard. Brother Nguyen had it hard when he was dragged from his house into the street and his wife and children forced to watch as they machine-gunned him.”

Recent years have found Bill devoting time to raise money to build a ship to serve the medical needs up and down the Mekong River in Cambodia, where millions live. He raised the funds and it is now staffed with Doctors and Nurses who devote two weeks at a time to help these poorest of the poor. The ship is 109 feet long, 30 feet wide with four decks, with state-of-the-art Dental operatory, ultrasound, medical lab, Pharmacy, Xray, making it the best-equipped clinic in Cambodia. These people have learned they are loved, and one result of this extensive kindness is that there are now more than 50 churches with 20 missionaries in Cambodia, along with scores of locally trained evangelists.

In no way is this a “look-what-I’ve-done” book; it needs to be in the hands of Christians in all the free world to help us appreciate what successful missions look like. Order it today for \$12 (this includes shipping) and let the profits come to rest in the Magnolia Messenger to accomplish yet another round of service to our Lord Jesus Christ. Address: Bill McDonough, P.O. Box 94038, North Little Rock, AR 72190. Email: [piqwem@aol.com](mailto:piqwem@aol.com) **MM**



# How the JUSTICE & MERCY of God Came Together

by Bill Lambert

Justice demands that every one of us live and die without God! The law of God says, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “Death” is separation from God presently and eternally. Justice requires that we must pay our sin debt, i.e., be separated from God, or someone else must pay it for us.

God possesses the qualities of infinite justice and infinite mercy in His nature. These qualities are conflicting in man, but they work in perfect harmony in God. Only God could be both totally just and totally merciful at the same time. God’s justice and mercy come together in perfect harmony and complement each other in the crucifixion of Christ. He asserted perfect justice when He sacrificed His Son to pay our sin debt. By that same sacrifice, He asserts His perfect mercy and offers forgiveness. This plan meets the demands of His law while showing mercy by forgiving those who violated His law.

The day Jesus died on the cross was the darkest of all days. But, that day was also the most wonderful day ever! You see, the crucifixion of Jesus was necessary to make our salvation possible. It is because of Christ’s death that we don’t have to pay our debt for sin; Jesus paid it for us!

We all deserve spiritual death, now and in eternity. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). Not one of us can say, “I have not sinned” (1 Jn. 1:10). Neither can we say, “I do not presently and continually sin” (1 Jn. 1:8). But, because of God’s grace, He forgave our past sins at baptism (Acts 2:38), and He continually forgives our sins, if we “walk in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7). Am I implying that you are a sinner? Yes, you are! And, so am I! Even if we did not sin by transgressing the law of God (1 Jn. 3:4), we surely sin by coming short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Amazingly, the sins of Christians who act in good faith are not even charged against them (Rom. 14:5, 23; 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:18-19). Why? Because they are being continual cleansed by the blood of Jesus. So, faithful imperfect Christians do sin, but our sins are “not unto death” (1 Jn. 5:16). Don’t misunderstand! Those who willful-

ly live in sin have no part in the benefits of the sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:26). By their rebellion, they reject Christ. Thus, they reject God’s payment for sins and must pay for their sins themselves.

How can God be a just God and not require us to pay our sin debt? That is the wonder in the wonderful grace of God! After declaring that all have sinned, Paul says, “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). He then explains how grace works. This is how God’s justice and His mercy came together. God sent His Son Jesus “as a propitiation by his blood” (Rom. 3:25). The word “propitiation” (Gk. hilasterion) denotes “a satisfactory payment.” The sacrifice of His Son on the cross was a satisfactory payment for the sins of the world!

So, Jesus loved us and died in our place! Paul says, “the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Jesus hung on that tree for us (Gal. 3:13). Even though we don’t have to pay for our sins, justice has been served. Jesus paid our debt for us!

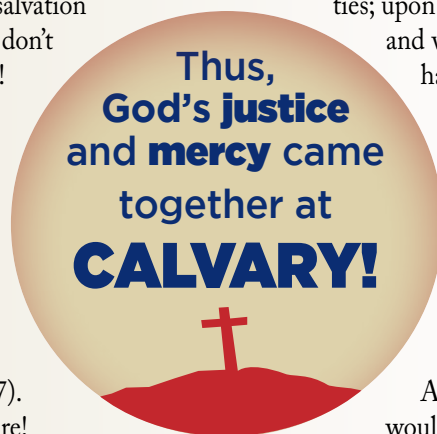
Isaiah gave a wonderful prophetic statement of this amazing grace. “Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way, and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

Paul said, “in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26). If Jesus had not died, God could not have saved Abraham, David, or us! His nature as a just God would forbid it. On the other hand, He cannot refuse forgiveness to the faithful! That would contradict His nature as a God of mercy. When He gave Jesus as the sacrificial lamb at Calvary, He perfectly served justice. When He justifies us, He extends His perfect mercy. He paid our debt and set us free. Thus, God’s justice and mercy came together at Calvary! **MM**

*(Bill Lambert is a well known preacher and teacher in our brotherhood. He is living in Searcy Arkansas. My thanks to him for this excellent article. His wife Helen has been very ill, so please be praying for her. -dd)*



Bill Lambert



## BIBLE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Continued from page 5

Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). “You see then that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:26).

Here is a proposed parallel:

Abram, believe, leave this land and go to a land I will show you, and I will bless you and make your name great and bless all the nations of the earth through you; but believe not and these blessings will not be yours.

Whoever, believe and be baptized and you will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

The next verse after Abram was told to go says, Abram went” (Romans 12:14). Nearly every time the essentiality of faith is stressed, Abram is used as an example, and he is called “the father of all who believe” (Romans 4:11). If Abram had not gone, he would have been used as an example of unbelief. So, what about those who refuse to be baptized? They too show their unbelief, and the rest of the verse tells the end of those who do not believe.

### ■ PRESENT

There is a present aspect of salvation as well. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). We need Jesus, at the right hand of God, continually interceding for us. Because even those who are saved, who walk in the light, still have sins that need to be cleansed (1 John 1:7).

The Apostle Peter, in introducing his first epistle, mentions all three aspects of salvation: past present and future.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Just as we were originally redeemed (“born again”) “by grace through faith,” “by water and the Spirit,” so we are presently being kept in grace by the power of God through a living faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We are kept saved by Jesus, “the one who died—more than that who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). The person whose “sins are covered,” the person “against whom the Lord will not count his sins” (Romans 4:6-7), is the one who “walk(s) in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had” (Romans

4:12). Walking in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham is the same as “walking in the light” (1 John 1:7) and as those “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4). People, even “saved” people who walk in darkness or “according to the flesh” have no such promises.

People who believe “once saved, always saved” generally believe one who prays for forgiveness and invites Jesus into one’s heart is forever saved, regardless of the life lived. Some, at least, say one who lives a blatantly sinful life was never saved in the first place. While that is true of some, it is not true of all. The Bible tells of some who have “fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4). You cannot fall away from where you have not been. It is difficult to understand how some can say, “You cannot fall from grace” when the Bible says explicitly some did: “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

John says repeatedly, “Believers have eternal life” (John 5:24, etc.). “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28). I love the sentiment of the song, “In Christ Alone,”

*No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand.  
‘Till he returns, or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I stand.*

There is nothing, however, except our own continued faith, to keep us from deliberately “walking out,” willfully turning from obedient faith to disobedience, from belief to unbelief. The Bible addresses that possibility: “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

Those who believe Christians cannot fall from grace think those of us who believe they can fall, believe they fall out of grace every time they sin. The Scriptures referenced above tell us, if we “walk in faith,” our sins are not counted against us (Romans 4:8, 12). If we “continually walk in the light,” our sins are continuously cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). If we “are in Christ and walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,” we are not condemned (Romans 8:1-4). Just as we are saved by grace through a living faith, so we are kept in a state of continued grace by a faithful walk.

### ■ CONCLUSION

Past. We are saved by grace through faith and our sins are forgiven at the time of our baptism (Acts 22:16). Present. As we continuously walk in the light, Christ’s blood continually cleanses us of sin, keeping us in a state of grace. Future. When Christ comes again or calls us home in death, he will usher us into the place he has prepared for us to live with him and the Father forever (John 12:1-2). **MM**





# the i-World

## we're living in...

by Mark Bridges

Several years ago in Bible class we started talking about today's technology and how it has changed our lives. The **iPhone, iPad, iMac, and iPod** have changed the world, and it was pointed out these devices all start with the letter I.

In Simon Sinek's book *"Start with Why"* he tells the story of two young men that saw the power of government and corporations as the enemy, not because they were big, but because they squashed the spirit of the individual. He writes, *"they imagined a world in which an individual had a voice - to give the individual the power to stand up to the established power - giving other individuals the ability to avoid having to play by the rules of monopolistic forces."*

Apple computer was started with this thought in mind: giving the individual the power. This may be good for some things, but...

I'm an Apple computer fan, and made a living with one for almost 30 years. Those statements made me stop and consider what the "I" really stands for and the influence they have on the world.

Adam and Eve had instruction from God, the established power, but the serpent planted a seed that gave them a voice.

• *Genesis 3:3-5 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'* Then the serpent said to the woman, *"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

This was the beginning of the individual acting as if "it's about what I want, and not living by the rules."

