

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.14, April 2, 2013 / 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)

JESUS— "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH!"

Jesus reminds us: "... **I will build My church**, and the gates of hell [Hades: the powers of death] shall not prevail against it..." (Matthew 16:17-18) The believers in the New Testament understood that once you're born again, you're part of the fellowship of the redeemed: **"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."** (1 Corinthians 1:9) Moreover, that fellowship is not just me and Jesus; but it is Jesus, me and God's church, the true Body of Christ **and even more specifically it is— Jesus, me and the local assembly of believers to which the Holy Spirit has joined me!** (1 Corinthians 12:12-24)

Here's a surprise... at least to our way of thinking: In the New Testament **no one ever laments**, "Attendance was down last Sunday, what can we do to build up attendance?" When the strong teaching of Jesus, (John 6:32-65), caused many who had been following Jesus to leave— Jesus did not panic or tell the few who stayed, "O gee, we had better do some CREATIVE PLANNING and develop a plan to appeal to the likes of the masses!... Maybe I need to up amount of dramatic miracles!"

BY THE WAY, the entire New Testament period was NOT filled with churches to whom the LORD WAS ADDING new converts every day, as was the case in Acts 2! **REALITY during the New Testament era and even to our day:**

1. The preaching/teaching of Jesus and the Apostles DROVE MANY AWAY! (John 6:66-71; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 4:1-5)

2. Just as Jesus warned in Mark 4:14-18— the work of satan, the reality of persecution, and the cares of this life along with money— these all REVEAL the lack of true conversion in many and so they fall away.

3. The Apostle John reported that there were many anti-christs; and that they left the true congregations because they were false converts from the start! (1 John 2:15-19)

Nevertheless, none of the New Testament churches lamented, "Attendance was down last Sunday, we need a high attendance promotion!" **There is no evidence that** they took a 'poll' to find out what the lost like so as to adapt church to the lost. **They had no** sports, no comedians, no entertainment, no advertising budget to be spent on endeavors designed to attract pagans. (Or to hold on to and bring back the carnal multitudes present last week!)

New Testament Christianity is radically different! The Holy Spirit via the New Testament REPEATEDLY calls upon believers,

- (1) To not blaspheme the gospel by bad living!
- (2) To ADORN the gospel by Christ-like living!
- (3) To live lives of loving one another!
- (4) In addition, Jesus, in Revelation 2-3, reveals that which He commends, that which He commands; and that which He rejects if a church is to be truly effective.

Moreover, the Acts of the Apostles overflows with SURPRISING teaching and examples as to the methods of God in building an EFFECTIVE CHURCH MINISTRY:

(1) Persecution of the church led to a church-wide prayer meeting with the results being a fresh advance of the kingdom of God— **See Acts 4:23-33!**

(2) Sin by church members led to severe chastening [SUDDEN DEATH!] **with the end result being** another fresh advance of the kingdom of God— **Acts 5:1-14!**

(3) Neglect of some church members and murmuring in the church led to the appointment of special servants to minister to the Greek widows **with the ultimate result being** yet another fresh advance of the kingdom of God— **Acts 6:1-7!**

(4) Bold preaching brought martyrdom and more persecution which yielded yet another fresh advance of the kingdom of God— **Acts 7:1-60; 8:1-4!**

WHAT SHALL WE SAY, HOW SHALL WE RESPOND? Pray for persecution? Shall we pray that Jesus get our attention by exposing sin in the church and killing some lying, deceiving Church members— from the Choir loft, to the pulpits to the very back pew?... or...What?

IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE UNDERSTAND THIS:

There are only two 'churches' being built in our world and in our town—

(1) An impressive harlot, but she is not of God's planting (Matt. 15:13-14); she is all tares and is rejected and will be judged by Jesus in the end. (Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 17:1-18)

(2) The miracle Bride of Christ who bears likeness to Christ. (John 10:27-30) Imagine that! Those in the Bride of Christ start as babes in Christ and they grow in Christ and bear more and more likeness to Christ!

NOTE: Of course real Christians and local congregations who belong to Christ BEAR LIKENESS TO CHRIST! OF COURSE— FOR JESUS IS THE ONE DOING THE BUILDING! **"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH!"**

All those whom HE BUILDS experience all of Romans 8:28-39! Note: For those 'sheep' who INSIST and persist in sin the GOOD SHEPHERD will chasten them: 1 Cor. 11:28-32; Heb.12:5-14.GOD NEVER gives justification, skips sanctification and then grants glorification.

