

Glad Tidings

December

FROM THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

2025

“Buy the truth, and sell it not.” (Prov. 23:23)

Philippians 4:13

Strength For Today And Bright Hope For Tomorrow

I Corinthians 15:19

SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:3)

In such a complex, busy and fast-paced world we have today, it is refreshing to have a few things that are simple. One of the most important things to keep simple is the church and the worship of God. The apostle Paul was very concerned about the Corinthian church getting beguiled and corrupted by Satan to complicate the *“simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:3). Thankfully, God keeps things simple in a world that is increasingly complicated and constantly fluctuating.

God has simple truths of his character that we can rely on. In a world where it seems that everything changes at a breakneck pace, it is a great comfort to trust in a God that *“cannot change”* (Mal. 3:6). Jesus Christ does not change with the times or culture, but Christ is the *“same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8). With the media influence today from all directions, we many times wonder who is really telling the truth and what sources can be fully trusted. In the midst of possible confusion and deception at any hand, it gives great peace to trust in a God that *“cannot lie”* (Titus 1:2). If we encounter confusion from the noise and complexity, we can rest assured that is not from the Lord. God is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

God knew that in the midst of a complex world his people needed simplicity. Satan makes things complicated, but Christ is simple. Satan is always attempting to corrupt the simple ways of the Lord with complexity and confusion. God set up his original church in such a simple way. Salvation is simple. We are saved to heaven by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9). What action of man is necessary to go to heaven? Is it a prayer, belief, faith, confession, baptism, a good enough life? It can be complicated to know which of those “works” is really the one that gains us eternal life. However, the Lord makes things simple in the salvation of sinners. We are not saved by any work we perform, but we are saved to heaven by God’s grace alone (2 Tim. 1:9, Titus 3:5). Jesus Christ finished the work of eternal salvation alone on the cross (John 19:30). That’s simple.

God made his church simple for his sheep. The New Testament pattern for worship is simple. We find in the

New Testament the original church had three simple components of worship: singing, praying, and preaching. Singing is simple. We ought to sing with our voices unto God (Col. 3:16). What instruments or additions to singing are acceptable to use in worship – piano, organ, guitar, drums, etc.? Well, the New Testament scriptures make it simple. We are commanded to sing with our voices to God with no mention of other additions to singing (Eph. 5:19). Praying is simple. Do you have to go and find the right person or a priest to be able to pray for you? No, we have the right and ability to simply pray directly to God in public worship and in private devotion. Preaching is simple. While we teach the whole counsel of God, ultimately the message of preaching is simple. The ministry is called to preach the simple message of *“Jesus Christ and him crucified”* (1 Cor. 2:2).

God ordained worship in the New Testament for the entire family to worship together. What room is each person supposed to be in again? Segregation in worship can be complicated and confusing. Children to the left, pre-teens to the right, young adults in another room, and seniors in another building. “Oh wait, I think I might have accidentally gone the wrong way, and I might be in the wrong room.” Sounds complicated. God ordained worship that the whole family sits down to worship together in the same room and hears the same preaching and teaching. That’s simple.

God ordained for church government to be simple. Who is it that needs to approve this decision by our church? Does this go to the regional director or state director, or is this a big enough decision that it needs to be approved by the national organization? Actually, no higher levels of approval are necessary for a local church to make a decision. God ordained the authority and structure of his church very simply. The local church governs its own affairs. There is no higher church authority than the local church body and congregation. Each local church body submits directly to the headship of Jesus Christ. There is certainly no higher level of authority or approval than Jesus Christ.

While some might disparage it, I believe it’s a great blessing to just simply live a *“quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”* (1 Tim. 2:4). God’s church is simple. The gospel is simple. Worship is simple. Church government is simple. God knew we needed simplicity. You may know that sheep are not very intelligent creatures. God consistently describes his people as sheep for a reason – we are not the best

at making highly complicated decision making. We mess up a lot. Therefore, to protect his vulnerable sheep from Satan, the Lord thankfully made things simple for us. What a blessing to just live the “simple life” that God has ordained for his people. (David Wise)

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

As we approach the Christmas season, we will see many portrayals of the nativity scene depicting the birth of Jesus Christ. It is easy to view this typical nativity scene with a great deal of sentimentality of a cute, little baby in a manger, and we might miss the gravity of what truly occurred. That little babe wrapped in swaddling clothes in an obscure manger in Bethlehem was not just any other cute baby. That little newborn child was God manifest in the flesh! The baby that would grow up to be Jesus of Nazareth was “very God of very God”! It is almost inconceivable to think that the eternal, omnipresent, sovereign God who rules over this entire universe condescended to this earth and took the form of a newborn babe that had to be nursed, carried, and changed like any other infant. Truly, great is the mystery of godliness that God was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

It is a great mystery to us how God could even become a man. God is omnipresent, everywhere present and nowhere absent, and even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him (1 Kings 8:27). When we think about the billions of lightyears vast this universe is, even all that space cannot contain God! Wow! How then could the omnipresent God be inhabited in the body of a little six-pound infant child? That doesn't make any sense to my natural mind. That is a great mystery to us that we will not fully understand this side of heaven.