• *Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

"Right in our own eyes" sounds like where we are today! The authority of God's laws have been challenged by the individual's desire to please ourselves and do things our way: the way that seems right to us.

• *Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

The Bible is full of illustrations of people denying themselves to obey God's will. Obedience is what God desires from us. His own son Jesus was the ultimate example, being sacrificed on the cross so we could be reconciled to God through his blood. We as Chris-

tians are to live in obedient service and to sacrifice our lives in his service.

• *2 Corinthians 5:15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

• *Philippians 2:7-8 "He took the form of a bondservant."*

This thought of the individual avoiding playing by the rules has led us to making our own rules. The individual chooses how to live, disregarding the will God has given us through his Holy Scripture, and leaning on his own understanding or interpretation of the rules.

The world is telling, selling, promoting, reporting, entertaining and even preaching we're free to express our individual rights, seek your own way or life style and that God will except it, just because He loves us and Jesus died for us.

The scriptures give us the way God will except, but there's a cost: denying ourselves because we desire to serve him his way. And that's a conflict with the world's view and Satan's desire.

• *1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

• *Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

• *Ephesians 2:1,2 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world*

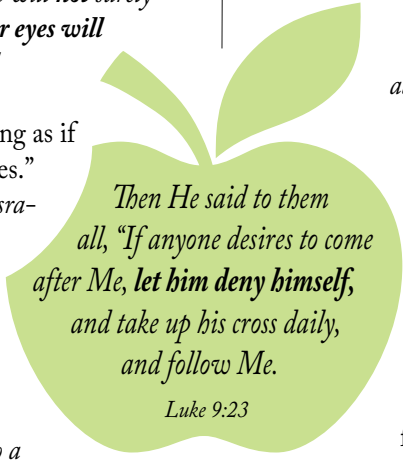
• *Romans 2:8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.*

Peter, Paul, and James began some of their epistles with this statement: "a bond servant of God." These were men who denied themselves; choosing to obeyed the gospel and served God from the heart. Those letters encourage us today as bond servants ourselves to obey and submit to his will.

In Hale'iwa, Hawaii there is an apparel store that uses this logo. Consider where the I is placed.



• *John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.* **MM**



Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Luke 9:23

# JESUS & BAPTISM

by Dennis Doughty

I believe in Jesus, I really do! He is my example of how to live, and my authority in matters of faith and salvation.

So, my understanding about the subject of baptism begins and ends with Jesus. Here is what I see when I look at the life and teachings of Jesus on the important subject of baptism.



First, Jesus was Baptized. When he was thirty years old Jesus was ready to begin his public ministry, but first, he had something he needed to do (see Luke 3:21-23). Traveling many miles on foot he went to the Jordon River where John is baptizing. His cousin at first tried "to prevent him." But Jesus asks him to "permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." We know the famous scene as Jesus was lifted up out of the water of baptism, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and sat upon him. Then God spoke those famous words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17).

Jesus knew the plan of God to save man involved baptism, so now he was leading the way, "doing the right thing" in fulfilling all righteousness. If Jesus had never been baptized, there might be a point to be made that baptism was not necessary. But Jesus' example here makes quite the bold statement to the contrary.

Second, Jesus Practiced Baptism. We all know of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, which John "the baptist" immersed under the waters of the Jordan river. But did you know this: just as John was being thrown into prison, "Jesus came into the land of Judea, and here he was spending time with them and baptizing" (John 3:22-24). Soon the Pharisees begin to hear "that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were" (John 4:1, 2).

Did the ministry of Jesus' baptize more than John's ministry? It appears so. It seems clear that baptism was a part of Jesus' public ministry along with his teaching and healing. Had Jesus never practiced baptism there might be a point to be made that baptism is not that important today. But Jesus' practice while here on earth

makes quite the bold statement to the contrary.

Third, Jesus Taught Baptism. When Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," came to Jesus to be taught, Jesus told him "unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:1-5). What water birth? Jesus, having been baptized in water, and baptizing others in water, what other water could he be referring to than to the water of baptism? After all, the word "baptize" means to be "immersed in water." When he appeared to his apostles just before his ascension, He instructed them to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:15,16).

Jesus is quite emphatic about baptism; "must," "unless, and "has been baptized," are words which point out the strength of Jesus' teaching about the subject. Had Jesus never given us this strong teaching about baptism, there might be a point to be made that baptism is not necessary for our salvation. But Jesus' teaching

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*"My understanding about  
the subject of baptism begins  
and ends with Jesus"*

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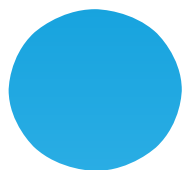
on the subject makes quite the bold statement to the contrary.

The Conclusion: The apostles were witnesses of Jesus baptism (Acts 1:21), they helped baptize many while with Jesus (John 4:2), and then taught the necessity of baptism for salvation as instructed by Jesus (Acts 2:38, 10:48, Romans 6:1-6, 1 Peter 3:21). Had Jesus not been baptized, not practiced baptism, nor taught baptism, and had his apostles not witnessed, practiced and taught baptism, there might be a point to be made that baptism is not a part of the gospel plan of salvation. But the example and teaching of Jesus makes quite the bold statement to the contrary!

I believe in Jesus. I really do! Do you? **MM**



**YOU  
CAN  
NOT  
STEAL  
MY**



by **Greg Ledbetter**

On April 3rd, 2020, the Governor of Mississippi issued a stay-at-home order. Everything except things deemed essential were immediately shut down. Just like that our world was turned upside down. For a while, we thought this might just be temporary, but as the weeks passed by, we quickly realized this would be the new normal. We started getting the news that we didn't want to hear. Schools would be closed for the rest of the school year. What? All sports would be canceled midsea-



**Greg Ledbetter**  
gregledbetter@yahoo.com

*Do not sorrow, for the joy of the  
Lord is your strength.*

*Nehemiah 8:10*

son. But what about my senior season? Church summer camps spread the word that they are not going to be in session this year. Wait, that's my favorite time of the year. What about my friends? News came that graduations would be postponed if they even happened at all. I have waited 12 years for this. This is not fair.

Moms and dads are telling their children birthdays would no longer be spent with their friends but with them instead. Who wants to spend their birthday with their parents? That's no fun. The bad news keeps coming in, and it is very disappointing and even depressing. We begin to tell ourselves there is no hope. In all of this, we can still have joy.

Yes, even in the most challenging circumstances, we can have joy. When we were young kids, we sang the song, I have the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart. The second verse, I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart. The last verse, and if the devil doesn't like it, he can sit on a tack, sit on a tack. We need to realize that Satan is trying to steal our joy, and as far as I am concerned, he can sit on a tack.

We need first to understand what joy is before we can have it. Joy and happiness are both emotions, but they function differently. Happiness is a bubbly, superficial, and conditional feeling that comes and goes. Joy is a deep-seated and enduring affection that endures. That is why we can wake up sad or happy, while in Christ, always have joy. For example, when my father passed away, I was at the funeral home, and I had mixed feelings. I was sad because I missed and would miss my father, but I had joy knowing he died in the Lord.

Ezra says in Nehemiah 8:10 Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. We have to realize that our only source of joy comes from our creator God. How do we get in touch with

the joy that God offers us? The answer to finding pure joy is living with Jesus. "...and in Christ you have been brought to fullness" (Colossians 2:10)

We are complete when we are in Jesus. He's the only one who can fully satisfy your soul. Because of that, we can have joy. Not just any joy, but His joy. Joy that brings us true life! That is what God desires! It brings Him glory to see you fully alive and living in Him. It's what He created you for. You will not find greater joy.

I want to leave you with some practical steps, young people, that helped me find true joy in God.

## 1 Ask yourself, 'Where is my security? What do I hold higher than God?'

It's a tough question to ask yourself. Remember, though, God only wants what is right for you, and sometimes that means going through something that is temporarily painful. But it is completely worth it. Be honest with yourself. Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose".

## 2 Pray

We need to talk to God. We need to be honest with Him. When we do, we start to feel a sense of freedom from our anxiety. This is what God does. He is full of grace and wants to restore us to him. He can help you put Him back at your center. You then need to listen to him. When we are honest, trust, and obey him, we can start to find God's joy and not the world's.

## 3 We need to practice thankfulness

We can be grateful. Open your eyes to what's around you and thank God for it. When we do this, it can bring great joy to our lives. We sing the song, "Count Your Many Blessings, Name Them One by One". Maybe we can start here because no matter where you are in life, you can find a blessing.

We have many choices to make in life. Some decisions are made for you. I am genuinely sorry for those who are missing out on monumental things in their lives because of other people's choices. But there is a choice that we can make that no one can steal, and that is joy. We find true happiness in our walk with God. The less we are concerned with our happiness and the more we are concerned with God, we will find pure joy. My challenge to you is this: for you to aim to find joy in Heaven, and I am convinced you will find happiness on Earth. If you aim to find joy on Earth, you will not find happiness on Earth or in Heaven. Don't let Satan steal your joy. **MM**

# What is this Sinner's Prayer?

I'm sure you have by now seen the commercial by Franklin Graham, where he encourages viewers to pray a version of the "Sinner's Prayer." This is unfortunate. When one has a unique opportunity to teach people the Gospel, he needs to simply teach the Gospel.

The "Sinner's Prayer" is never found in the New Testament. Indeed, in every specific case of conversion in the book of Acts, people were baptized.

