

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 38, **No.45, November 13**, 2012 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

FAITH and GIVING THANKS!

God's commands and Promises are wonderfully clear: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. 5:18) **"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS: and again I say rejoice...**be anxious about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:4-7)

Just before the Thirty Years War, which devastated the center of Europe from 1618-1648, a young disciple of Martin Luther was assigned the Lutheran pastorate of Eilenburg, (Germany), a walled city presently some 27 km driving distance from Leipzig. The scene was thus well laid for one of the most challenging pastoral ministries on record. Both Protestant and Catholic-sponsored armies tore through Germany from 1618-1648 - six of them altogether, coming from such diverse areas as Bohemia, France, Austria, Sweden, Denmark and Spain.

Though it can be argued both ways as to whether the war was triggered by Catholic attempts to throttle the Reformation or from covetous Protestant princes, once war was joined the carnage was tremendous. **Some say Germany suffered more in proportion during the Thirty Years than she did after World War Two (1939-1945).** Historians Will and Ariel Durant in their *Story of Civilization*, mention that population in Germany and Austria fell from 21,000,000 to 13, 500,000 (*The Age of Reason Begins*, page 567). Writers Renard and Weulersee claim that one might travel sixty miles without seeing a village or house. Of 1717 houses standing in nineteen Thuringian villages in 1618 only 627 remained in 1649. Both sides inflicted barely believable atrocities on each other. Both sides hired cruel mercenaries so mercy was in short supply. In Magdeburg 20,000 out 36,000 were massacred. The religious issues soon faded to the background as armies resorted to almost unrestrained rape, massacre and torture.

At the beginning of 1637, the year of the Great Pestilence, there were four ministers in Eilenburg. But one abandoned his post for healthier areas and could

not be persuaded to return. Pastor Rinckhart officiated at the funerals of the other two. **As the only pastor left, he often conducted services for as many as 40 to 50 persons a day— some 4,480 in all.** In May of that year his own wife died. By the end of the year, the refugees had to be buried in trenches without services. **Nevertheless, in 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' war, Pastor Martin Rinckart drew spiritual strength from a SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING for God's past and present goodness. The story goes that one day in 1633 Rinckart came home for a meager meal with his children and composed a special grace: "Nun danket alle Gott" (Now Thank We All Our God)**

*"Now thank we all our God, With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, In whom His earth rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today."*

On the surface it still seems utterly remarkable that Rinckart could write that prayer considering all that was going on around him. **Most amazing! How could he - how could anyone - muster up the faith to declare praise to God at such a time, with his family barely having enough to eat. Ah, faith! That's the key word.**

Faith isn't what many people think it is today— virtually believing in something that may or may not be true. The Bible describes true faith as a supernatural gift from God once a person has surrendered their will and allegiance to Him (Ephesians 2:8). Faith is a *charism* of the Holy Spirit, a word we recognize in the word "charismatic" or "charisma."

Rinckart undoubtedly had placed his trust in the one true God even before those tragic years. As a Christian pastor, he well knew that his Savior, Jesus Christ, had promised that this gift of faith would always be with him. In John 4:14 Jesus said, "those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Jesus also said: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" John 7:38-39).

Rinckart knew that the Holy Spirit, given to Christians after sincere repentance and belief, is the very power that made the universe. That power, being personal, can take up residence inside Christians (Ephesians 3:20; John 14:23). **Such a living hope made it possible for Pastor Rinckart and his tiny flock to endure.** Martin Luther, of course, had been the apostle of faith and Rinckart knew Luther's writings well. As a young man he had written a play about his spiritual hero. Rinckart would need all of Master Martin's lessons in faith. In the 1630s a foreign army appeared outside the city gates to besiege Eilenburg for the second time. The general demanded a 50,000 thaler ransom or the city would be put to the sword - not a vain threat in those days.

Pastor Rinckart, the story goes, led some of his best followers to parley with the besieging army. The general flatly refused to lower the terms. According to Brian Wren's website "Praying twice", Rinckart then and there urged his people to pray. **"Come, my children, we can find no mercy with men, let us take refuge**

with God.” The small flock fell on their knees and prayed fervently. They then sang one of the most popular hymns of that era, **“When in the hour of utmost need.”**

When in the hour of utmost need We know not where to look for aid,
When days and nights of anxious thought Nor help nor counsel yet have brought.