Jesus was like any other newborn who needed to be carried by his parents, nursed by his mother, diaper changed, and was reliant upon his parents to keep him alive as the Son of man. However, at the same time, in that newborn babe dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

All the power of the sovereign, omnipotent God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords dwelt in that little babe who was born and put in a manger in Bethlehem. That is the great mystery of godliness, that God became a man. God's ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours like the height of the heavens above the earth (Isaiah 55:9). Truly, God's judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out! (Rom. 11:33) Despite the limitations of our mind, let us meditate on the mystery of the incarnation during this Christmas season that truly God become a man to save his people from their sins! (Matt. 1:21) (David Wise)

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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Elder Jonathan Wise & Elder David Wise, Co-Editors

CONTRIBUTIONS – THANK YOU!

We would like to thank all the individuals and churches that have generously financially supported the printing and mailing costs of Glad Tidings this year. It is through your generous contributions that we are able to produce the Glad Tidings newsletter with no official subscription fee.

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

By Elder Larry Wise (1944-2024)

Jesus came into this sin cursed earth as the faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people of God. To accomplish this end, He, the living Word, had to be made flesh and dwell on the earth because it was flesh and blood that brought sin into the world. Man is a flesh and blood individual contaminated by sin but Jesus was a partaker of just part of the same because He was without sin, having

been conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. (Heb. 2:14). This sinless high priest could then make the perfect sacrifice to take away the sins of His elect family. He was wholly God and yet wholly man. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,..." (II Tim. 3:16). Jesus told Philip that he "that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9). However it was as a man that He offered the supreme sacrifice: "But **this man**, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" (Hebrews 10:12).

This faithful high priest that atoned for the sins of His elect family was subject to like passions and was tempted in all points as his children but without sin. He is thus amply qualified to be one who is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of His children. He is the compassionate high priest and even told His disciples as they could not stay awake to watch and pray while he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41). As Jesus prayed this prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible tells us, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." (Luke 22:43). Why did Jesus need any strength; wasn't He the Son of God? Jesus indeed was the Son of God but He was also the son of man; in His humanity, He needed the strength that could only come down from above to do the will of the Father and bear the cross of Calvary.

If Jesus as a man needed the strength that could only come from above, how much more do His people need the same strength to put all things aside and do the will of the Father! It isn't any wonder then that Paul would say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13). Paul had learned in whatsoever state he was in to be content; he didn't learn this by accident but had been taught by a higher authority than himself.

Paul was caught up into the third heaven and the paradise of God and heard unspeakable words that was unlawful to be uttered. There was given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure. He prayed to the Lord for removal of this thorn three different times. The thorn never was removed but He was told, "...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." (II Cor. 12:9). The Lord's strength is made perfect in the weakness of His children and thus Paul would go on to say that he took pleasure in infirmities and distresses for Christ's sake "...for when I am weak, then am I strong." (I Cor. 12:10). Sometimes God's children are allowed to get so weak that they have no other alternative than to look up; it is then and then only that they can claim they are strong. Truly Jesus is that high priest that is touched with the feelings of His people and their infirmities.

The Lord's people forfeit much peace and joy because they fail to believe His promises. Do they really believe He will never leave them or forsake them? If they do, then they can depend upon His faithfulness to see them through. Paul again said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Cor. 10:13). Paul was in a ship that was destined to be wrecked and all hope seemed to be lost but the Lord sent an angel with a message to cheer him and the people on the ship. He was told to fear not for he must appear before Caesar and all on board would be spared. Paul then said to everyone, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts 27:25). Paul believed God's promise and so should every one of His people.

Jesus was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that they might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4:4). He accomplished that redemption and sat down on the right hand of God and ever lives to make intercession for His people. All need His strength each day as they press toward their final destiny in a departure from this life and may they all be able to say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:" (II Tim. 4:7). Trust in the Lord who does all things well. (December 2017)

ALL POWER

By Elder Jerry Wise
Pontotoc, Mississippi

The above words need great consideration upon whom or what all power may belong.