The case of Saul is of particular interest. In Acts chapters 9, 22, and 26, his conversion is described in detail. Perhaps you have heard it said that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus.

That is not true. Jesus told him to go into the city, and it would be told to him what he must do. Paul himself describes his situation further in chapters 22 and 26. When Ananias came to him, he found a man who had been in fasting and prayer for three days and nights. If Saul was saved when Ananias found him, then he was the most miserable saved person in history!



David Wayne Hester  
dhester@faulkner.edu

Ananias addressed him as "Brother Saul;" yet, he was not a brother in Christ at that moment. Remember that in Acts 2, Peter addressed those at Pentecost as "brethren;" yet, he had not begun to preach yet. How were they brethren? They were fellow Jews. That is the same way in which Ananias was able to call Saul "brother."

Paul tells us what Ananias said. Saul was a believer in Jesus, had demonstrated his penitence, and had confessed Jesus as Lord. What did Ananias tell him? "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). I submit to you that this is the one thing that so many people lack today--baptism for the purpose of salvation! When one reads Romans 6:1-18, he sees that baptism is inextricably entwined with salvation.

The person who believes in Jesus as the risen Lord, turns from sins in repentance, and confesses Christ as God's Son is ready for baptism into Christ for forgiveness. When he does this, God adds him at that moment to the church. **MM**

**HAVE YOU OBEYED THE GOSPEL?**



# The CURSE of the TREE

Genesis 1–6

by Danny Dodd

The creation narrative of the Bible is fascinating on numerous levels. Just the thought of God in six days bringing about the incredible world in which we live simply by speaking it demonstrates his unfathomable power. The intricacies; the details; how the creation is held together and works is a wonderful topic all its own.

So are humans. Central to the narrative of Genesis is God's relationship with those he created in his own image—man and woman—starting, of course, with Adam and Eve. God created us to have dominion over the rest of his creation (created just a little lower than the angels according to the Psalmist in 8:4–6; also Hebrews 2:6–8). From the beginning God's ideal was to have a special relationship with us. Adam and Eve experienced the idyllic garden life—innocent and carefree. The garden was fashioned to sustain them and for their enjoyment. It offered them the perfect situation in which to commune closely with the Creator. No one should have asked for more, but they did. Of course, they did. And this then—the result of them wanting more—becomes the central narrative of the entire Bible. It is all about the fall and redemption of man. It is the curse of the tree.

## ■ Become like a god

This story is just the first of many in human history that demonstrates our tendency to grasp for more and how we can be manipulated and deceived into selling out to possess it. Satan exploits human weakness in the garden for the first, but certainly not last time. Who doesn't want to become like a god? Once Eve submitted, and then Adam by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, everything immediately changed forever.

In fact, they did become like a god in some ways (Genesis 3:22). By eating the fruit they entered into the tension between good and evil, but unlike God were not adequately prepared to handle it. Since that moment we remain securely within that tension doing battle with the same “devil's schemes” as we wrestle “not against flesh and blood,” but “against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:11–12). The same desire that was within first Eve and then Adam to become like a god resides in us. After all this time, we still want more, which allows Satan to exploit and manipulate us just as he did them. Sin still is “crouching” at our door, “desiring to have” us (Genesis 4:7) It is the curse of the tree, which remains ever with us.

*"From the beginning God's ideal was to have a special relationship with us."*

## ■ The Curse's Effects

Immediately the world felt the effects of Adam and Eve's actions. Immediately they felt the shame of their nakedness. Innocence was lost. They became fearful, hiding from God. Pain entered the world for the first time. These three alone—shame, fear and pain—continue to do great damage to God's creation, but there was more.

All of creation was specifically cursed—animals, man, woman, and the earth itself. Women were put in a submissive role to man—a consequence that continues to create conflict. Men were sentenced to sweat and hard labor. The ground itself was cursed—from the beauty of Eden to thorns and thistles!

And then there is death—the ultimate, horrible result of Adam and Eve's decision. Death came by murder after the garden and death continues to come in all shapes and forms to claim us. The curse of the tree! We wanted more and we got it, but it was more than we ever needed; more than we ever bargained for; and much more than we could ever handle. We were not created for this.

The Genesis story quickly reveals it—jealousy, murder, and evil of all sorts followed man's banishment from the garden. Eventually it reached critical mass, in that all we thought about continuously was evil. The desire for more totally consumed. The earth went from calling “on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26) to being destroyed by a flood due to completely forgetting the Lord. God had to reset. The effects of the curse were overwhelming.

## ■ God's Covenants

It would not be the last time God reset. That same deceptive serpent would eventually be crushed (as foretold very early—Genesis 3:15) by a God who became like a man on another tree. He lifted the curse with death the last enemy still to be eradicated when he returns to take us back to the beginning—as God will once again dwell with us (Revelation 21:1–4).

Even with the direction of this story showing man moving away from God, He never moved away from us. His covenant with Noah simply foreshadowed the one he made with Abraham, which itself foreshadowed the one we enjoy now in Christ Jesus. This is The Story within the story. **MM**

# SAM'S

# Journey

by Les Ferguson, Sr.

This "Journey" is about Sam Lawrence, a 23-year-old young man who obeyed the gospel on May 20, 2019, and is now a member of the South Huntington church of Christ in Kosciusko, MS. Sam is an Account Manager with Tow Works, a software company that does automated voyage planning systems for river traffic.

Sam graduated from Kosciusko High School as a typical young man, growing up without much emphasis on God. He attended Holmes Community College, graduating with an Associate's Degree. During this period he worked part-time with Sherwin Williams paint store, where he met another employee named Will Nichols, who would have a major impact later on in his life.

Sam decided to enter Mississippi State University as a pre-med student. He soon realized he had no idea of what he ultimately wanted to do. He found himself caught up in living an ungodly life style. His time at Mississippi State lasted only one year, 2017-2018. He dropped out of college and began working on the farm with his brother. Not long after, he was offered a job managing a liquor store, and accepted it.

All the while, he was still pursuing a life with a downward spiral. God was on the bottom of the list of things he wanted to talk about. Any effort made by anyone to engage him in conversation about the Lord made him very uncomfortable. But about this time, he met a young lady who was much more spiritual-minded than he. As they saw each other from time-to-time, she would make little comments about Jesus. His awareness of Jesus was slow. It was a small beginning, but it was a beginning.

Sam said, "Every now and then I had to deal with bouts of depression and feelings of anxiety." One evening in his room he logged onto a web site focusing on depression and anxiety, and as he listened and read, one line really caught his attention. It said something to the effect that if you were feeling depressed and anxious, you probably were "too far away from God." Sam admitted, "That really got my attention because God was on the bottom of my list." That night he made a decision to download a Bible app. He read through several books of the Bible, but there was a lot he did not understand. He made some notes and began to think on them.

As time passed and his journey continued, he became convicted

that what he was doing and how he was living was not okay. One night when he couldn't sleep, he began to think "maybe there is something to all this Bible stuff." From what few sermons he had heard, they emphasized that God is love, so he thought maybe he was okay. His journey led him to listen to some more sermons over the internet. There was one particular sermon with a "hard-hitting message." What the preacher stated was just how Sam was living. Then the preacher made two statements that really got his attention. The first one was "this is who you are," referring to that ungodly life style. The second statement was "this is what you need," referring to Jesus. Those two statements took his excuses away.

He knew he was in trouble. He had been trying to do better.

He would leave sin for a little while and then come right back to it. He read a lot. He prayed. There was lots of confusion. He learned that emotions will fool you. So he talked to the one person who would talk about the Bible with him, Mrs. Shaw Rushton.

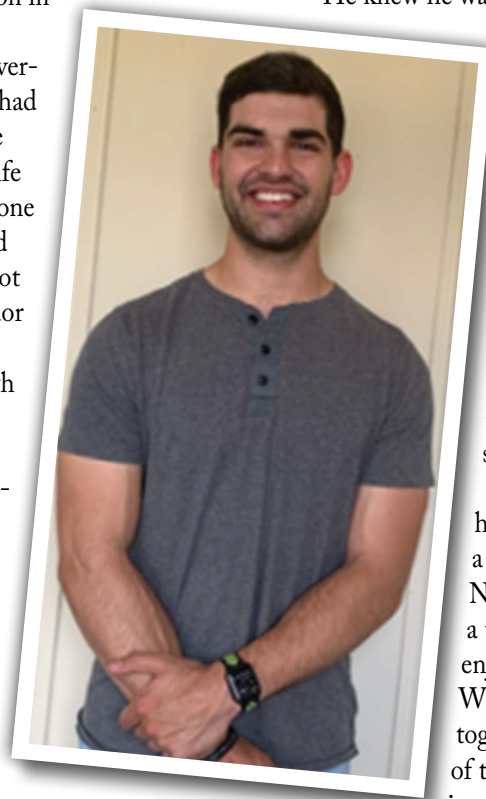
Ultimately, he realized he was just coasting. He made the decision to change his circle of friends. So long story short, he accepted a job with Tow Works. It was a much better environment than the liquor store, and it helped him to grow.

Now his prayer was for someone to help him in understanding the Bible, and to find a good church. Out of the blue one day, Will Nichols (from Sherwin Williams) sent him a text. It was a picture of some food they had enjoyed when they worked together at Sherwin Williams. That led to them talking and getting together to work out. Will Nichols is a member of the South Huntington church of Christ and is actively involved, especially with the youth.