Then this our comfort is alone, That we may meet before Thy throne,
And cry, O faithful God, to Thee For rescue from our misery.

To Thee may raise our hearts and eyes, Repenting sore with bitter sighs,
And seek Thy pardon for our sin And respite from our griefs within.

For Thou hast promised graciously To hear all those who cry to Thee
Thro’ Him whose name alone is great, Our Savior and our advocate.

And thus we come, O God, today And all our woes before Thee lay;
For sorely tried, cast down, we stand, Perplexed by fears on every hand.

Ah! hide not for our sins Thy face, Absolve us thro’ Thy boundless grace,
Be with us in our anguish still, Free us at last from every ill.

That so with all our hearts we may Once more our glad thanksgivings pay,
And walk obedient to Thy Word, And now and ever praise the Lord.

*(Can be sung to the more familiar tune of **JESUS SHALL REIGN!**)*

The opposing general was impressed. He reduced the demand and the city was spared. One can imagine Rinckart returning home feeling that the second verse of his song of praise now sounded more meaningful than ever:

*“O may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And **blessed peace** to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, And **guide us when perplexed**,
And free us from all ills, In this world and the next.”*

Note the words “blessed peace,” and the grace to “keep” Christians spiritually secure. “Perplexed?” The Bible says Christians are often perplexed about the strange twists and turns of this life. Perplexed, wrote the great Bible writer Paul, but not in despair (2 Corinthians 4:8). Rinckart’s faith – **or as he would say, Christ’s faith inside him - stretched through all the terrible setbacks of this life and reached out in vision to the world beyond.** What a wonderful guide was faith through the cares and snares of this life. After a life of prayer and devotion and study and good works in Christ’s service, Rinckart possessed both fruits of the Spirit in abundance.

The inspiring last verse of Rinckart’s song of prayer shows how it is possible to worship God with our *minds* as well as our hearts. This is not often stressed today. **The last stanza is relentlessly orthodox in its theology as it brings the Christian teaching of the Trinity into the picture:**

“All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given,
The Son and him who reigns With them in highest heaven;
The One eternal God, Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, And shall be evermore.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=1v8kHKX61fg

God is one and yet in some mysterious way God is three - how strange to human conceptions of logic! But a God we can explain and control is no God at all.

Martin Luther, Rinckart’s mentor, knew this. He used to refer to *Deus Absconditus*, **the God who is so great that he is always beyond us, his ways often inscrutable, his greatness without measure** (Isaiah 40:12-31). Yet Rinckart knew what all dedicated Christians know, that God is accessible and can be appealed to in faith and wants to instill that saving faith inside us through His Holy Spirit. As Rinckart’s life’s experiences showed - this kind of faith is practical and workable and brings healing in its wings.

[A few years after Rinckart’s death, the chief musician at the University of Berlin, Johann Cruger (1598-1662), set Rinckart’s stirring words to music... **In the 1850s an American scholar named Catherine Winkworth translated it into English and it became a chief Thanksgiving hymn sung in almost all the churches of the New World.]**

Has the message of *Nun danket* reached you? (*Now Thank We All Our God*)
What is Rinckart’s message for today? One American pastor has said of *Nun danket* that “no matter what the external conditions, **contracting the disease of hardness of heart is not inevitable.**” No matter what our outward circumstances or how far away we feel from God or if we have never prayed to him before, **there are always two words we can pray—** those are the words **“Thank you.”** Even in direst difficulties we can always begin a prayer to God by offering him thanks for what is still going right in our lives. John L. Hoh, Jr. wrote: “It is the will of God that we give thanks. If we were not thankful we would go insane with the perplexities and irregularities of life’s experiences. **If there was ever a time when we needed to be thankful it is in the hour of crisis;** because if we are not thankful, we will be overwhelmed by despair.” (*Article edited from Neil Earle, a pastor-journalist based in Los Angeles*)

In another part of the world, about 40 years later, we have the First Thanksgiving Day Proclamation in America / Date: June 20, 1676 By: Governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts:

