



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 41, No. 51, December 21 , 2015 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is **a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD**

[NEXT NEWSLETTER... January 5, 2016]

GOD Gave— What Shall I Give?

LET US JOIN IN with the Apostle Paul in GRATITUDE; and JOIN the Macedonian Christians in overflowing with RICH GENEROSITY! 2 Corinthians 9:15— "Thanks be to God for His **indescribable** gift! ... His gift **too wonderful** for words! ... His **inexpressible** gift! ... His **unspeakable** gift! ... His gift that **words cannot describe....** Thanks be to God for His **unspeakably precious** gift!"

2 Corinthians 8:1-5— "Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. **They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor.** But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that **they gave not only what they could afford, but far more.** And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for **their first action was to give themselves to the Lord** and to us, just as God wanted them to do." (New Living Paraphrase- 2 Cor. 8:1-5)

WHAT SHALL I / WE GIVE UNTO THE LORD?

I. LET US GIVE GODLY ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS! The Christ-like spirit of a local assembly of Christians is a most tangible thing. When we gather for services you can sense it, even see and hear it; and most importantly each one of us makes it happen... or we do the opposite! **This spirit, of which we speak, is the product of the Holy Spirit—** the inner spirit of our lives shining through smiles, greetings, conversations, conduct, and so much more. There is the kindly courtesy of our greeting one another. There is the warm handclasp of friendly interest. There is the heartfelt participating in a Sunday School Class or a Prayer Service or a Worship Service.

There is, in the Worship Service, the centering of our attention upon our primary business of the hour, the worship of God— for we gather to give HIM praise, adoration, and honor. We gather to give Him ourselves, our gifts, talents, and offerings. We gather to give united hearts crying out, ***“Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory! Amen!”*** We gather to sit at HIS FEET— to receive and to heed HIS WORD.

A further revelation about the SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH **is seen as we NEVER SPEAK OF THE CHURCH as "they"... it is always "we" or "us" or "our."** IF there are times when the spirit of the church is not high and fine, we never blame "they" or "them"... rather, we search our own hearts. **And we stand ready to repent of our own failures;** and ready to contribute needed forgiveness, godliness, purity, joy, faith, hope, and love. We stand eager and ready to help and serve.

We refuse to think evil or speak evil or to listen to evil about our brothers and sisters. Moreover, we are not merely those who are willing to serve **if** all goes according to our personal liking; **rather, we are the LORD'S SERVANTS and will be found at our duty posts in all the seasons of life.**

WALKING IN THE WORD AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT'S APPLICATIONS OF THE WORD OF GOD TO US, we embrace powerful everyday ways that God delights to use to build up His Kingdom! **THEREFORE, LET US BE FOUND GIVING THESE:**

1. I CAN AND WILL BE FOUND PRAYING for the rule and reign of God in and through us **in our** individual lives, **in our** homes, **at** our work places, **and especially in the midst of our church family.**

2. I CAN and will be found talking UP my brothers and sisters and not talking them down! I refuse to do satan's work of fault-finding, accusing, back-biting, slandering, tale bearing, or discord sowing. **RATHER, I choose** to do Christ's work of loving, blessing, praying for, and doing good. **I choose** to speak words of patience and kindness and encouragement. If I see a brother or sister overtaken in a fault, **I choose** to go to them privately and in humility to seek to be Christ's agent of healing.

I choose to speak well of the LOCAL ASSEMBLY of saints to which the Holy Spirit has joined me. There is so much to give thanks for as we look at the various works of God's grace in the midst of the saints at Southside. Because it is a glorious testimony to my Savior, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, I will speak well of the local church to which He has joined me. Nothing of the work that Christ is yet to complete in the Body at Southside is ever godly grounds to deny or minimize the amazing grace of God already done and being done!

I choose NOT to persecute JESUS! Living in the fear of God, I remember that the words and attitudes I manifest toward my brothers and sisters reveal words and attitudes I am, in fact, manifesting toward Jesus! I may sing and preach and testify loudly and have a reputation of being a great spokesperson for Jesus. But what I say and do toward another Christian, reveals the reality of what I have just said and done to Jesus. (Acts 9:4-5)

I AM BLESSED that we are ENJOYING love and harmony— but we are NEVER BEYOND needing to hear this: When I or when any of us participate in satan's work of fault-finding, accusing, back-biting, slandering, tale bearing, discord sowing, and/or evil speaking against another Christian or against a local Bible-believing church or against our spouse— **WE ARE PERSECUTING JESUS!**

3. I CAN AND WILL BE FOUND FAITHFUL so that I am a contributing, building up member of the Body of Christ at Southside. I choose to give

full proof of my own faith in and love for JESUS by my faithful contributions to the building up of the Body of Christ at Southside. In the midst of the crookedness of this present world, I will walk uprightly in all my dealings with both saints and sinners.