Of course they talked about the Bible and about church. When Sam found out that Will was talking about the church of Christ, his thought was "they are weird." He had been told "that is the group that does not use an instrument in their singing."

Even though he had some negative thoughts, his friendship with Will Nichols led him to agree to attend a worship service with him. He was greeted warmly and accepted as an individual with worth. That first visit led to another and soon he was reg-

*Continued on page 27*

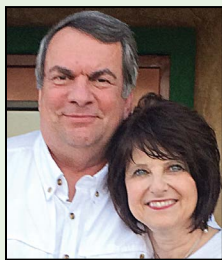






## DOUG GREENWAY RETIRES

By Ken Joines



For the past 17 years, Doug Greenway has served the West Main church in Tupelo as pulpit preacher. In the Spring of 2019 he gave his elders an 18-month notice and at the end of February this year, Doug officially retired and is succeeded by Kerry Williams. He plans to remain at West Main—where he and his wife Vickie will serve on the teaching rotation—while filling in for churches within driving distance of Tupelo. He plans to write a weekly blog on grieving, and this Fall offer a Grief Support group. During these years I've known Doug rather closely since my daughter, Jennifer and husband Robin Enochs worship at West Main.

Born in Paragould, AR, Doug holds a Bachelor's degree (Elementary Ed) and Master's (Biblical Studies) from Harding University, a Master's (Ed. & Admin.) from Southern Miss, and a Master's in Family Counseling from Freed-Hardeman University. He has served just three churches throughout his career: Ocean Springs, MS (5 years), Boonville, MS (21 years), and Tupelo. Doug's wife, Jamie, died of Multiple Myeloma in 2006. A year-and-a-half later he and Vickie were married. Vickie retired in 2010 after 31 years teaching accounting.

I'm writing this to let churches know that Doug is now available for preaching appointments. I can personally attest to the fact that he is a good, solid preacher of the Word. Here are the numbers where he can be reached: Cell # 662-523-5858; email: doug\_greenway@yahoo.com **MM**

## New Minister for West Main in Tupelo

On March 1st, 2020, Kerry Williams began his work with the West Main congregation in Tupelo as the new Pulpit Minister. Kerry also serves as the Dean of Graduate Studies for Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas, and as Director of the Tahoe Family Encampment (a week long family camp in Lake Tahoe, California). He formerly served as the Pulpit Minister for the Waterford Church of Christ in Waterford, Michigan. He has preached for 28 years, serving congregations in Alabama, Texas, and Arkansas, and has taught for both public and private colleges. He and his wife, Lenora have been married for 28 years, and have three grown children: Reann Wear and her husband Josh of Muscles Shoals, Alabama; Reagan Chrisco and her husband, Count, of Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Seth Williams who is currently attending Freed-Hardeman in pursuit of a Bible degree. **MM**



## PREACHER SEARCH

### ● Archibald Church of Christ

Minister needed: Archibald church of Christ located in rural north-east Louisiana. Sound congregation with 2 elders, 5 deacons, and average attendance around 70. Several young couples and children. Active congregation with several outreach programs. Competitive salary with a 3 BR 2 Bath parsonage included.

**Contact: Bobby Dan Free at 318-331-7946.**

### ● Pine Grove Church of Christ

Full-time preacher needed for congregation of 110 members, located approximately 5 miles west of Fulton, MS, off 4-lane Highway 25 north. Congregation made up of ages from infant to 90 years. They have 3 elders, 4 deacons and a 3-bedroom, 2-bath house, that has just been completely renovated. Located within 1/4 mile of the church building. Salary negotiable.

**Contact: Steve Johnson 662 687-0825.**

### ● Tiptersville Church of Christ

Tiptersville, Mississippi (five miles south of Walnut); Congregation of 40 in need of a full-time preacher. Congregation has elders and deacons and a very nice home. **Contact: Donnie Green, 662-837-0568.**

### ● Coffeetown Church of Christ

Searching for a minister. A congregation of 45-60 people. A 3-bedroom 2-bath house is provided and also has a storage building. House is adjacent to the church building.

**Contact: Jim Peters 662-675-8623 or John Allen 662-473-8702**

### ● Boxwood Church of Christ

Full-time preacher needed for rural congregation in Southwest Louisiana. Boxwood Church of Christ is located 10 miles south of Merryville, Louisiana, in the Bivens community. We are a long-time established country church with loving members. 20-25 in attendance each week. Must be willing to work in the community and help teach classes. 3-bedroom/2-bath house provided. Salary negotiable. **Send resume to: Boxwood Church of Christ c/o Wesley Jeans 339 Ruel Franks Road Merryville, LA 70653 337-825-6575**

### ● Meridian Church of Christ

Located in Meridian, MS. In search of a full-time minister. The Meridian church is a warm, welcoming congregation composed of 60-75 active members. The church is served by two elders and four deacons.

It is our aim to honor God and His Son and to serve Him in accordance with His holy word. We are searching for someone to share, in a vital way, that endeavor. Please submit a resume' along with two audio/video sermons to: Meridian church of Christ, PO Box 3476, Meridian, MS 39303-3476 or E-mail to one or both of the following: **Andy Duncan (Elder), hadunca62@gmail.com or Tom Fair(Elder), htfair1@gmail.com.**

# News, Notes & Information

## PERSONAL WORKERS' SEMINAR

IT IS A JOY TO ONCE AGAIN host a Personal Workers' Seminar on Techniques at the Cecil May, Jr. Academic Building on the campus of Magnolia Bible Center in Kosciusko, MS.

The seminar will be held on Friday, October 16, from 10:00 a.m. till Noon and offers a free lunch for anyone attending with us. I hope this pandemic will be under control by October and allow us to host this Personal Workers' Seminar this year of 2020.



Robert Rawson

I WILL PRESENT conversation techniques, which benefit the personal worker as biblical studies are sought with friends and fellow citizens of any community. Of course, a pandemic time may hinder us doing personal work in the homes, but the use of the internet system for this good work will be discussed.

There are many more attitudes which we as Personal Workers encounter; let's get together and share some techniques which help out the people in this Personal Workers' Seminar.

Contact: Robert Rawson, 662-457-2468 **MM**

**The world starts  
next door.**  
**Let's reach your neighbors!**



**September** – Are We All Going to the Same Place, Just Taking Different Roads?

**October** – Taking Care or Taking Advantage?

**November** – God's Love in Four Dimensions

**December** – A New You in the New Year

Also, reach all new movers in your area.

**Interested? Contact us or visit our website!**

[matt@housetohouse.com](mailto:matt@housetohouse.com) | [get.housetohouse.com](http://get.housetohouse.com)



## READERS' RESPONSE

*Reasons Why We Continue Publishing the Magnolia Messenger*

■ We enjoy MM very much. This is a good work to help others know Christ. (James Pace, Winona, MS)

■ Sorry about the loss of Bro. Franks. I enjoy the Messenger immensely. (John K. Wills, Owingsville, KY)

■ Thank you for continuing your hard work for the MM. (Bonnie Strickland, Brandon, MS)

■ All our members receive it and always look forward to it. We appreciate all the hard work everyone puts forth and we say thanks. (John Purdy, Coffeeville, MS)

■ Dear Brethren,

I was telling my good friend about the Magnolia Messenger, what a wonderful and edifying brotherhood publication that's published quarterly. She told me that she would love to receive the magazine. Thank you. Yours in Christ. (Michael Hall, Galveston, KY)

■ Thank you for the work that you do for the cause of Christ and His church!!! (John Lee, Warner Robins, GA)

■ I extend my greetings to the Franks family and your new editor, Dennis Doughty. Like many, I am pleased that the MM will remain in publication following the tragic passing of both Al and Paul Franks. I was blessed to have known both of those fine men.

I am hopeful that you may have some extra copies of the spring 2018 issues on hand. I'd like three or four if they are available. If they aren't available, I understand. I should've requested these issues two years ago I know. (Jim Womack, Montgomery, AL)

■ Dear Magnolia Messenger

I would like to thank you for sending me your magazine. I always enjoy receiving it and doing the Question Box. There are always articles I find to be very good... You are in my prayers and God bless. Your brother in Christ, (James Bricker, St Petersburg, FL)

■ I just want to say I was so sorry to hear about Brother Al's accident and passing. I will surely miss all his good lessons in the MM. I will pray that God will bless and comfort all of you in this time of sorrow. I look forward to receiving the MM every time. Thank you so very much... Many thanks again for the MM and God bless. Everyone is my prayers.

(Jimmy Grubbs, Seneca, SC)

■ We also appreciate the ongoing publishing of the MM and especially Dennis Doughty, the present Editor. We continue to pray for June and Glenda in the loss of Al and Paul. We love the "Good News" paper and thankful that it can continue to be published. (John & Beth Pigg, Ridgeland, MS)

■ Dear June and Glenda,

I don't have words to tell you how sorry I am for your loss. I read so much of Mr. Al Franks' work, I felt like I knew him. He was great at encouraging people. His writings were always inspirational. June, I can't imagine losing my mate and son in such a short time. My prayers are with you both. P.S. I am thankful the paper will continue. (Barbara Baker, Hohenwald, TN)

**Due to the COVID19 Situation two large gatherings have announced their postponement of events;**

**Harding University Lectureship**  
have been postponed until next year's date of  
September 26-29, 2021.

The **PTP** directors received final notice that they will not be able to have  
PTP in the Sevierville Convention Center this year.  
They will continue to have online material available.