The Holy God having by a long and Continual Series of his Afflictive dispensations in and by the [present](#) Warr with the Heathen Natives of this land, written and brought to pass bitter things against his own Covenant people in this wilderness, yet so that we evidently discern that in the midst of his judgements he hath remembered mercy, having remembered his Footstool in the day of his sore displeasure against us for our sins, with many singular Intimations of his Fatherly Compassion, and regard; reserving many of our Towns from Desolation Threatened, and attempted by the Enemy, and giving us especially of late with many of our Confederates many signal Advantages

against them, without such Disadvantage to ourselves as formerly we have been sensible of, if it be the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, It certainly bespeaks our positive Thankfulness, when our Enemies are in any measure disappointed or destroyed; and fearing the Lord should take notice under so many Intimations of his returning mercy, we should be found an Insensible people, as not standing before Him with Thanksgiving, as well as lading him with our Complaints in the time of pressing Afflictions: The Council has thought meet to appoint and set apart the 29th day of this instant June, as a day of Solemn Thanksgiving and praise to God for such his Goodness and Favour, many Particulars of which mercy might be Instanced, but we doubt not those who are sensible of God's Afflictions, have been as diligent to espy him returning to us; and that the Lord may behold us as a People offering Praise and thereby glorifying Him; the Council doth commend it to the Respective Ministers, Elders and people of this Jurisdiction; Solemnly and seriously to keep the same Beseeching that being persuaded by the mercies of God we may all, even this whole people offer up our bodies and souls as a living and acceptable Service unto God by Jesus Christ.

Reality is this: Whether we are in the ecstasy of jubilation or the agony of desperation—

1. It is a good thing to give thanks: **Psalm 92.** **2.** Thanksgiving sanctifies all aspects of life, including suffering: **1 Thessalonians 5:18.** **3.** There is always something significant to thank God for with everything God brings or allows in our lives: **Ephesians 5:20.**

4. We are able to give thanks in these ways because we have confidence that God is working everything together for **the specific good of** conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ: **Romans 8:28-29!** **5.** Moreover, it is a repeated, wonderful command that we are to be thankful: **Colossians 3:15; Psalm 100:4.**

6. In a marvelous way, the giving of thanks is connected with saving faith: **Luke 17:11-19. Note:** A lack of faith and a spirit of ingratitude go together!

Thanksgiving and Praise often involve sacrifice. Let us give verbal praise and thanksgiving unto the LORD: **"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a SACRIFICE OF PRAISE, the fruit of lips that confess His name."** (Hebrews 13:15)

The most astounding example of THANKSGIVING comes from the lips of Jesus! Standing before His disciples, *Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks!" (Matthew 26:27).* As you know, that cup contained wine which was representative of His own blood which He was soon to shed for the sins of the whole world. **It was the cup of death, and yet with the very shadow of the Cross upon Him, Jesus gave THANKS!**

Crowded into that cup were (1) your sins and mine, (2) the wrath of God against those sins and (3) the very sacrifice of Himself for us!

Instead of shrinking back, He quietly ***"took the cup, and gave thanks!"***

O how doomed we all would be were it not for the miracles which come forth from the fountain of JESUS' SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING!

NOW: Now, many more miracles wait to be manifested... through you and I... and **especially upon the undeserving ones of our world?** Let us walk in the steps of Jesus. **Let the miracles come forth!**

AMERICA'S NATIONAL THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY WEEKEND IS AT OUR DOORSTEP: NOVEMBER 22-25, 2012!

1. SOME will have extra time off from work. As families gather, let us list and count our blessings; and let us pray and worship Almighty God through Jesus Christ, by His blessed Holy Spirit. Many years ago there were ten lepers who were wonderfully healed by Jesus. **Sadly, only one of them returned to Jesus to give THANKS.**

The healed and THANKFUL one went home WHOLE! The nine, healed of physical leprosy, walked on and away from Jesus, consumed with the damning leprosy of ingratitude dominating their souls. (Romans 1:18-32)

2. Many of you will be visiting family and/or friends back home or family and/or friends will be coming to you. There will be grand opportunities to manifest genuine "JESUS IS SAVIOR AND LORD" faith!

EXAMPLE: **On Sunday, November 25**— At "their" home or at yours, be prepared in advance to ASSEMBLE WITH SAINTS, with a Christ-centered, Bible-believing congregation in Worship Services.