Individuals that are chained up and in prison have no power over anything. They are solely dependent upon the jailer for their survival.

A baby has no power in which to feed themselves, change their clothes or even bathe; they are solely dependent upon the mother.

The farmer can plow his field and sow the seed but has no power over the seed; only God can make it grow.

The minister can preach the Holy Word of Jehovah God but has no power upon those with whom he preaches too; only God can give them life.

When facing death, we have no power in which to save our life; only God saves.

Remembering our topic of All Power, you will not be able to give one example of anything of the created that has All Power. All Power means total superiority over everything that exist.

Mankind has longed for such power, but is powerless over his existence. Sure, he has choices to make in his living but even that can change in an instant and he finds himself powerless.

We are told in Matthew 28:18 that Jesus says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." (Now that Power!!!!)

Jesus controls everything!!!! Jesus has power over me!!!! Jesus never makes the wrong choice or decision of anything!!!! Even our eternal life.

Hannah's words in 1 Samuel 2, is a great example of the All Power!!

"And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail." (1 Samuel 2:1-9)

Let's continue with All Power. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:37, 44-45)

"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:26-29)

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John 17:1-2)

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:19-20)

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" (Ephesians 2:1)

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:2-5)

Now that's All Power!!!!

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." -2 Corinthians 13:14

From the Master's table!!!
O Victory in JESUS!!!!!!!

I've heard some say that Jesus could have chosen not to die for our sins. Is this so?

Elder Joe Nettles
Hamilton, Mississippi

Part 1. In the 1980's a movie chocked full of heresy and blasphemy hit the big screen called "The Last Temptation of Christ". Unfortunately, like so many movies designed to malign our Lord, it drew great praise and critical acclaim from Hollywood. The premise was that Jesus Christ, being a man, chose not to be the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the elect and instead entered into an illicit affair with Mary Magdalene. They derived this damnable premise from such passages in the Bible as Matthew 26:39 - "...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." Many erroneously claim that this teaches that Christ would have gladly abdicated the responsibility of redeeming the elect. This is not what our Lord meant. Yes, it's true he was in great agony knowing the torment he would willingly take upon himself. The Bible tells us that in his distress his sweat was as great drops of blood. However, Jesus Christ wasn't willing to leave it undone. He knew that it would be a successful work which would purchase in total all the elect family - "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied..." (Isaiah 53:11). For what did he pray? To

answer that question, look at the "cup" that he requested should pass from him. The term "cup" here was translated from a Greek word which Strong's Concordance defines as "a drinking vessel; by extension, the contents thereof". If someone offers you coffee and you reply, "Yes, I'll have a cup", do you mean that you want to eat the actual vessel or do you want to drink the contents thereof? Obviously, you are referring to the contents of the cup. When Christ prayed for this mercy from the Father, he wasn't praying to be released from his covenant obligation to redeem, but he was praying that the contents, the suffering involved, would eventually pass. Just think, Jesus took upon himself the agony, torment, and shame of the sins of billions of his elect family all within six hours! I'd venture to say that Jesus would have willingly suffered forever for our sins seeing that eternal torment was the cost. Yet, the Father heard his cries and graciously limited the torment to six agonizing hours. Only the Godman, Jesus Christ, could have suffered the eternal torment of billions within six hours. We can't even begin to comprehend such love and power!

Part 2. Did Jesus Christ have the ability to sin? Did he have the option to choose not to die for his elect? I shudder to even consider these questions, but for the sake of learning let's examine these unthinkable concepts. First, we must not forget that even though Jesus Christ "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), he at the same time was also all God (John 8:58; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23). If the Son were ever to act contrary to the Father and the Spirit, they being the three persons in the Triune Godhead, there would be a schism in the Godhead. This is impossible according to scripture. James 1:17 teaches that there is no variableness in God, Malachi 3:6 teaches that he cannot change, and Hebrews 6:17 declares his immutability. If there could be a disunity between God the Father and God the Son, there would certainly be variableness, change, and mutability in God. In other words, God would not be God. We reject that. Secondly, let's take into account the scriptures which plainly teach the impeccability, or inability to sin, of Jesus: 1) "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). Jesus is called the Son of man. He walked, talked, fellowshiped, ate, drank, rejoiced, comforted, and cried with sinners. Yet, there is a sense which he is still "separate from sinners". We can sin. He could never sin. 2) "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). The great deceiver, Satan, yields the power of death against sinners, however, that devil has nothing in Jesus. No sin. No potential to sin. Absolutely nothing. 3) "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his

own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). In contradistinction to the flesh which is weak, Jesus Christ came with no such weakness! 4) "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth..." (Isaiah 42:4). It was not only impossible for Christ to fail, he could not even be discouraged!