# IN Tribute:

*"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." Revelation 14:13*

## ● Dr. John Simpson

*Dr. John Simpson died this past April 14 at the age of 94. He was a long-time preacher in the Memphis area and wrote many articles over the years for the Magnolia Messenger. I did not know Dr. Simpson personally, but have asked his long-time friend Don Green, who I have known for many years, to pay tribute to this great preacher.*  
-dd

Here are some things I remember about Brother Simpson and family. He has a wonderful wife, Dorothy, and three daughters. I heard Dorothy encouraged John to preach the Gospel when they lived in Arkansas. He was working as a printer at the time.

He served in the Navy during World War II and afterwards attended Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas. He was a graduate of Harding Graduate School in Memphis and received his Doctor of Ministry from Louisville Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

After graduation John preached in several places in Arkansas until coming to Memphis, TN, to work with the East Frayser Church of Christ. We were a growing congregation. I think around seven



hundred members of the church worshiped together. We grew and nearly filled the large auditorium of 1,000 seats. We added at the time John was with us a large fellowship hall, which was also used by the community for voting and recreation. There is a stone on the front of the addition telling about the hall being built and the history.

Brother John Simpson, Dorothy, and family worked with East Frayser for thirteen years as I recall. John was very effective on "What is Your Faith?" TV program in the Memphis and west TN. area. It was a panel of speakers from several religious groups in Memphis and the listeners would ask the panel questions. John always gave a Bible answer to the questions.

John not only preached, but he would visit in the homes of prospective members. I recall being present once when he visited Orville Snow. Orville had been attending and was retired from the US Navy in Millington, Tennessee. John asked Orville, "don't you think it is time that you were baptized?" Orville replied, "lets go! "

John spent a lot of time in his office at 2285 Frayser Blvd. But unlike other preachers, he would also study with others how to become a New Testament Christian. Others will tell you what effect John Simpson and family had on their service to God Almighty and Jesus Christ the Lord of his Kingdom. Of those of us who knew them, we will not forget John, nor will we forget his faithful service to God. **MM**

## ● Nancy Jane Kilpatrick

Nancy Jane Kilpatrick, 78, left her wheelchair behind and walked through Heaven's gate Monday, March 9, 2020, at her home in Tupelo, Mississippi. She was born October 8, 1941, to Will and Estle Kilpatrick in Baldwyn, Mississippi.

Shortly before her second birthday, Nancy contracted polio which would take much of the use of her legs and eventually force her into a wheelchair for the remainder of her life. Her mother was determined that she would be educated and independent and able to take care of herself.

She graduated from Baldwyn High School in 1959 as the Salutatorian, and after attending Northeast Mississippi Community (then called Junior) College, continued her education at the University of Mississippi where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Accounting. She worked as a Certified Public Accountant for Nail McKinney Professional Association for over 40 years, retiring in 2014.

Nancy was a faithful member of the West Main church of Christ

where she taught the Wednesday night four-year-old class for several decades. She participated in every activity that came her way, including Lads-to-Leaders, supporting missions in Honduras and Russia, visiting others, fellowship functions, and always supporting her church family in their activities, especially the youth. Her faith in God and knowledge of the Bible made her a shining example to everyone.



Nancy was an avid Ole Miss Rebel who had been a football season ticket holder and one of their most loyal fans for the last 20 years. She was preceded in death by her parents and several half-siblings and her beloved dog and companion, Dixie, who died one day earlier. She leaves behind many beloved friends who considered her family.

A celebration of her life took place Friday, March 13, 2020, at the West Main church of Christ, Tupelo, with Minister Doug Greenway officiating. **MM**

### “...it is appointed for men to die...”

Even though we know and understand that portion of Hebrews 9:27 quoted above, we were still saddened to hear of the recent death of **Gordon Gentry**. He passed from this life on April 17, 2020, at the age of 74. A graveside service was held on April 20, in Pontotoc, Mississippi.



**Gordon** retired as a Major in the United States Air Force.

He served the N. Brandon Church of Christ in Brandon, Mississippi, as their preacher for a number of years. In 1989 he became the minister of the Pontotoc Church of Christ. He continued to assist with the preaching until his passing. In the midst of his service as a preacher, he also became associated with Magnolia Bible College. In addition to taking classes, he especially blessed MBC with his technical expertise in the world of computers.

**Gordon** was also a friend of Sardis Lake Christian Camp. He and I had the privilege of serving as co-counselors for several camp sessions. I saw a side of Gordon which I came to love and appreciate. Those were fun days and nights.

**“Precious Memories! How they linger!”** A good man has gone on to his reward. He is missed. Our love and sympathy to his wife, **Martha**, and all the rest of his family. **MM**

*Les Ferguson, Sr.*

### ● Carole Childers

*Written by her beloved husband, Tom Childers:*

Carole Childers, the queen of our home, the undeniable energy and personality of almost 56 years of marriage, my sweetie pie, the mother of our four children, Nana to our seven grandchildren (eight, counting our grand-daughter-in-law), the epitome of a preacher's wife, a teachers of babies, a faithful exercise instructor and encourager of senior women, a gracious lady and national president of the Freed-Hardeman University Associates, and the voice of FHU for many years who said thousands of times, “Freed-Hardeman University. How may I direct your call” – that voice is now silent.

Carole has fought the good fight, she has finished the race, she has kept the faith. She has died in faith; she has gone to her real homeland and to a better country. Her new address is in that heavenly city prepared by God.

Carole is now with the Lord which is far better than anything this life can offer. While cancer was destroying her outer self, she was renewed day by day. Her light momentary affliction paved the way for eternal glory. As she watched cancer destroy her earthly home, she did not lose heart, for she knew she had a building from God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. She was of good courage for she would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Her life was controlled by the love of Christ who died for all and was raised for her eternal salvation.

Our three children, Leah Beaver, Jenny Johnson, and Tim Childers, and I were at her bed side where she died peacefully. Our son-in-law, Rob Johnson, was also with us. “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (Prov. 31:28-30). **MM**



### ● Dorothy “Dotsy” Downs

Dorothy “Dotsy” Downs, 80, of DeRidder, Louisiana, passed from this life on Sunday May 24, 2020. Dotsy was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, but moved to DeRidder when she was fifteen years old. It was in DeRidder she met the love of her life, James “Jimmy” Downs. Dotsy and Jimmy were married on December 5, 1958 and had celebrated 61 years together at the time of her passing. Dotsy helped convert Jimmy to New Testament Christianity. They both had a great love for the church. Dotsy and Jimmy also loved the work of “The Magnolia Messenger” and were very supportive of the Messenger through many years.



We extend our deepest sympathy to her beloved husband, Jimmy, daughter, Jennifer Rodrigue (Clay), son, David (Melody), and two precious grandchildren, Cayley Rodrigue and grandson, Jayden James, “JJ” Downs, also a special cousin, June Franks, Kosciusko, MS. **MM**  
*(I was blessed to be that special cousin)*

• • • •

*What does the future hold,  
How often I ask myself,  
What is my main goal,  
How much of my life is left?*

*Here on earth does it really count  
If I am happy or sad,  
Or have money—a great amount!  
If I keep company that is bad?*

*The pleasures of earth are all around,  
And Satan promises so much.  
All of this I must turn down,  
For a future with One who is Just.*

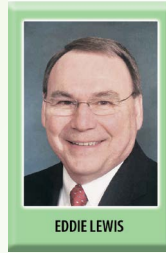
*When at last I do grow old,  
My body is tired and bent with years,  
And death comes claiming all but my soul,  
Will I be happy or have haunting fears?*

*I close my eyes the last time,  
I have seen the last setting sun.  
I am in the hands of One who is kind,  
Will He say to me----“Well done?”*

*Written by Dotsy in September 16, 1958*



# Visiting among Churches in north Mississippi



EDDIE LEWIS

*By Eddie Lewis, Missionary to North Mississippi, 9423 Laurel Hill, Olive Branch, MS 38654. E-mail: lewis7946@gmail.com*

## January through March 2020

**by Eddie Lewis**

*I appreciate so much the opportunity to inform you about my mission work among the churches in North Mississippi. I appreciate the Germantown church of Christ sponsoring me the last seven years in this ministry. This report covers the months of January through March. During this time, I got to speak at five churches including serving as an interim for Coffeerville and Pine Grove near Fulton, MS and visiting with two other churches.*

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to stop my visits and shelter at home for the last two Sundays in this quarter. At the time of this writing, I will not be visiting or speaking at any churches through the end of April and possibly beyond. I pray that God will bless you and your family during this time.

■ **January 5:** I was invited to preach for the Pine Grove church of Christ east of Fulton, MS. The congregation is searching for a minister and asked me to help them during the interim. I got to speak at Pine Grove two Sundays in this quarter. They have 110 in attendance and three elders. They have a great mix of ages and are involved in reaching out to their community. They do have a preacher's home close to the building. I enjoyed visiting with the congregation. Jimmy Tucker, one of the elders, took me out to lunch and we had a good visit.