In the local body of Southside, I may be a "little toe" or an "arm" or an "ear" or "a hand" ... or I may not feel sure as to what my gifts are.

However, I know that we are all built up by the streams of grace that God has ordained to flow through one to another, (Ephesians 4: 11-16; 1 Corinthians 12). Thus, I embrace all of the many "**One To Another**" commands of my LORD, on behalf of my brothers and sisters.

4. I WILL CHOOSE TO OPEN MY EYES TO THE HARVEST, for souls are perishing.

Some time ago, 10,000 active Christians were asked this question: "Who or what was responsible for your coming to Christ and the church you attend?"

Here is how they replied:

2%-- I had a special need.

4%-- I just decided to.

6%-- I liked the pastor.

½ of 1%-- I attended a revival service.

78%-- **A friend or relative influenced and invited me!**

9½%-- All other reasons.

Therefore, let us each and every one go out into our daily world and live holy and humbly, and live lovingly and forgivingly, and live to give kindness and hope, and live to be a blessing to others— **THUS, CREATING ENTRANCE WAYS** so as to be empowered to influence and invite others to Christ and to the local assembly where God has us worshipping. For it is the will of God that when we bring folks to our Sunday School classes and Worship Services that they will be able to experience, to see the GOSPEL we have been telling them about!

II. GIVING Tithes and Offerings UNTO THE LORD (SEE the

earlier quoted New Living Paraphrase of 2 Cor. 8:1-5 at the first of this article!)

In the last century, **R.G. LeTourneau** was a designer and manufacturer of heavy earth-moving equipment. **In the early years of his business, LeTourneau went into partnership with God. By this he did not lower grace to the level of a bargain.** Rather he said, "Because I believe that God wants businessmen as well as preachers to be His servants, I believe that a factory can be dedicated to His service as well as a church." **In 1935 he irrevocably assigned over 90 percent of the company's profits to the LeTourneau Foundation,** described as a "not-for-profit corporation whose income and capital can be used **only for the cause of Christ**". (Moving Heaven and Earth, Donald Ackland, Iversen-Ford Associates, New York). **LeTourneau said: I have never been much of a preacher of tithing.** My Life Verse has been Matthew 6:33, ***"Give first place to the kingdom of God and what He requires, and He will provide you with all these other things."*** **MY PHILOSOPHY has been— we should serve God because we love, not because we are making a bargain with Him.** Many marriages go on the rocks because it was a bargain rather than love. You do something for me and I'll do something for you. In the same way people say, IF I DO THIS FOR GOD will He also do something for me? That's not love, it's a bargain. ***I often say, if you love the LORD you will serve Him and if you are not serving Him it proves you don't love Him and if you don't love Him it proves you don't know Him.***

I hope you are now beginning to understand what I meant when I began by saying that I'm not much of a preacher of tithing. **If under the law the people of God gave one-tenth to the LORD, shame on us, living under grace, if we don't do better.** The tithe may be a place to begin if you are not now giving to the LORD, but it's no place to stop. **You see what I mean? If you get a vision of what our salvation cost, see Christ on the cross, the cruel nails in his hands and feet, the mocking crowd and the weight of our sin... paying the penalty for you and for me—** it will put your service and giving on a different plane.

JESUS gave himself willingly to give us salvation from sin. If this grips us, we can't help but love Him. We will say with the song writer— ***Love so***

amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all! Only the grace of God can save us from a superficial declaration of love for God.

True love based on an understanding of God's grace and deep gratitude for the gift of salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ—these will settle the problem of “what should I give God” because my thinking will be turned around to consider that all I am and have belong to Him and I am a steward for Him while serving him in this life.

It's easy to sing, “Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.” Only God's grace in a life can make it come true. **Man, selfishly inclined, can't do it in his own power— IT TAKES GOD'S POWER!** [The above is from R. G. LeTourneau's autobiography, *Mover of Men and Mountains*]

****** UNCONFESSED, DEEP IN THE HEART OBJECTION: “That's all well and good for LeTourneau— He was rich! I am NOT!” (Oops... You must not have read the opening Scripture about the extravagant GIVING of the POOR and Persecuted Macedonian Christians!) MY ATTITUDE ABOUT GIVING IS ROOTED IN MY ATTITUDE TOWARD MONEY!** Jesus said Luke 16:10, **“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”** If a person is faithful to God on financial issues—which is the *least* issue, then they will also be faithful and scriptural with the *greatest* issue— faith in God and passion for His kingdom labors.