WHAT IS OUR FAITH?

By Elder Rusty Wise
Tupelo, Mississippi

1 Samuel 16:7 "...for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Is our faith a reflection of our Saviour? Not just what we may call worship, but our lives and our daily walk, do they emulate our profession of that faith; in other words, do we resemble Jesus Christ?

Are our lives committed to loving one another as ourselves, to being kind compassionate neighbors, to loving our wives as Christ loved the church, and for which we are also ready to give up our lives?

Or are we the ones that hold up all the physical outward signs, but show little of the great inner workings of God's magnificent handiwork?

Maybe we even go as far as shouting to those around us about how much they need to change their lives. That they may resemble the one of which we preach. We may even do it to the point of arrogance.

However, our Saviour was anything but arrogant. With all the confidence of God he preached a message that comforted poor wretched sinners. With meekness he withstood all this world could hurl at him. With obedience he fulfilled the will of the father. With courage he withstood the agony and the shame of the cross. With love for those that despised him he took away their sin. With power he laid down his life for his sheep. Victorious, he was raised up again. He not only paid my sin debt, not only satisfied God's justice, but he purged my sin and hath perfected me forever in the sight of God. And he has left me his testimony as a source of comfort to warm me in a cold dark world.

May our churches and our lives reflect the greatness of our Saviour. May our light so shine in a dark and dreary land. May the love and peace and joy of our God abound this day. Amen.

ETERNAL SECURITY – MAN OR GOD'S CREDIT?

By Elder Matt Jordan
Arab, Alabama

The more a person has to do in cooperation with God to obtain eternal life, the more credit that person deserves for their eternal life. "*To the praise of the*

glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Ephesians 1:6

The more a person has to do in cooperation with God to obtain eternal life, the more is required for them to maintain their eternal life. *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Philippians 2:13*

The more a person has to do in cooperation with God to obtain eternal life, the more likely it becomes that they will fail to keep it. *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” John 10:28*

Eternal life is not a cooperative effort between God and man, even though a majority of Christians think so. God speaks and people live. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” Ephesians 2:1*

Don't be like the majority. Man deserves no credit. Man can never do enough to secure eternal life. Man can never keep doing enough to maintain eternal life. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14*

Since we are dead in sin when we come into the world, the first thing we need is spiritual life, a choice and work of God alone. Since we can't reach perfection in this life, we must rely on God to sustain our eternal life. Being made spiritually alive, we can and should foster an environment that helps us stay spiritually healthy. But if eternal life can be taken away or if it doesn't remain for whatever reason, it was never eternal to begin with. *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39*

CHURCH IS HARD

Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgement.

Church is hard for the pastor's family, under the microscope of an entire body.

Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.

Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn't.

Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.

Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.

Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.

Church is hard for the deacon with an estranged child.

Church is hard for the person singing worship songs, overwhelmed by the weight of the lyrics.

Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.

Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.

Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.

Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.

Church is hard for the sinners.

Church is hard for me.

It's hard because on the outside it all looks shiny and perfect. Sunday best in behavior and dress. However, underneath those layers, you find a body of imperfect people, carnal souls, selfish motives. But, here is the beauty of church—

Church isn't a building, mentality, or expectation.

Church is a body.

Church is a group of sinners, saved by grace, living in fellowship as saints.

Church is a body of believers bound as brothers and sisters by an eternal love.

Church is a holy ground where sinners stand as equals before the Throne of Grace.

Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a training ground for mighty warriors.

Church is a converging of confrontation and invitation. Where sin is confronted and hearts are invited to seek restoration.

Church is a lesson in faith and trust.

Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of hope.

Church is a family. A family coming together, setting aside differences, forgetting past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of victories.

Church, the body, and the circle of sinners-turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church— The days when I am at odds with a friend, when I've fought with my kids because we're late once again. When I've walked in bearing burdens heavier than my heart can handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on my face. When I've worn a scarlet letter, under the microscope. When I've longed for a partner to hold, or fought tears as the lyrics were sung. When I've walked back in, afraid and broken, after walking away.

I'll remember, He has never failed to meet me there.

(Originally posted by Elder Mike Roberts, Pastor of New Hope PBC in Milan, TN)

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Galatians 6:9)

CHURCH NEWS

Bethany Primitive Baptist Church, Ecu, MS. Dec 14, 2025. Bethany Primitive Baptist Church, 5 miles west of Ecu, MS will have its annual Christmas singing on 2nd Sunday night in December 2025 (Dec. 14). Singing will begin at 5:30pm with refreshments served afterwards. Come and worship the Savior in song with all the saints. Elder Jeremy Wise is Pastor of Bethany.