One of the elders, Carl Gaddy, taught the Bible class. They are studying the



Carl Gaddy, Jimmy Tucker, Steve Johnson  
Pine Grove

book, "A Systematic Study Of 1 Corinthians" by Willard Conchin. They talked about the problem of division. Carl did a good job of leading the class. He considered some of the major causes of division.

In February they looked at the lesson, "The Gospel That Paul Preached." It was a good lesson on the power of the Gospel.

In January the morning sermon was "One Thing I Do" based on Paul's statement in Philippians 3:13-15. Paul talks about the one spiritual goal that he had in his life. It is a good study of why we need to set spiritual goals.

In the evening service I preached on "God Is Generous" based on Matthew 20:1-16. Jesus gives the apostles a warning about their attitude toward service. The parable also emphasizes the grace of God. It is a good study.

In February the morning lesson was on faith, "Creeping On The Promises Of God." I considered two great examples of men of faith.

In the evening lesson I considered one of Jesus' parables, "The Freedom Of Forgiveness" based on Matthew 18:21-35. It is a great lesson about the nature

of man's judgement and the nature of divine forgiveness. I enjoyed my visit.

■ **January 12:** I was invited to preach at the Coffeerville church of Christ. They continue to search for a minister. During this quarter I have preached five times at the congregation. They have around 60 in attendance and no elders. They have an active Lads-To-Leaders program. They do offer a preacher's home next to the building. I enjoy my visits with the brethren there. It is a good congregation, with a good mix of ages.

John Wayne Purdy teaches the Bible class. They are studying a book by Willard Conchin, "Examine Yourself." The lessons have been on our attitude toward the elderly, strangers, the poor, people that are different, those in authority, and scripture. John is a good teacher and always makes great applications for living the Christian life.



John Wayne Purdy

In the worship I've been preaching on the theme "Images Of The Church." The first Sunday I talked about the church as "The Family Of God" and the second Sunday as the "Body Of Christ." Both images are important for us to understand our relationships in the church.

In February I considered the image of the "Vine And The Branches" based on John 15. Jesus wants us to be a "fruit-bearing" branch. The power to bear fruit comes from us abiding in the vine. It is a good study.

The second Sunday my lesson was on "What Does Membership Mean." I considered several of the images of the church that we have been looking at and what that means for us as members of the body. I also emphasized the rich provision of God.

In March I presented a sermon on "The Glory And Grandeur Of The Church." We used Ephesians to consider several passages that tell us that God is the author of the church. Jesus is the "Head" and "Savior" of the church. The mission of the church is to reveal God's mystery of salvation for all. In the church we enjoy



*Lighthouse ministry luncheon at the Germantown church of Christ.*

several blessings. It is a good lesson.

■ **January 19:** I was invited to speak at the Lighthouse ministry luncheon at the Germantown church of Christ. The Lighthouse Ministry is for singles, widows, widowers, and divorcees. It's a wonderful ministry that brings together around 150 adults. We are involved in all kinds of ministries to encourage these singles. I spoke on "Learning How To Count Your Blessings, Not Your Troubles." I considered several passages that talk about us developing this attitude, and gave some examples of people who have learned to do that. I enjoyed the gathering. This group is a blessing to my life.

■ **February 16:** I was invited to preach for the Union Central church of Christ between Paragould and Marmaduke, AR. Their new preacher is Jeremy Pierce. He and his family began their ministry with the church February 23. The church has four elders and nine deacons and about 130 in attendance. They have a great mix of ages and a very active youth ministry. I appreciated the invitation. It was good to see some old friends and make some new ones. After service we enjoyed a wonderful fellowship meal.



*Tim Wooldridge, Randy Brinkley, Buddy Vaught, Scotty Hickson-elders Union Central-Paragould.jpg*

Ron Harris, one of the members, taught the adult Bible class. He took his lesson from Romans 12. Ron said in these verses Paul gave us God's picture of the Christian life. He added that these verses describe how we are to think about ourselves. It was a good lesson.

In the worship, I preached on forgiveness. We considered the parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:21-35. It's a great study on the nature of man's judgment, the nature of divine forgiveness, and nature of the debt we owe to God.

■ **March 1:** I was invited to preach at the Cleveland church of Christ. Their regular minister, Tim McCarter and his wife Debbie, were out of town on a vacation trip. I appreciate so much the invitation to come and visit with the brethren there. It was good seeing old friends. The church has two elders and about 40 in attendance. This Sunday they had 54 in attendance with several students from DSU. I appreciate the good work that Tim is doing with the congregation and the opportunity to see some wonderful Christian friends. We enjoyed a fellowship meal between services. It gave me a chance to visit with more friends.

In Bible class I taught a lesson from John 5:1-30. Jesus said, "I do not seek to do my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me" (v. 30). The mind of Christ was to be obedient to his Father's will. Jesus wants us to do the same thing.

In the morning worship I preached on "The Glory And Grandeur Of The Church." We considered several passages that teach us about the church. It is glorious

because God is its author, Jesus is its Savior and Head, because of the church's mission, and because of the wonderful blessings found in Christ.

In the afternoon service I preached on "Only One Returned" based on the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. One of the characteristics of the unbeliever is ingratitude (Romans 1:21). As Christians we must show our gratitude in the home, with our neighbors, and to the Lord.

Sunday afternoon I got to visit with Madolyn Gibson at the MDCC Student Center in Moorhead, MS. She told me about the wonderful work being done at the center. She and her late husband, Gene, directed the center for many years and she continues in this ministry with the help of Jason Zuehike and Gary Free from the Indianola church. Most of the students that come to the center are unchurched students. They have had a tremendous ministry in bringing students to Christ. Madolyn told me about their plans for the future and I pray that God will bless this evangelistic ministry in the heart of the Mississippi delta.

■ **March 15:** I visited with the Cornerstone church of Christ near Byhalia, MS. The church has been in existence for 8 years and Brother Jimmy Stokes has served the church for 6 years. They have around 50 in attendance and no elders.

They have a wonderful mix of ages and are very welcoming. I enjoyed meeting Brother Stokes and his family. The Coronavirus scare was in full swing and the church there took several

*Continued on next page*





# The Women of North Bypass

*"I was hungry and you fed me" Matthew 25:35.*

In the Great and Final Judgement Jesus said He would commend and reward His faithful children for the service they rendered to others in this life. To feed others is one aspect of that service, and on a human level such a basic need. In fact, it is a universal human need that must be met for life to continue.

Yet unfortunately many around the world go hungry, and even in the United States there are people who struggle to have food to eat. In Warren county Mississippi, and the Vicksburg area, there are those who need food. Over forty shut-ins and elderly folks have been identified who cannot get out and have limited means to have hot meals. Thankfully a group of faithful Christian women and some Christian men have responded to their food needs.

This article is to highlight and call to attention the wonderful work of the women and men at the 61 North Bypass Church of Christ in Vicksburg. I realize that often elders and preachers get a lot of attention

for what they do. Such men do a great work in their respective roles, but there are others within the church that also serve a vital and necessary work. Many serve in the background, not getting or seeking the public attention that others do.

The scriptures teach us to "give honor to whom honor is due" (Romans 13:7). Once a month these faithful women, along with their drivers and helpers, prepare meals for about forty elderly shut-ins. These meals take time and are lovingly prepared and patiently delivered; often under very difficult circumstances on barely passable roads filled with potholes, and in some cases even flooded due to the rains. They do this at a cost of time and money to themselves. These faithful women go with love in their hearts for Jesus and the shut-ins they minister to.

Such Christians are an example to All Christians. We often feel that we are not doing much if we are not teaching a bible class or serving in some leadership position. Everyone can serve the Lord in some



*The faithful women are Nellie Caldwell, Tina Ashley, Mary Jane Solomon, Katy Watt, Polly Harris, Geri Grady, Betty Covington, Yvonne Carter, Corrin Stanley, and Pat Kellum. The men who assist them are Dean Caldwell, Ronnie Kellum, Phil Solomon, Willie Nettle and his wife Robin Nettle.*

capacity. Let these Christians be an example of serving the Lord, for even a cup of cold water will be rewarded when it's done in His service! **MM**

*Donnie Cain, Minister  
Midway Church of Christ,  
Utica Mississippi*

## Visits among Churches in North Mississippi

*Continued from page 25*

precautions to make sure that everyone was safe. I appreciate their efforts.

In Bible class one of the members, Tommy Martin, taught the class. They were studying the letter to the Romans and were in chapter seven. He had a good discussion about the Law and how it brought people to a knowledge of sin. Only in Christ do we meet the grace of God. I enjoyed the study.

In the worship, Brother Stokes presented a lesson on what we can learn from the Coronavirus. The text was Matthew 6:24-34 where Jesus discusses worry



*Toria and Jimmy Stokes Cornerstone Byhalia*  
and our trust in God. He gave a lesson that was on point and timely. It was a great encouragement to all present.

■ **March 22 and 29** I stayed home because of the COVID19 outbreak. The governor of MS asked all of us to stay at home. I appreciate so much my elders' guidance in making decisions that keep our members safe and the encouragement they have provided all of us with calls and emails to make sure each member is safe, and our needs are being met. I pray that this shut down will soon be over, so we can assemble again and enjoy our worship together and resume our daily lives. **MM**

# SAM'S JOURNEY

Continued from page 19

ular in his attendance.

