

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.44, October 29, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

**Biblical Christianity, in the STEPS OF JESUS! —
Not Boring! Not fun and games! Not entertaining!
REAL! LIFE-TRANSFORMING!**

Some years ago, I was in a home... and a young man was excited about the wonderful revival meetings that they had recently had at their church. He was especially keen on the Evangelist: "One of the best I have ever heard!"... and... **"He was so funny!"**... and so, the young man proceeded to tell me joke after joke that the Evangelist told. The jokes were what stuck with him. Most of them were, indeed, funny. However, he did not have a single word in his report about anyone being convicted of sin and/or repenting. He did not come away from the 'revival' with a passion for Christ... just jokes. **HERE WAS A SINCERE, TEACHABLE YOUNG FATHER BEING LED ASTRAY BY A MODERN 'BIBLE-BELIEVING' CHURCH!** 'Christian' comedians are very popular. More and more pastors, in order to attract or to keep the crowd, pay much attention to creative entertainment and humor as a vital part of Sunday worship services.

It is true, that God gave us the ability to laugh. A cheerful heart is a good thing. It is also true that no one in all of history had more JOY than the Suffering Servant of God, our Lord Jesus Christ! But Jesus was no 'funny man'... nor did He train 'funny men'...'Christian comedian' is not a Biblical calling or gift of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, we are in a time when the churches love funny men, love entertainment, love to talk about how **Christianity is supposed to be fun!** So called 'Christian' comedians are **crowd bringers and crowd pleasers** in America. These crowds are generally among the many of Christendom whose moral lives, by all statistical accounts, are no different from their non-Christian neighbors. **Many will wake up too late! (Matthew 7:21-23; 24:37-39)**

A. W. TOZER wrote: ... There are millions who cannot live without amusement; life without some form of entertainment for them is simply intolerable; they look forward to the blessed relief afforded by professional entertainers and other forms of psychological narcotics as a dope addict looks to his daily shot of heroin. Without them they could not summon courage to face existence. No one with common human feeling will object to the simple pleasures of life; nor to such harmless forms of entertainment as may help to relax the nerves and refresh the mind exhausted by toil. Such things, if used with discretion, may be a blessing along the way. That is one thing, however, the all-out devotion to entertainment as a major activity for which and by which men live is definitely something else again.

The abuse of a harmless thing is the essence of sin. The growth of the amusement phase of human life to such fantastic proportions is a portent, a threat to the souls of modern men. It has been built into a multimillion dollar racket with greater power over human minds and human character than any other educational influence on earth. **[This quote was written in the 1950s... today, he would have said, 'multibillion'...]**

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was—a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers.

So, today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions [BILLIONS!] of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God. Many churches these days have become little more than poor theaters where fifth-rate "producers" peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

The great god Entertainment amuses his devotees mainly by telling them stories. The love of stories, which is a characteristic of childhood, has taken fast hold of the minds of the retarded saints of our day, so much so that not a few persons manage to make a comfortable living by spinning yarns and serving them up in various disguises to church people.

What is natural and beautiful in a child may be shocking when it persists into adulthood, and more so when it appears in the sanctuary and seeks to pass for true religion. **Is it not a strange thing and a wonder that, with the shadow of atomic destruction hanging over the world and with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements?** That in an hour when mature

saints are so desperately needed vast numbers of believers should revert to spiritual childhood and clamor for religious toys? **"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned ! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim."** AMEN. AMEN. (The Great God Entertainment is by A.W.Tozer; Taken from *Root of the Righteous*, Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1955, p. 32-33)

LIVING, DYNAMIC, TRANSFORMING VISUALS!

Many culture-wise pastors and other leaders tell us that people's attention span is short. They remind us that folks today are accustomed to high tech entertainment; **AND THAT IF THEY ARE TO BE REACHED WITH THE GOSPEL, WE MUST USE DYNAMIC, EXCITING, VISUALS— THEY ARE RIGHT! Therefore, they conclude, churches must entertain folk.** So, they pay big bucks for all manner of exciting entertainment venues because they must get the crowd to come. **THEY ARE RIGHT AGAIN—** with few exceptions the churches with the biggest entertainment budgets draw the biggest crowds. Moreover, the common method goes something like this: Once they have the crowd and they have entertained them for a while, the professional religious entertainer — who may be a preacher or an evangelist or a comedian or a sports hero or an illusionist, etc — must draw the net!