REALITY: There are only two churches in the world. There are only two congregations in Gallatin. Moreover, the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest— Matthew 13:24-30. EVEN IN Bible-believing, Christ and His grace focused congregations— when they assemble, there will be wheat and tares together! **JESUS WILL ONLY BUILD HIS CHURCH.** HE DOES NOT COMPROMISE THE GOSPEL nor GOSPEL TRUTH IN ORDER TO APPEAL TO TARES. **The 'building work' of Jesus IS FOR HIS BRIDE!**

The methods used to build the harlot are different from the methods used to build Bride! **WHICH CHURCH one wants to see advance DETERMINES THE METHODS USED!**

In a New Testament Church, all believers have to do is to *stick to the business of holy Christian living and boldly proclaiming the gospel to the world.* GOD will add to the church as He pleases! (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 3:6-11)

In the first century NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH, when needs and problems came up, they went before the Lord and sought His help and got it. **EXAMPLE: "What did they do when Peter was locked up in jail?" There was always an answer and the answer was always from the LORD— normally in specific answer to prayer!** (Acts 4:23-33; 12:5-12)

The Lord is still building His church. In the local assembly - He brought us together. - He holds us together. - He helps us with every need and problem that arises, if we take it to Him.

QUESTION: In light of this reality, why is the Church-wide Prayer meeting so neglected by us today?

Here are two very real needs in all Bible-believing Churches:

1. There is a need to genuinely praise God corporately... so that we are letting the Holy Spirit and the words of Scripture lift us into God's presence ... **So that when we are singing hymns or choruses or praying or reading Scripture or preaching and/or giving testimony, we are truly before the Throne of God in worship in a spirit of unity.**

We speak not of ‘cookie-cutter’ uniformity, but of praise that is true and pure and beautiful before the Lord, coming from our hearts UNTO the LORD in God-given unity and holiness. (Ephesians 4:1-16)

2. There is also an urgent need for laborers, not only in the harvest beyond, but also in the house of prayer, in the assembly of the saints. Laborers are needed for **the sometimes thankless, monotonous tasks** that make it possible for us to be a well-equipped, well-nourished, gospel army. There are many needs for laborers:

EXAMPLES: - **People** to be responsible in the nurseries. - **People** to help get dinner ready at fellowship meals. - **People** to help cleanup. - **People** to open and close. - **People** to help with music and singing. - **People** to teach classes. - **People** to disciple others. - **People** to visit the sick, shut-ins and widows. - **People** to write letters. - **People** to minister to folks at home... or in jail, etc.

People to ‘own’ the specific missionaries we support—so that each month those missionaries will receive specific ministry from the assembly of saints at Southside.

People... a Body of saints in Christ with their EYES and HEARTS wide open—thus, vast amounts of spiritual ministry is accomplished every LORD’S DAY before, during and after our gatherings.

No assembly of believers can function with power if it doesn't have an army of people to do the ‘everyday and unseen’ jobs purely as acts of worship unto our LORD! (Worship is not just PRAISE! Worship is SERVICE unto the Lord!)

THEREFORE, TWO NEEDS: More praise! More laborers!

The temptation is to sit down and map out a solution. But the solution, if it's going to be valid, **has to come from the LORD Himself:**

(1) You don’t go to man for artificial stimulus when you need to learn to worship and praise— **you go to the Holy Spirit breathed** Word of God and behold GOD and His gospel of mercy and grace. (Rom 12:1-2) (2) You don't go to man when you need laborers— **you go to the LORD of the harvest!** (Matt 9:36-38; Luke 10:17-20)

Further Note:

(3) Going to God IN ONE ACCORD brings forth PRAISE! (Acts 4:23-33);

(4) DEALING WITH SIN in the church brings forth new laborers! (Acts 5:1-14)

(5) Surely we understand this principle in the area of money. We need to take literally our Lord's promise that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things, including funds, will be added to us. **So, we are not to beg or ask for pledges.** We are to take these and all matters before the Lord. **Let us agree** with the brother who said:

"If we as an assembly should reach a place where the money isn't coming, freely and unto the LORD, from the hearts of believers who know the importance of being faithful in the unrighteous mammon, **we should take it as a revelation from God that we are out of step with Biblical Christianity!**" (2 Cor. 8:1-15)

And so these two needs for more true praise and more laborers have to be approached in the same way: They have to be taken before the LORD of the church, remembering that He alone is the builder.

- He knows what we need better than we do.
- He cares more than we do.
- And let us remember also that Jesus builds His church through the **intercession** of His saints! (Acts 4:23-33)

Man's way is this: Whatever 'packs the pew' must be of God!

With God's way, there are seasons of many (Acts 2) and there are seasons of few who remain, (John 6:63-66; Phil. 3:18-19) — BUT AT ALL TIMES, we must LOOK UNTO THE LORD! **MOREOVER, The true work of God can NEVER be judged by size, only by SORT!** (1 Cor. 3:13)

1. We need to be clear in our minds as to what we're asking for when we ask for more true praise. "Lord, give us a spirit of true praise!" We can picture SINGING hymns and Choruses with our whole hearts, even with uplifted hands and with wonderful God-honoring testimonies, etc. - and these things should happen!