Laodicea Primitive Baptist Church, Lafayette Springs, MS. Dec 21, 2025. Laodicea Primitive Baptist Church, Lafayette Springs, MS will have a Christmas singing 3rd Sunday night in December 2025 (Dec. 21). Singing will begin at 5:30pm with supper afterwards. Elder Steve Weaver is Pastor of Laodicea.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

Years ago during the closing prayer of a worship service at Little Flock Primitive Baptist Church in Burnsville, Mississippi, my son was looking around and taking everything in. After the "Amen," a brother who was seated across the aisle from him raised his head up. After which he said very loudly, "Look Mom, he woke up!" (Jonathan Wise)

BISCUITS

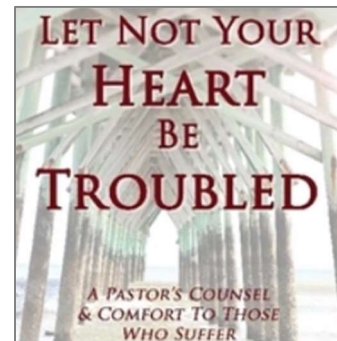
A pastor asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast. "Lord, I don't like buttermilk", the farmer began.

The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going. The farmer loudly proclaimed, "Lord, I don't like lard." Now the pastor was growing concerned.

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour". The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, "But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen."

FEATURED BOOK



Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled, By Michael Gowens

Trouble is inevitable in life, but when trouble gets inside the heart, a person is really in trouble. Such spiritual "heart trouble" is a threat to every believer living in this world. It may present itself in many different forms: Depression, Disappointment, Loneliness, Mistreatment, Grief, Guilt, and Fear.

But there is good news: God has provided help in His word. *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* offers pastoral counsel and biblical comfort to real people with real problems, helping them to navigate the path of suffering with calmness of soul and peace that passes understanding. Writing as a "fellow student in the school of affliction, not as a professor or expert on the subject, but one who has traveled far enough to know that God is real, his promises trustworthy, and his love better than life," Gowens believes that the believer has the spiritual resources necessary to glorify God by enduring the many crises of life. These pages contain both practical guidance and substantive encouragement. Here is real help for the hurting.

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"29) He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31) But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:29-31)

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

By Elder Michael Ivey
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I was asked to describe the elect mentioned in New Testament scripture. This is my reply:

I believe the elect are the "whom" Paul describes in Romans 8:29-30. As such, scripture reveals the elect is a group of persons whom God by covenant agreement and before the world began chose in Christ, according to His loving foreknowledge and according to His sovereign authority to exercise mercy and compassion on whom He will (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9, Romans 8:29, 9:13-15). Thus, He predestinated them to the adoption of children, to be conformed in fashion to the glorious image of Christ (Ephesians 1:5, Romans 8:29). Accordingly, they are those for whose sins Christ atoned at calvary and thereby are eternally justified by His blood (Romans 5:9, 8:30). Moreover, sometime between conception and corporeal death, though "dead in trespasses and sins," they were, are and will be quickened (born again) by the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," which is a sovereign direct-and-immediate action performed in them by the Spirit of God. All elect persons were/are born again in the same manner and at a time chosen by God alone (Titus 3:5, Romans 8:30, John 3: 3-8, Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13). When Jesus returns the second time in judgment, He will raise and quicken the bodies of His elect in graves to be joined by His elect who are then living and will change all their vile bodies to be fashioned like Him in glorified bodies (Romans 8:30, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). All of this will occur in the "twinkling of an eye" which is to say at the speed of light (1 Corinthians 15:52). In this condition of immortal glory, the elect will "ever be with the Lord" in heaven (1 Cor. 15, Philipians 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Follow up question: Can I kindly ask, do people have any personal involvement/influence/choice in being saved by Christ?