In other words, they have to go for the close, they have to manipulate the emotions of the crowd and get them down the aisle. Those who respond are guided through a 'sinner's prayer'— which is followed by the announcement that all who 'repeated the prayer' are **SAVED! Sadly, it is well documented that from 75-90% of all these deceived souls get back to their normal living for sin, self, satan, and society in rather short order.** The denominational leaders, evangelists and pastors know all about these deadly stats! However, thus far, they have not been willing to change their methods. They just gear up for the next big show. **Yes, dynamic and exciting VISUALS are needed— BUT NOT PRETEND ONES!**

REGARDLESS OF 'ATTENTION SPAN'— what the lost really need to witness is **REALITY.** They need to **SEE** genuine Christians who are seeking to live holy lives, whose lives overflow with love, with forgiveness, with kindness, and who love Jesus and His Word and who live with a holy boldness for Christ. **WHEREVER THERE IS A GENUINE, HOLY SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIAN— THERE ARE 'VISUAL EXPRESSIONS' OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST which are life-transforming to both the Christians and to those to whom they/we witness.**

The tragic reality is that the church in America in 2013, pretty much has to turn to illustrated, play-acting, drama-sermons coupled with high-tec lights/sounds with flesh appealing music — **because the REAL LIFE sermons that we are supposed to be 'preaching' by our living before a watching world are SADLY missing!** Tragically, many in the pulpits

and pews are living on about the same moral level as the pagans to whom we are supposed to give the gospel!

NEVERTHELESS, God's method is real life and real living— not play-acting: 2 Corinthians 3:2-3! The New Testament Church did not have a DRAMA DEPARTMENT because there is no 'play acting' in real Christianity! Neither did they build churches by means of groovy 'Praise Bands' or 'Gospel' Quartets. **In radical contrast, God does His wonders through the preaching of the gospel and through genuine ILLUSTRATED LIVES! Example: Drink deeply of the account of a 'server of tables' named, Stephen, as found in Acts 6-8! Awesome!**

We humans are VISUAL! Thus, **God's gospel produces, models and sets before a watching world REAL VISUALS!** Yes, the heavens declare the glory of God and the earth shows His handiwork! (Psalm 19:1) **BUT when real 'living epistle' Christians are full of the Holy Spirit— a watching world SEES JESUS:** Acts 6:15; 7:54-60! **REALITY:** The New Testament Church **did not do** 'play-acting' drama of any sort nor any sort of musical religious ragtime as a means to get the gospel out. **Instead, they turned their world 'upside down' with the real thing— their Holy Spirit-filled living and bold gospel preaching!** (Acts 4:23-33; 5:28; 17:6)

QUESTION: Should we continue to promote **pretend dramatics and entertainment-factor based music OR should we** repent of our anemic Christianity and become **LIVING EPISTLES?**

BY THE WAY, THIS WEEK A GROWING NUMBER of churches will be once again promoting 'Hell-houses' or 'Judgment-houses' as they try to **SCARE** people into praying the sinner's prayer. **REALITY:** So far as a method to **SCARE THE HELL** out of sinners, Jesus never used pretend play-acting dramatizations such as the modern day Hell Houses!

Moreover, Jesus rejected even the use of a real resident from eternity coming back to earth from the dead - (from the dead, Luke 16:30: heaven or hell) - **so as to warn the Rich Man's brothers! JESUS SAID, 'NO!'** He refused to send anyone from hell or from heaven to use as a tool of evangelism!

STRANGE REALITY: Hell Houses, other dramatizations, various forms of religious entertainment and/or books about people who have supposedly been to heaven or hell and back are popular today. The evangelistic methods of the New Testament are not popular! Nevertheless, in radical contrast to man's beloved religious practices and ideas, Jesus still says that if the lost "will not hear **Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.**" (Luke 16:31) Yes, the New Testament

GOSPEL of Christ is CLEAR in the Old Testament. (Isaiah 53) But how much more clear, rich and full the gospel is in the New Testament!!