“If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, [deceitful riches; or in ‘money matters’] who will commit to your trust the true riches?” If we will not be faithful in financial matters, and if we will not allow God to be *first* concerning money issues, how can He trust us with the true riches of His grace? WE CANNOT serve God and mammon! (Luke 16:13) **All stingy giving is rooted in love for mammon and/or love for what mammon buys!**

III. GIVING PRAYER UNTO THE LORD! BECAUSE ONLY GOD CAN DO THE WORK OF GOD— the congregations in the Book of Acts often gathered for united congregational prayer! (Classic example: Acts 4:23-33) **WHAT ABOUT MY ATTITUDE TOWARD “GIVING TIME AND PRAYER?”**

SADLY, for many churches, the church-wide prayer meeting no longer exists or is the LEAST ATTENDED meeting of the church. **HERE IS A RADICAL CONTRAST: "THEY WILL ALL BE THERE!"**

The pastor of a Mennonite church had scheduled Dr. David Gibbs, of the Christian Law Association, to speak during a Wednesday night Prayer Service. AS the Pastor was driving Dr. Gibbs from the airport to the church building, Gibbs was trying to prepare himself for what he is about to face, so he asked:

“Pastor, I know it's Wednesday night... and folks do not know I'm coming... I just want you to be at ease, because I'm happy to come and the size of the crowd does not matter...” **The pastor responded simply, "THEY WILL ALL BE THERE!"**

So, Dr. Gibbs translated that ‘response’ into his Baptist experience and figured that a few would show up for a holy huddle. They arrived. The building was a plain, unattractive block building. **THE PARKING LOT WAS FULL!** Dr. Gibbs entered and found bare concrete floors and bare metal folding chairs— **OVER 400 HUNDRED metal folding chairs**— all filled with the REGULAR WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER MEETING CONGREGATION ! As the pastor had earlier stated, "THEY WILL ALL BE THERE!" **KEEP IN MIND: These were farming people, with crops to plant, or tend, or harvest.** Their days were always long and their work was never done. **HOWEVER, EVERY WEEK on Prayer Meeting Night— THEY WERE ALL THERE! Stunned,** Dr. Gibbs asked, "Pastor, please explain this to me?"

“Well, Bro Gibbs, **WE ARE ALL FAMILY and ...**

- 1. We are responsible for one another!**
- 2. We are commanded to pray for one another!** And we also realize that;
- 3. We need God's wisdom and power** if we are to make a difference in our community in reaching others for Christ!
- 4. THEREFORE,** we have just as many for Prayer meeting as we do for other Church-wide services...

5. At our Prayer Meeting, the main agenda is PRAYER. We actually spend most of the time praying— **(a) PRAYING** for each other and **(b) PRAYING** for those in the world we seek to reach and minister unto!”

CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER SERVICE: FOR MOST OF US, the issues are not a lack of time, how tired we are, or a thousand other excuses!

The issues are LOVE for Jesus, LOVE for our brothers and sisters in Christ,

VISION of our calling, and EMBRACING DEPENDANCE UPON GOD!
IT IS ENCOURAGING that in recent times our 6:30pm Wednesday PRAYER SERVICE is growing! **HOPE TO SEE YOU THIS COMING WEDNESDAY!**

It’s a matter of PRIORITY AND FOCUS!

Grace to one and all! James Bell

PS... TO EACH AND EVERY ‘SOUTHSIDER’— Cindy and I are blessed and honored to serve and fellowship in your midst! **THANK YOU** for your many expressions of love and kindness!

May this be a very special week during which you EXPERIENCE DIVINE REVELATION and worship like/similar to that of the poor shepherds (Luke 2:8-17) and the magnificent MAGI (Matthew 2:1-11) of long ago!

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Contact Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS:

☐ **6:30pm— Children** Ministry/activities;

☐ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— **(For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)**

☐ **6:30pm— CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE...** Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— New Study, the Epistle of James, starts January 7 @ 11:00am; Cindy Bell teaching

* **EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study!** {Study in ROMANS}... Come to back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning... walk forward... till you smell the coffee!

SUNDAY SERVICES FOR DECEMBER 27, 2015:

9:30am- Sunday School // **10:45am-** Worship
(No meal or afternoon service)

SUNDAY SERVICES FOR JANUARY, 2016: 1. January 3, 10, 24, 31: 9:30am- Sunday School // 10:45am- Worship // NOON meal and Early Afternoon Service. **2. January 17:** 9:30am- Sunday School // 10:45am- Worship / LORD'S SUPPER // NO MEAL, or afternoon service. [EVENING HOME GROUPS... location to be announced] **3. First 2016 FIFTH SUNDAY Evening of PRAISE— May 29**

SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL— *Uniting Church, Home, and School in CHRIST!* <http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>