NOTE: It is tragically common on Holiday weekends for folk to take a vacation from Church services. **The tired excuses are always the same:** "O we had a house full of company!" "We did not bring any clothes for church!" **Reality:** This is just one more reason lost family members and children in the home have the feeling that Christianity is a joke... something totally insignificant and unworthy of top priority.

ACTUALLY, Holidays give Christians wonderful opportunities to humbly and unashamedly show who is LORD of our lives. It is as simple as, "On Sunday our family will be in Sunday School and Worship services... we would love for you to go with us! If you choose not to, you are welcome to "make yourselves at home" until we get back, etc."

3. During these days, even as God has instructed us in His Word, let us give love and ministry to others, doing good to all... but especially to brothers and sisters in Christ. **Thanksgiving and other holidays** also provide good opportunities to build bridges to the lost: Share a meal. Watch a game or play some games. Go hunting, etc. Love unconditionally. Don't corner or pressure... just radiate Christ. **Manifest great gladness at the prospects of gathering with the saints for Bible Study and Worship...Invite them to join in with you but place ZERO pressure and avoid any spirit of condemnation.**

**THE PURPOSE OF THE FOLLOWING STORY IS NOT A 'GUILT TRIP'-
BUT RATHER, A FACING OF THE REALITY in our world:**

Stomachs protruding, bulging, and sore. **Two boys. Two reasons.** Mom, can I have some more turkey? *Help yourself, there's plenty more.* ~~~~~ **Mom, is there anything to eat? My stomach's sore. Maybe tomorrow.** One woman laughs. The other one cries.

Inflation's cutting the paycheck. We will have to economize.~~~~~ **Drought ravaged the land. No game. No grain.** One dad's trying to keep his standard of living alive. **The other, just trying to stay alive.**

I don't like sweet potatoes...well, there's plenty of mashed!~~~~~ **Dad, couldn't you find anything to eat? Nothing son.**

Now thank we all our God.... *You don't like pumpkin pie; then eat the mince. I don't like that either. SURPRISE! I baked a cherry pie just for you!* ~~~~~ **Nothing? Nothing? It's been 3 days. Maybe tomorrow!**

My stomach hurts. That's what you get for eating like a pig. Quiet down. You won't die. Dad is getting you an Alka Seltzer. ~~~~~ **My stomach hurts, Mom... I know son... Maybe tomorrow there will be something... Dad's still out looking.**

STOMACHS PROTRUDING, BULGING SORE. TWO BOYS. TWO REASONS. ONE IS STUFFED. THE OTHER IS STARVED. ONE MOM LAUGHS. THE OTHER MOM CRIES. **ONE BOY LIVES. THE OTHER BOY DIES.** (Copied and Edited...Author, unknown) **What's the point? THIS THANKSGIVING:**

1. Let us be a people of **GRATEFUL HEARTS.**
2. Let us be a people of **OPEN HEARTS.**
3. Let us be a people of **SHARING HEARTS.**
4. Let us be a people of **LOVING HEARTS.**

With **THANKSGIVING** for you all! / James Bell /
www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

1. **Tuesdays, 10:30am— Ladies Bible Study!**
2. **WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM!**
YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Adam and Bethany's home.
3. **Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH VISITATION**
4. **EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's Fellowship and Bible Study**

Sunday Schedule for November 18, 25

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School /
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal / 4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service**
{November 18— LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE will be at the END of the morning worship service and in the auditorium}}

Sunday Schedule for December 2, 9

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School /
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal / 4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service**

Sunday Schedule for December 16

1. **9:30am- Church-wide BRUNCH** (Brunch in the place of Sunday School)
2. **10:45am-** A SPECIAL TIME OF WORSHIP, REJOICING in the Birth of JESUS CHRIST:
 - a. **Several Men will speak— sharing Biblical REASONS why Jesus came.**
 - b. **The Choir and various ones will lead us in PRAISE/SINGING/CAROLS— Rejoicing in Christ's birth!**
 - c. **WE WILL CONCLUDE the service at THE LORD'S TABLE.**

Sunday Schedule for December 23

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School /
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **LORD'S SUPPER at conclusion of the worship hour.**

Sunday Schedule for December 30

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School /
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal / 4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service**