Sam had already formulated some ideas about church membership. He did not believe baptism was all that important. He had been baptized when he was about 12 years old, as he said, "doing what my friends were doing." He was strongly leaning toward "once saved, always saved." As he continued to come to worship services with Will, he was hearing things being preached which he did not believe. Sam agreed for Will Nichols to invite Will Anderson (our preacher) to come over to their Bible discussions. He came into the study ready to prove baptism was not necessary. Will Anderson taught him and showed him in the Bible what he needed to understand. The study concluded with Sam Lawrence being baptized into Christ Jesus for the remission of his sins. As stated above, that took place on May 20, 2019.

Sam has embraced 1st century Christianity in the 21st century. He is an excited young man about his relationship with the Lord. He dearly loves being around fellow Christians, and is ready and willing to study with anyone. His desire to grow in grace and knowledge is like a breath of fresh air. Accountability is important to him. As he stated, "I want to be a Christian, period."

His life, his obedience, and his continued growth is a great encouragement. Even though "friendship evangelism" is not mentioned in this journey, one can readily see it at work in Sam Lawrence's life. My heartfelt thanks goes to all who had a part in Sam's journey to Jesus! **MM**

## Precious Memories

### IN MEMORY OF

#### JUDI BETTS

Virginia C. Henley  
(Daphne, AL)

#### INEZ BRANNON

Herschel & Dorothy Ford  
(Florence, MS)

#### FRANKLIN BURROUGHS

Inez Burroughs  
(Pensacola, FL)

#### HART CHAMBLEE

Sandra Chamblee  
(Duck Hill, MS)

#### CAROLE CHILDERS

John & Beth Pigg  
(Ridgeland, MS)

#### DOTSY DOWNS

Jeraldine Jones  
(DeRidder, LA)  
Barbara Gayle  
(Lake Charles, LA)

Otis & Paulette Boudreaux  
(Lake Charles, LA)

Ernest & Robbie Cole  
(DeRidder, LA)

#### Rayburn & Johnnye Blackmon

David & Missy Blackmon  
David & Kim Watson  
Carl & Windy Blackmon  
(Merryville, LA)

Charles & Myrtle Neely  
(DeRidder, LA)

Merlin Ward  
*Nacogdoches, Texas*

Jimmy Downs  
(DeRidder, LA)

Jennifer & Clay Rodrigue  
(DeRidder, LA)

Carole Milner  
(Brandon, MS)

Judith B. Cryer  
(DeRidder, LA)

#### AL FRANKS

Sandra Chamblee  
(Duck Hill, MS)

Jerry & Eleta Grimmer  
(New Albany, MS)

Carl & Vera Spencer  
(Jackson, MS)

Cindi Franks, Amber Wylie  
& Bonnie Burge  
(DeQuincy, LA)

The Ladies Sunday School Class  
(Amory, MS)

Tom Welch  
(Many, LA)

Ernest & Robbie Cole  
(DeRidder, LA)

Thomas H. Welch  
(Many, LA)  
Irene Hall  
(Mt. Olive, MS)

#### MARNECE MOORE FRANCES THOMPSON

Larry & Janie Wallace  
(Kosciusko, MS)

#### PAUL FRANKS

Bob & Charlotte White  
(Harrison, TN)

Carl & Vera Spencer  
(Jackson, MS)

Nelma Ivey  
(Jackson, MS)

Aaron & Jeanette Horis  
(Harrison, AR)

John T. & Ann Smithson  
(Rossville, GA)

Jerry & Eleta Grimmer  
(New Albany, MS)

Cindi Franks, Amber Wylie  
& Bonnie Burge  
(DeQuincy, LA)

Sandra Chamblee  
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RAY FRANKS

GWEN LAROCQUE  
Gerald & Geri Spears  
(Singer, LA)

#### AL FRANKS PAUL FRANKS

MARNECE MOORE  
FRANCES THOMPSON

Dewey & Martha Lawrence  
(Kosciusko, MS)

#### AL FRANKS PAUL FRANKS

VELMA DELANCEY  
RUTH PRITCHARD

Charles Pritchard  
(Steele, MO)

#### KARLA GRIFFITHS DAN SPENCER

Carl & Vera Spencer  
(Jackson, MS)

#### MRS. EVELYN JAMISON

Stacy & Myra Simmons  
(Ripley, MS)  
Wanza Gray  
(Corinth, MS)

#### KYLE HAZLIP DWIGHT HAZLIP RANDY HAZLIP

Ellen Welsh  
(Natchez, MS)  
Bonnie Skates  
(Natchez, MS)  
Nelma Hazlip  
(Natchez, MS)

#### MRS. EVELYN JAMISON

Stacy & Myra Simmons  
(Ripley, MS)  
Wanza Gray  
(Corinth, MS)

#### DONNELL ASKEW WILLARD BOOTY MELBA COLE PERKINS FRANCES GUNN WYLIE

MARY SELBY  
ROD HYATT  
MONA CHANDLER  
RENA DUHON FRANKS  
BONNIE JO NELSON

CLYDE WOOD  
ANNIE JANE SMITH  
GWEN LAROCQUE

Cindi Franks, Amber Wylie,  
& Bonnie Burge  
(DeQuincy, LA)

MR. MARSHALL KERN  
Judge & Mrs. Edward Patten  
(Hazlehurst, MS)

GERALD WORTHLEY  
Paul & Evelyn Laney  
(Nettleton, MS)

HONOR

WILBURN DELANCEY  
Charles Pritchard  
(Steele, MO)

CINDY HATHCOCK  
(Birthday)  
Cathy Hollie  
(Amory, MS)

LADIES OF THE LORD  
DEQUINCY  
CHURCH OF CHRIST

Cindi Franks, Amber Wylie  
& Bonnie Burge  
(DeQuincy, LA)





# from a Woman's Viewpoint

# THE EMPTY SEAT

by June Franks

The story of Jonathan and David is a very interesting Bible story. They were very close and experienced a deep bond of friendship. The Bible says, "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul" (I Samuel 18:2).

Jonathan's father, King Saul, feared David's growing popularity and henceforth viewed him as a rival to the throne. Saul became extremely jealous of David and sought ways to kill him. Saul tried to enlist Jonathan's aid to kill David, but Jonathan remained David's friend and warned him of Saul's anger. Because of his fear, David did not want to sit at King Saul's table. Instead David hid in a cave.

Jonathan made this statement to his friend regarding David's seat being empty when he was to dine with King Saul: "...And you will be missed because your seat will be empty" (I Samuel 20: 18). This scripture is often referred to at funerals. Where do you find a more appropriate time to have an empty seat than at the death of a precious loved one! But another place where we see too many empty seats is at a worship service. It is sad but it is true.

Because of COVID-19, most all church buildings have experienced empty seats for several weeks now. We have been blessed with modern technology that has allowed us to continue to worship God electronically. However, we should not become comfortable with worshipping online. It will be sad if some will not want to return to our usual way to worship according to the pattern in the New Testament. We should be looking forward to the time when we will be worshipping together again in our church buildings. The assembling together and the fellowship with one another is so important. The church building is the place where we come together to encourage one another as members of Christ's body. We have often heard during this time of worshipping online that "the church is not the building." Most of us recognize that fact; it takes people to make up a church. The Bible does not mention church buildings, but according to scripture early Christians met in homes. The Bible says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10: 24, 25).

In the Bible the word "church" is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* which means "called out for a purpose," "group," "assembly," or "congregation." It never refers to a building, but to a group of people chosen by God. We have been called by the



gospel out of a world of sin (II Thessalonians 2: 14).

When we answered the call of the gospel and became a Christian, we should have been committed to making sure that our seat is not empty at our place of worship. The Bible says, "...Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5: 23). The body is the church (the called-out group), which Christ purchased with his own blood (Acts 20: 28). Therefore, the church is very important. Our love for the church should keep us motivated to see that our seat is always filled at all worship services.

The realization that Christ purchased the church—the Kingdom—with His own blood should help us to see it is of utmost importance. How then can one say the church is not important? The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her" (Ephesians 5: 25). If Christ loved the church enough to die for it, then why wouldn't we want to be a part of His church—His Kingdom—and make sure our seat is filled at all worship services? What a great love He manifested on our behalf. Do we love the church enough to keep our seats filled?

The Bible says, "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 23: 37). How can we say we love God if we deliberately fail to fill our seat at all worship services?

The Bible also says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6: 33). The Kingdom of God is the church. Are you seeking (putting) God and the church first in your life?

We see many people who deliberately do not attend any worship services. Over the past 30 or 40 years, church attendance has been on the decline. People, especially here in the United States, are becoming more and more worldly, drifting deeper and deeper into unbelief, and are getting out of the habit of regular church attendance. Some often use the excuse, "I don't have time" and others will say, "Sunday is my only day off." Some try to justify missing worship services by saying, "I can worship God at home." And that is true. You can worship God at home. Many of us have been worshipping God at home for the last couple of months. We had no choice, and we all know it has not been the best arrangement.

Sunday is the "Lord's Day," the first day of the week. It certainly should be considered a day of worship to God. The disciples of the first century came together on the first day of the week to worship—to "break bread" and to hear God's word preached (Acts 20: 7). The word "worship" involves honor and respect for God. God is so good and worthy of our love and adoration. Why would

*"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching"*

*(Hebrews 10: 24, 25).*

we not want to worship such a God as this?