Scripture shows God is sovereign and the only source of power in all his work of saving sinners. For instance, in teaching the principle of election that pertains to how choice of who God would save Paul states in Romans 9:16 "So then [it is] not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Notice, he says it is not by man's free will (not of him that willeth) nor by his good works (nor of him that runneth) that God is enticed to save sinners. Similarly, scripture indicates the work of regeneration, being born again, is a sovereign work of God which he performs directly and immediately, without any human means or other external channels as assistance. In John 3:7-8, Jesus informs us that the

Spirit, like the wind, goes when and where it pleases to quicken, which infers it is not guided or aided by human causes. In John 5:25, having noted the "Father raiseth up the dead" and "the Son quickeneth whom he will", Jesus reveals His method of quickening is by an effectual command to live by the Divine irresistible voice of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Moreover, He informs us that everyone is born again exactly the same way, which means a baby (John the Baptist, for instance) is born again the same way as an adult and one who is mentally impaired is born again the same way as a person with acute mental awareness. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Ephesians 2:1, Paul states "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." When considered in light of Jesus statement in John 3:6 "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," these scriptures teach when a person is born again they are changed from being dead in trespasses and sins to being spiritually alive in Christ. Just so, life always precedes action. Therefore, because believing is an action, in order to believe Jesus is the Christ one must first be born again. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 2:14 by teaching man in his fallen nature, before he is born again, cannot favorably embrace things that pertain to the Spirit of God because they are absurd to his carnal mind. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned." To have spiritual discernment one must first be born of the Spirit and thereby have spiritual life in Christ. Thus, to believe the gospel one must already be born again.

Follow up question: What is your understanding of the word "whosoever" in John 3:16?

In the phrase "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" the tense, voice and mood of the verb "believeth" is present, active, participle. With this in mind, I believe a correct interpretation of John 3:16 is: Everyone who is believing in Christ is not in potential of perishing, but is assured to have everlasting life. I use potential and assured because the mood of the Greek verbs for "should not perish" and "have" are subjunctive. In other words, believing in Christ supplies present assurances that one will not perish and instead assures one has everlasting life. This grammar does not support a notion that believing in Christ is a contributing factor for receiving eternal life. Rather, it suggests believing in Christ is the basis for assurance

that one will not perish and instead is assured to have eternal life.

Jesus employed similar language to make this point in John 5:24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." As in John 3:16, the verb tense, voice and mood (TVM) of the Greek words interpreted "heareth" and "believeth" is present, active participle as to mean "is hearing" and "is believing." The TVM for "hath" in the phrase "hath everlasting life" is present, active, indicative and allows meaning as "has everlasting life." TVM for "is passed" in the phrase "is passed from death unto life" is also present, active, indicative. In other words, this statement may be correctly rendered as "He that is hearing my word and is believing on him that sent me has everlasting life and is not condemned but is departed from death and is alive."

CONVERTED

By Elder Dan Samons
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I was recently tasked with responding to this quote from Paul Washer posted in a Facebook theology group. "If a person professes faith in Christ and yet falls away or makes no progress in godliness, it does not mean that he has lost his salvation. It reveals that he was never truly converted. (Paul Washer)"

To do so requires great care in understanding how the terminology he uses is defined. Lordship Salvation Calvinists such as Washer often use CONVERTED as a synonym for REGENERATED. Perhaps more accurately, they insist that there is no REGENERATION without CONVERSION. Stated another way, the implication is, "If someone is not CONVERTED then they are not REGENERATED." If Washer is using these terms in that way, then his statement is categorically false.

REGENERATION (the new birth) is the immediate impartation of spiritual life / eternal salvation to man (John 5:25). Man has no participatory involvement in that event as it is a work of God alone (Ephesians 2:1). The REGENERATE are in possession of eternal life based on God's sovereign mercy and not based on anything they have ever done.

CONVERSION is the proper motion of the REGENERATE under gospel instruction. It is a matter of absolute biblical certainty that a man can be REGENERATE and yet UNCONVERTED. Peter was a regenerate man as affirmed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:16-17 (per John's affirmation in I John 5:1). Yet he stood in need of CONVERSION in some respects per the Lord's own testimony (Matthew 16:21-23, Luke 22:31-32).

If we employ the proper definitions of REGENERATION and CONVERSION above, rather than improperly conjoining them, then Washer's statement is true. When CONVERSION is properly defined, this statement is affirming: "If a person professes faith in Christ and yet falls away or makes no progress in godliness, it does not mean that he has lost his salvation, it reveals that he is wrong and stands in need of the correction of James 2, because he is not living in a way that is consistent with his profession of faith."

That is a correct statement. It is precisely what James has in mind when he speaks of "dead" faith (James 2:14ff). Notice, he is addressing "brethren" (v14) and his subject is the "showing" of faith (v18). He is speaking of an external manifestation of one's belief that arises from their actions. He does not suggest that those who are "without works" have no faith. Indeed a man who has no faith certainly does not have dead faith. Rather this dead faith condition intends the state of living in hypocrisy by acting in a way that is inconsistent with one's profession. This dead faith designs a failure to utilize God-given faith such that one's life is not profitable to the kingdom of God (v14).