Moreover, it is the Word of God that makes the lost wise unto salvation— as the Author of the Word, the Holy Spirit, quickens the Word to hearts! Also, the loving, forgiving, 9-fold fruit Holy Spirit filled lives of real Christians is the Gospel 'SET TO MUSIC!' **As our lives sound forth the glorious MUSIC of the gospel, the sinner SEES live, living, REAL VISUALS and HEARS the 'music' of the gospel!** Now, having seen and heard the gospel, the sinner is more open to the WORDS of the Gospel from our lips or from a tract; or from a sermon, etc.

Yes, it still pleases God to save those who believe through the FOOLISHNESS of preaching! (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21) I repeat: Nowhere in the New Testament did the Holy Spirit call for or set forth the use of play acting or entertainment or grand productions or grand art or comedy as divinely appointed ways to get the true Gospel of Christ to the lost!

There are many ways, methods and schemes along the broad way by which one may build the great harlot religious system. **Many are they which are NOT of the planting of Jesus and they will come to a tragic end!** (Matthew 7:13-27; 15:1-14) However, the Word of God is very plain that the Church of Jesus Christ, which is HIS planting, is built by Jesus Himself!

And He declares that the GOSPEL is the POWER of God unto salvation - not the gospel 'dressed up' in play acting or with flesh-pleasing music - **but the pure Gospel PREACHED and the pure Gospel lived by genuine saints who BOLDLY tell the good news of the Gospel.**

So in the end, it just depends on 'which church' one is engaged in building as to what methods one uses! FRIGHT from a Hell House may lead to a religious decision and commitment to a form of powerless religion. But the pure preaching of the Word of God is bold, brings Holy Spirit conviction, repentance and faith, and CONTINUING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST! (Acts 2:23-47) Let us return unto the LORD and His ways!

HOW CAN CHRIST BE MADE VISIBLE IN GALLATIN, SUMNER COUNTY and/or wherever you may live? ANSWER: EVERY GENUINE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE A WALKING, LIVING MIRACLE... walking/living MIRACLE lives of which the world knows nothing... walking VISUALS which will leave the SPIRITUALLY DEAD with having been confronted with SUPER-NATURAL witnesses, living VISUALS of Christ on earth:

1. "...Be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50) 2. "...Wash **one** another's feet" (John 13:14)
3. "...Love **one** another..." (John 13:34-35; John 15:12, 17) 4. "Love **one** another" (Romans 13:8)
5. "Be devoted to **one** another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10) 6. "Honor **one**

- another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10) 7. "Live in harmony with **one** another..." (Romans 12:16) 8. "...Stop passing judgment on **one** another" (Romans 14:13) 9. "Accept **one** another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7) 10. "...instruct **one** another" (Romans 15:4)
11. "Greet **one** another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26) 12. "...When you come together to eat, wait for each other" (I Corinthians 11:33) 13. "...Have equal concern for each other" (I Corinthians 12:25)
14. "...Serve **one** another in love" (II Corinthians 13:12) 15. "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2) 16. "If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:15) 17. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Galatians 5:26) 18. "...Be patient, bearing with **one** another in love" (Ephesians 4:2)
19. "Be kind and compassionate to **one** another..." (Ephesians 4:32) 20. "...forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32) 21. "Speak to **one** another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19) 22. "Submit to **one** another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21) 23. "...in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3) 24. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
25. "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13) 26. "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against **one** another" (Colossians 3:13) 27. "Teach... [**One** another]" (Colossians 3:16) 28. "...admonish **one** another" (Colossians 3:16) 29. "...make your love increase and overflow for each other" (I Thessalonians 3:12) 30. "Encourage **one** another" (I Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews 10:25)
31. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11) 32. "Encourage **one** another daily..." (Hebrews 3:13) 33. "Spur **one** another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24) 34. "...Do not slander **one** another" (James 4:11) 35. "Don't grumble against each other" (James 5:9) 36. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16) 37. "...Pray for each other" (James 5:16)
38. "...Love **one** another deeply, from the heart" (I Peter 1:22, 4:8) 39. "...Live in harmony with **one** another..." (I Peter 3:8) 40. "Greet **one** another with a kiss of love" (I Peter 5:14) 41. "Offer hospitality to **one** another without grumbling" (I Peter 4:9) 42. "Each **one** should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10) 43. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward **one** another..." (I Peter 5:15) 44. "Love **one** another" (I John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11, 12; II John 5)...