It is a great privilege and a great blessing to be able to worship the Lord with our brothers and sisters in the Lord's church on the Lord's Day. How can we truly show our love and devotion to God by deliberately staying home and not making sure that our seat is filled?

We can rest assured when our seat is empty we are not pleasing God unless we have a valid reason. We are also missed greatly by those brothers and sisters in Christ who love us and care about our souls.

We will be the one who is blessed by living a faithful and dedicated life in compliance with all of God's commandments. If our seat is empty, we are the one who is missing out on one of our greatest blessings in life—the combined fellowship and worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember, "...and you will be missed because your seat will be empty," (II Samuel 20: 18) **MM**

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# Is Your Church a Friendly One?

by Kathy Doughty

A few months ago I was out of town and visited a church I had never been to before. I was by myself so I was a little anxious. I walked in and the greeter shook my hand and handed me a copy of their bulletin.

The foyer was full of people waiting for the worship hour to begin. I stood next to the wall observing all the members hugging and talking to each other. For the next several minutes not one person spoke to me or even acknowledged my presence. After the service was over no one spoke to me, not even the family sitting near me on the same pew.

I left feeling disappointed. I thought to myself, what if I was someone looking for a church home, or someone wanting to study the bible. Would I choose this congregation? Probably not.

To quote from an article by Michal Knowles, "In the kingdom of God, strangers on the doorsteps represents a gift and an opportunity from God." We only have one time to make a good first impression on a visitor. The scriptures teach us to "contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers" (Romans 12:13), and to "be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:1,2).

If visitors leave feeling unwanted or unloved, we may have just lost a talented and hard working servant of the church or the opportunity to teach God's word to a potential new Christian. Paul states "and when we were come to Jerusalem the brethren received us gladly" (Acts 21:17). As Christians we should have a welcoming attitude as Christ had. "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7;ESV).

When we have a visitor, if we thought of them as a guest of Christ, then we surely would not ignore them! We sometimes think it's the preacher's duty to greet the visitor, but think of it this way; the most important person to welcome a visitor is you. Don't ignore Christ's guest. **MM**

*(This is the first time my sweet wife has written an article. But clearly this experience made a big impression on her. She is always one of the first to introduce herself to any visitor we have. Sadly, too many visitors experience what she described here. - dd)*





# "INSCRIPTIONS"

by Dennis Doughty

## Christ verses Adam

As our thoughts this Lord's Day is upon the resurrection of Christ, do we really appreciate what His resurrection meant to each of us? Paul explained: "For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21,22).

You will grow old and die of "natural causes" or from cancer or a virus. All because of what one man did. That's not fair, is it? Physical death came upon mankind through Adam. He willfully broke God's command and was told the consequences, "you shall surely die" (Ge. 2: 15-17). You and I are still suffering the consequence of Adam's sin, we are still dying!

But thanks be to God, everything we lost unconditionally through Adam we gained unconditionally through Christ. By one man also "came the resurrection of the dead." By His resurrection Christ gave to all of us the eternal life we lost by Adam's sin. Everyone will be resurrected, "All will be made alive," some unto life with God, others to spend eternity in outer darkness with the devil and his angels. Through Christ you will be resurrected from the dead, the only question is, where will you spend eternity? **MM**

## DEADLY MISSISSIPPI

# TORNADOS

On April 12, Covington County was battered by twin tornadoes, one of which was the largest ever recorded in Mississippi and the third largest in the nation.

Both tornadoes ran the full width of the county and were rated EF4. One was 1 1/2 miles wide and the other 2 miles wide. They were only a few miles apart. To date, there were 520 homes affected, 90 of which were completely destroyed. At least 16 businesses were damaged or destroyed. We are thankful that lives were spared in our county, but the devastation is massive.

On April 19, another EF4 tornado ripped through an area south of Hattiesburg, not more than 50 miles south of us.

Our congregation has been able to help victims in these areas due to the generous donations by the Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort based in Nashville, TN. On Wednesday, April 15, a 53 foot trailer pulled into our parking lot loaded with food and supplies to be distributed throughout our area. We have been able to help families in our county as well as surrounding communities.



We are also thankful to the Decatur Church of Christ Response Team from North Alabama who did an outstanding job in the clean-up of trees and debris.

We appreciate brothers and sisters from congregations at Pleasant Grove in Laurel, Johnson Grove in Brookhaven, Lumberton, Pine Belt in Hattiesburg, Laurel Church of Christ, and Kensington Woods for their help in organizing and distributing supplies to local people as well as victims in Soso and Baxterville.

It has been our privilege to be involved in such a massive effort, all to the glory of God. It has given us the opportunity to fulfill needs and embrace the brotherhood of man and hear the amazing stories of survival these victims have shared. It is also given us the opportunity to share Bible literature and have contacts from all over the affected area.

We covet your prayers for everyone affected by these storms. **MM**

Steve and Wanda Carter for the Collins Church of Christ Collins, MS 39428

## The Berean Children's Home

is funded through donations from individuals and churches. If you, your church, or business would be interested in helping with this work, please contact us. We are a registered 501 c(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue code and a registered charity in the state of Mississippi. Therefore, all donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

**Director: Andrew Redd 601-754-4138**

Berean Children's Home  
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Bogue Chitto MS 39629

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Website: [bereanhome.org](http://bereanhome.org)  
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Office Phone: 601-823-5776  
Office Hours: Monday - Friday  
8:30 am-4:30 pm  
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Our mission at Berean Children's Home is to provide children with a loving home and to assist each child to mature spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically.



**"A FAMILY with a HEART"**

We are looking for a set of House Parents for our Home and if anyone is interested please contact me at my cell number or personal email.

## These Sent In Answers to QB, Last Issue

- |                              |                              |                            |                                |
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| 65. Edward Yancey            | 130. Gwendolyn Bryant        | 195. Michael Harvill       |                                |

## Who is that Mask Lady



*Beth Beall, who does the proof reading of the Messenger, and Erika Anderson, the preacher's wife, have made over 200 of these COVID-19 masks. The first batch of 60 went to the staff at the*

*VA Nursing Home in Kosciusko. Several have gone to members of the congregation in Kosciusko. Others have been sent to Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas. Good work ladies!*

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## THE QUESTION BOX

■ **Romans 8 is one of our favorite chapters for study and devotionals. Read it and do the following exercises:** (see NKJV)

ABBA	ENMITY	LIFE	SEPARATE
BONDAGE	FAMINE	LONG	SIN
CARNAL	FLESH	NAKED	SLAUGHTER
CALL	FUTILITY	PERIL	SONS
CORRUPT	GROAN	PREDESTINED	SPIRIT
DEBTORS	HEIRS	PRESENT	SUFFERING
DISTRESS	HOPE	SAINTS	

■ **Match the words with the definition:**

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. Conqueror      | A. To buy back  |
| _____ 2. Angel          | B. A situation of great trouble                               |
| _____ 3. Principalities | C. Could be translated as "messenger"                         |
| _____ 4. Tribulation    | D. Princely rulers  |
| _____ 5. Justified      | E. Standing in to take the place of another                   |
| _____ 6. Intercession   | F. Victor in battle   |
| _____ 7. Groanings      | G. Something that has been made                               |
| _____ 8. Firstfruits    | H. Having sins forgiven as if I had never done them           |
| _____ 9. Redemption     | I. The portion of a harvest that is ripe first                |
| _____ 10. Condemnation  | J. The condition of being in obedience to God                 |
| _____ 11. Righteousness | K. Separated or holy and refers to every Christian            |
| _____ 12. Creature      | L. One created  |
| _____ 13. Creation      | M. Taken as a child by someone other than the physical parent |
| _____ 14. Adoption      | N. Expression of pain by a mother giving birth                |
| _____ 15. Saint         | O. lost in sin  |

P R E D E S T I N E D B U Z C  
B T D K S T N I A S O G L P A  
T I R I P S S L A U G H T E R  
J O S U F F E R I N G S F R N  
T N E S E R P R F Q Q L Y I A  
I X N B N D A A T V E G T L L  
T O W N A O R G C S N R I B M  
S H E M T R A C H O I Z L A R  
R L I F E K T E L V R D I O P  
O Y T I M N E G C E T R T E N  
T K W L D E S A H O N B U A Q  
B G Z E C W V D Z E E I F P O  
E J K A I F S N S D I S M S T  
D A L U P E P O H T S R H A V  
N L U Y S A B B A Z H X S D F

■ **Fill in the blanks from Romans 8**

"There is therefore now no \_\_\_\_\_ to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (v1)

"...For we do not know what we should \_\_\_\_\_ for as we ought, but the Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ makes intercession for us with \_\_\_\_\_ which cannot be \_\_\_\_\_." (v26)

"And we know that \_\_\_\_\_ things work together for \_\_\_\_\_ to those who \_\_\_\_\_ God, to those who are the called according to His \_\_\_\_\_." (v28)

"What then shall we \_\_\_\_\_ to these \_\_\_\_\_? If God be for us, who can be \_\_\_\_\_ us?" (v31)

### Please Send Your Answers To Us

(Print your name... Please. Thank you!)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTICE: Each person who sends in answers will be recognized in the next issue of the "MM" (see page 31). ALSO, by random drawing, the name of ONE student will be selected to receive a beautiful New Study Bible.

### "The Question Box"

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