But true praise is something much more than that— The true praise of God is to serve God well with body, soul, and spirit, 24/7: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with singing." (Ps 100:1-2; Rom 12:1-2)

If our joyful noise to the Lord is real and our singing in His presence is truly music to His ear— **then we're going to be serving Him gladly as we serve Him well.**

MOREOVER, WE WILL NOT ONLY SING WITH THE CONGREGATION; WE WILL SING AT MIDNIGHT IN THE PRISON! (Acts 16:22-40)

Moreover, we will be manifesting holiness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not the works of the flesh! (Galatians 5:19-23; Isaiah 1:11-20)

HERE IS STUNNING REVELATION:

*"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works; **you have the***

name of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God... " (Rev 3:1-2)

The church at Sardis had a name of being alive. **If you went to their meetings, there would have been GREAT CROWDS and you would have heard dynamic praises.** But those praises were not real: Because their works were not perfect in the sight of God, their works were not meeting God's requirements! **Most of her members were DEFILED WITH THE FILTH of this world! (Rev. 3:4)**

GOD REQUIRES HOLINESS, LOVE, and FORGIVENESS! GOD REQUIRES THAT WE REPENT OF all works of the flesh! **Moreover, God's way to HAPPINESS, which is foundational to worship, is serving others after the pattern of Jesus!** (John 13:13-17; 13:34-35)

Sardis, in their eyes, was the most alive church around! But in reality, most of the member's lives, (even as is true in many churches today), were deeply soiled with the filth of sin! TODAY lovelessness, hate, back-biting, slander, resentments, bitterness, immorality, etc. abound in the Great ALIVE churches!

GENUINE PRAISE is the offering up of our body as a living sacrifice, committing it gladly to the thankless, monotonous glory-less jobs in the service of God without grumbling; and praise from hearts repenting and being purified from sin! (Ps. 51) *"I appeal to you therefore brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship."*(Rom. 12:1-2)

How did Jesus live so as to receive His Father's pleasure?

By emptying Himself of His glory, taking the form of a servant, and serving obediently even unto death. How did Paul live manifesting spiritual worship to God? It was through endurance in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, fastings... REJOICING in the LORD always... seeing every situation as one to further the gospel! (Phil. 1-4)

So if we're asking the Lord to shower us with a spirit of true praise, we're really asking Him to help us yield ourselves to a spirit of glad service in the every day and in the thankless places and the cruddy jobs. We are really asking Him for BOLDNESS to take the gospel to the lost in our world. Moreover, **we are willing to be done with the filth of this world, to be done with bitterness, anger, lust, etc.**

LET US: Make a joyful noise... **Serve the Lord with gladness...** and come before his presence with singing... with cleansed hearts. (Isa. 1:10-20)

2. We also need to get clear in our minds what we're asking for when we're asking for more laborers. "Lord, give us more laborers!"

THUS, we might picture MORE people gathered for OUTREACH ministry ... more help in the nurseries ... help with various Classes ... faithful ministry to the widows... parents nurturing their children in the ways of the LORD... men and women reaching out boldly proclaiming the gospel ... somebody going out to a foreign land to help those missionaries ... **All this and more may well happen.**

(1) But every laborer who is truly serving the Lord with gladness is first of all a person whose heart is on fire with praise and thanksgiving toward God!

(2) GETTING RID of all manner of sin that has been allowed to dirty a believer's heart is a foundational key to PRAISE-JOY-FILLED LABORS for the souls of others! (Psalm 51:12-15; 40:1-3) When King David repented of his sin, then he began to SING again and then he went AGAIN into the harvest! (Psalm 51)

(3) TODAY, the Holy Spirit is already PRESENT and indwelling; but even so we must follow the same pattern: Acts 4:23-33; Acts 5:1-14!! All too often the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched. Nothing so quenches the Holy Spirit as lovelessness and ungodliness. **Who are these laborers who get the work done?**

People who live a life of repentance and faith... **People who** have first learned to enter into God's gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise ... **People who** have learned truly to be thankful unto Him and bless His name. They work diligently with songs of praise **in their hearts** ... they continually renew their strength... for they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength... (Isaiah 40:31)

"... I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) **Jesus is building His church all over the earth, including the place where you and I are.** As we lay these two needs [More Praise and More laborers!] before Him we can be sure that our very desire to pray for these things is coming from Him. **And we can be sure that He waiting to give us these two miracles in the coming days in greater measure than we could ask or think! But we have not because we ask not!**

SHALL WE BECOME A HOUSE OF PRAYER? Or shall we to go to the world for methods and techniques, drawing people to religious clubs rather than being those through whom JESUS CHRIST BUILDS HIS CHURCH?

(1) A spirit of true praise to serve the Lord with gladness - May we yield to it!

(2) An army of laborers who will joyfully live and die praising Him - May we be found among them! [Additions and Edited from R.E. Bieber]

Grace and Peace in our LORD JESUS CHRIST! James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for April!

1. Ladies Bible Study— 'LORD, HEAL MY HURTS!'— Tuesdays @ 10:00AM! Call — 615-452-5951

2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH

4. Saturdays @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for April 7; 14; 21; 28, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish} [LORD'S SUPPER, 4/21]

4. 1:00pm Early Afternoon Service