Many Washerite zealots press an improper understanding of dead-faith upon the naive who do not have a firm grasp of James's intent. It takes the form of telling the brethren, "You're not REALLY eternally saved." Ironically, when pressing this accusation upon others, Washer proves himself to be unconverted with respect to this truth. Were he to apply his doctrine to his own error, it would find him NEVER TRULY converted, and raise the question: "Is Washer eternally saved?" When Christians play the UNCONVERTED = NOT ETERNALLY SAVED game, the fact of remaining sin will reveal many ways that we each stand in need of CONVERSION, and thus none of us are eternally saved. But when our terms are correctly defined, we see that eternal salvation is not a function of our personal performance in righteousness, but rather is based entirely on the work of Christ. Nevertheless, we all stand in need of conversion in many ways and this is part and parcel of the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. May God bless our studies and understanding of his word.

THE STRAIT GATE

By Lic. Tyler Sposite
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Matt. 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: [14] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Question: Doesn't Matthew 7:14-15 state that eternal salvation is difficult to attain and only a few are able to find it? In order to properly assess this question, let's consider a few points:

1. The sermon on the mount was not addressed to everyone, but to Jesus' disciples (Matthew 5:1-2). Hence the individuals being taught are already born again. Throughout this sermon he calls God their Father.

2. In Luke's version of this teaching Jesus is even more emphatic: Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Jesus says we must ****strive**** to enter this strait gate. Striving implies difficulty and effort. Yet eternal salvation is not by good works, good will, or effort (John 1:13; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 9:16).

3. The natural man neither receives the things of the Spirit of God nor seeks after God (1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:10-13). He is spiritually dead and has no capacity to bring himself to a state of spiritual life. The Son of God himself must do this for him before he is able to do anything spiritual (John 5:24-25). It follows from this that whoever finds himself entering in through this gate is already born of God and in possession of eternal life.

4. So then, to what does the "life" refer to in this text? This refers to the abundant life that Jesus Christ came to give his people (John 10:10). This abundance does not consist in worldly riches or material possession, but spiritual abundance in knowing the gospel, having fellowship with the Lord and following him in faithful discipleship. This "life vs destruction" motif is common in the Old Testament, particularly the book of Proverbs. Solomon says that the instruction of one's parents are "the way of life" (Proverbs 6:23) and that wisdom (3:18), fulfilled hope (13:12) and a wholesome tongue (15:4) are "a tree of life". These verses don't refer to going to heaven when you die, but to a blessed and happy life here and now. Paul the Apostle told Timothy to "lay hold" on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12). Timothy was already born again, but Paul encourages him to remain steadfast in his faith and walk with the Lord so as to experience and enjoy that life in its fullness here and now.

5. When a child of God allows his or herself to become distracted from the Lord Jesus Christ and sucked into the folly of this wicked world, there is indeed destruction on that wide path. Not eternal ruin in hell, but loss of blessings and the joy of our salvation, and the incurring of natural consequences for sin. Scripture all over the NT warns of the dangers of being duped by false doctrine or of walking in the flesh. God's people are saved eternally by grace, but sin and false doctrine still have their consequences in this life.

6. Why does Jesus say we have to "strive" and why is the way considered "narrow"? Simply put, it is very

easy for God's children to take their eyes away from Jesus. Worldly pleasures and distractions of no spiritual benefit, temporal struggles of everyday life, and our own besetting sin all contribute to leading us to focus and follow after these things rather than looking to Jesus and following Him. I am reminded of Paul's instruction in Hebrews 4:11 where he says we must "labor" to enter into gospel rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Laboring to rest seems like an oxymoron, but when we look back at our own experience, we can all understand how difficult it can be to truly rest in Jesus and trust what he has done and said. In the time of our Lord many of God's people among the Jews had this exact problem. They were so entrenched in their own ideas of what the Messiah was to look like, and so stubbornly devoted to their own traditions that they rejected him and his doctrine when he showed up. This indeed led to Israel's destruction when God judged that nation in 70 AD.

So, in summary, Matthew 7:14-15 is about discipleship, not sonship. The narrow gate is for born again children of God to experience the blessings of following the Lord in this life, not for the unregenerate.

BEING FOUND IN CHRIST AT ALL TIMES

By Elder Clayton Nowell
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In Philippians 3:9, Paul says that since he had suffered the loss of all things for Christ, it was his desire to be "found in Him." That is, in whatever he did, he wanted it to be pleasing to his Heavenly Father and his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It had to be wholly in God's will and it had to be completely consistent with working out what God is working in us to do. (see Philippians 2:12-13) This was a burning desire of Paul's heart.