REALITY: IT IS NOTHING SHORT OF STUNNING and **TRAGIC BEYOND WORDS** as to how **LACKING** multitudes of professing Christians are of the above actions, words and attitudes which **WOULD MAKE CHRIST VISIBLE** to our families and to our neighbors! **MOREOVER**, it is even more stunning as to how **DIS-INTERESTED** multitudes of

professing Christians are as to becoming those in whom and through whom CHRIST SO LIVES!

QUESTION: HOW CAN CHRIST BE MADE VISIBLE IN GALLATIN, SUMNER COUNTY and/or wherever you may live? HERE IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF A TEENAGER:

In or around 1544 or 1545, Cornelis Aertsz de Man (who lived in the Netherlands) witnessed an Anabaptist being burned at the stake, for refusing to recant and bow to Romanism. As the flames raged upon this unnamed soldier of the Cross of Christ, he prayed for his tormentors. **Cornelis, age 14**, was so moved by such a powerful and beautiful faith that he searched and found a home where Anabaptists were having Bible study. **"Their witness of faith, their serious study of the Word, their joy in life and their concern for love and moral integrity all excited him."** [This account is from Faithful Unto Death: 15 Young People who were not afraid to die for their faith, by Myron S. Augsburger, pages 9-18]

NOTE: This congregation of believers did not march Cornelis off to the youth fun and games department— no, he was seated right in the mix of all the adults who were seriously studying God's Word! Their adult, youth, and children's 'program' was all the same: (1) BY WORD OF GOD and by the power of the Holy Spirit, sinners are converted to Christ; and then, (2) they are to be DISCIPLED. **Within a few weeks, Cornelis was converted to Christ. He was baptized and disciple in the midst of the congregation. BY THE AGE OF 17, Cornelis was so strong in the faith that the Romanists thought if they could capture him and get him to recant they could make a major dent in the Anabaptist movement.**

It was not long before they captured Cornelis and threw him in prison. Day after day they sought to get him to recant. Finally, they brought him into a castle court room where they lined the walls with Romanists priests. There they promised that if only Cornelis would renounce his simple Biblical faith and return to the state Romanist church that he would be give a FUTURE OF POSITION AND HONOR. **Cornelis calmly replied: "There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!"** Over and over and day after day, Cornelis stunned and overwhelmed the learned preachers with his Christ-like spirit and powerful speaking forth the truth of Scripture. In short, they mercilessly tortured him until at about age 21, being convinced that he would not recant, they burned him at the stake. **THUS and QUICKLY, Cornelis was absent from the body and PRESENT with the LORD FOR ALL ETERNITY!**

REALITY: The above account of how Jesus builds His Church is much like reading what is found in the Acts of the Apostles.

WHICH WILL WE PROMOTE?

1. **Boring RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT**, followed by emotional manipulation— which gives a 'drug-like' FIX of excitement but leaves one powerless to live any different from the world and all too often leads to a bad eternity!

2. **OR SHALL WE PROMOTE the way modeled** in the Acts of the Apostles; **the way modeled** by an Anabaptist being burned at the stake, praying for his tormentors; **the way modeled** by an Anabaptist church overflowing with, "... witness of faith,... serious study of the Word, ... joy in life and ... concern for love and moral integrity...."; **the way modeled** by a 17 year old (about 3 years old in the LORD) setting forth a powerful, godly witness: "There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!"... **and the way modeled** by MULTITUDES for 2000 years of church history.

Grace to all in Christ! James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org