Further, while Paul had suffered much for righteousness, he also wanted his attitude through it to continue to be pleasing to the Lord. While Paul had tirelessly labored for the sake of God's elect, he wanted his service to be a sacrifice well pleasing unto the Lord. In his frustrations, his trials, his burdens, while shipwrecked, in prison, and even enduring stripes from his captors, perhaps he envisioned each stripe that was laid upon our Savior and pondered Isaiah 53:5 that says, "and with His stripes we are healed." If the sufferings of Christ proved that He had such love to us, surely we can endure what we must to be identified with Him and be willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. Right? So, the next time we are having to endure suffering to be faithful to the Lord, remember what Jesus endured for us. And remember, we should be like Paul in wanting everything we do to please the One who suffered so much for us.

Finally, we also should be careful that all we do in the way of earthly pursuits would still be in His will and thereby be pleasing to Him. We have little control over much of what is thrown at us in this life, but we have much control over how we choose to spend our time and how we spend our energy and resources each day. Are we “redeeming the time” by using it to God’s glory (see Ephesians 5:16) or are we squandering it? In all we do, we should be able to pray with a clear conscience for God’s help and strength to be able to accomplish it; so that, we may be “found in Him” at all times.

So, if the Lord comes this week, what will He find you doing? Will it be pleasing to Him, or just to you? Let’s seek to serve in whatever way we can and in whatever way we can, that in all things, we may be manifesting that we are serving for His glory.

PAUL & BARNABAS IN CYPRUS

By Elder Rickey Taylor
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Act 13:3-4 “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”

It was by the instructions of the Holy Spirit that Saul and Barnabas were to be separated for the ministry that the Spirit had called them to do (Acts 13:2). Thus the two, along with John Mark, obediently begin what is referred to as Paul’s first missionary journey. At the time of the Spirit’s command, they are in Antioch of Syria. They then set sail for the island of Cyprus. Barnabas is a native of Cyprus, which no doubt made him an excellent guide for their journey on the island (Acts 4:36-37).

Time and space will not permit to write about each one of these verses, but I just want to mention a few things about some of them. In verse 7 of this chapter, we read that Sergius Paulus, a Roman official with great authority and a prudent man, desired to hear the preaching of Paul and Barnabus. Now the scripture takes the time to tell us that the deputy being a prudent man shows us that he was not inclined to fall for every scheme of deception of mankind. He obviously had heard of the preaching of the apostle and wanted to hear it more in detail.

Then we read in verse 6 of a sorcerer by the name of BarJesus (his name is interpreted as BarJoshua) who tries with all his power to prevent the men from telling the governor about the news of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Probably this sorcerer had much gain from his sorcery among the people. He used magic and the arts to deceive the people into believing something that was not real, and this he

feared would be revealed through the gospel that Paul preached.

He was probably confronting Paul before he even got near the deputy. Paul, ignoring him, went on to the deputy, the man following them and pleading with the deputy to not hear these men. Then, when Paul began to testify to the deputy, BarJesus would say that his doctrine was false, and not to listen to them. Then, the scripture tells us, **Acts 13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him.** The apostle looking intently at the man. Notice here that the Scripture gives us the two names of the apostle. **Saul** who is also called **Paul**. The apostle had two names because he had dual citizenship of two countries, Rome and Israel. Saul was his Israeli name, representing the nation of Israel. Paul was his Roman name, a Gentile name. Notice that after this particular verse, he is only called Paul. Many believe that he used this because he was a minister to the Gentiles, making it easier to have access to the Gentiles. Regardless of whatever reason it was, we know him only as Paul from this time forward.

Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and set his eyes upon him. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has no sinful nature, it is the “**Holy**” Spirit. Therefore, what Paul was about to do wasn’t through his sinful nature or an act of vengeance. It was under the direction of the Spirit. The sorcerer was working to hinder the word of God from being preached to the Lord’s children, which would be a great benefit to them. What was about to be done, wasn’t Paul’s doing, but the act of a Holy and just God.

Acts 13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Satan working through this man, was attempting to hinder the work of the Apostle to preach the gospel. Therefore in just retaliation, the Spirit put blindness on the sorcerer to leave these men alone for the work that they did was of God.

Acts 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. The deputy saw this happen by the hand of God. These men were not false teachers but were sent of God. The deputy then hearing about Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, being crucified, and rising in the third day was astonished at this doctrine! He was now a believer, as well as many of the people that heard them also. Now the deceptions of man was replaced by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Greatly benefiting many of the people of this little island! To God be the praise! (R. L. Taylor)

God be with you until, by God’s grace, we meet again in the next Glad Tidings or in heaven.