

# GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

**Volume 40, No.2, January 14, 2014** / 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."***

## **Winning Battles in an Increasingly Deadly Spiritual Warzone!**

**It seems that almost every day, there are new signs and/or new reports of deepening trouble all over the world**— and not just the normal troubles that we have always experienced in a fallen world. No, there are social, political, economic, and spiritual upheavals taking place in our time which threaten to radically change and/or destroy life as we have known it in the last fifty plus years. Thus, on the physical front, more and more Americans are seeking to 'stock up', to be prepared for suspected hard times.

**But spiritually we are already in a most deadly warzone!** Many are falling away into loving this present world. Many are falling away into deepening addictions to gross and enslaving sins. Many are falling away from the true Christian faith which exalts Jesus and His Word.

**THEREFORE, LET US SERIOUSLY Read, Study, Meditate upon, HEED, and SHARE the Word of God in the Year 2014!**

**In 2014** it is critical that the saints of God in Christ be ***"... steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*** (1 Cor. 15:58)

## **I. Don't be Surprised, Caught off Guard, Anxious, or Paralyzed by Fears and/or Unfolding Events**

**Let your heart be settled in and guided by God's Word in** Matthew 24-28; Mark 13-16; Luke 21-24; John 17-21; all the New Testament Epistles; and especially the Revelation. Be regularly reading through one of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles! **Obviously, not all at the same time— we are simply encouraging a definite focus.**

**1.** The above mentioned Gospel **sections** unveil the death, resurrection, ascension and second coming of Jesus Christ; **as well as** the believer's Great Commission assignment! Suggestion Option: **Read straight through** Matthew, Mark, Luke and/or John— where we are privileged by the Holy Spirit to behold the LAMB OF GOD, to sit at His feet, hear His voice, experience His presence, marvel at Him, and experience the Holy Spirit calling us to faith/obedience. **QUESTION: *Should we not read the Gospels carefully and often?***

**2.** The **Acts of the Apostles and all the various letters** by the Apostles unveil how the Holy Spirit wants us to **'be the church' and 'do church'** before a watching world. **QUESTION: *Should we not read these God ordained patterns and instructions for Christians often and carefully?***

**3.** Moreover, the **Epistles reveal** glorious revelation as to our **position of being 'in Christ' and give** detailed revelation as to spiritual warfare strategies **and** abundant revelation as to how to live so as to not bring shame to the name of Jesus **and** glorious, practical ways to adorn the gospel by Christ-like living **and** powerful warnings against FALSE PROPHETS **and** clear calls to gladly suffer for righteousness sake. **QUESTION: *Surely these are abundant reasons to read these often and carefully?***

**4.** The **Revelation** is the glorious unveiling of Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Lamb of God. The Revelation 'unveils' what Jesus Christ **is doing** at this present time; what He **will be doing** in days ahead and the reality of His ultimate intentions. **QUESTION: *Don't we need to be grounded and settled in such truth?***

### **READ THE REVELATION LOOKING FOR THE SOVEREIGN LAMB OF GOD!**

**1. Revelation, chapters 1-3 — The Sovereign Lamb is in Heaven** working through His blood bought redeemed saints on earth.

**2. Revelation, chapters 4-19 — The Sovereign Lamb from heaven is** ruling and over ruling present and coming events on earth, including Kings and Kingdoms, Presidents, Dictators and secret rulers even of this present hour.

***JESUS is moving them ALL toward that great and glorious day when He, the Lord Jesus Christ, will come back to this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!*** (Ephesians 1:10)

**NOTICE: In the Revelation— in the midst of** all these events that those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb often suffer the wrath of men and satan, but never the wrath of God!

**3. Revelation, chapters 20-22— The Sovereign Lamb is eternally enthroned and His holy Bride will be with Him in the New Earth and the New Heavens.**

**4. LET US NEVER FORGET:** The supreme and ultimate goal of all history is NOT THE TEMPORAL SAVING OF AMERICA; NOR IS IT THE SAVING OF ANY OTHER EARTHLY NA-

TION! **RATHER, the supreme and ultimate goal of all history is a BRIDE for Jesus**, comprised of all those saved by God's amazing grace during all time periods of history from Genesis through the days of the Revelation. **Revelation 21:9-27 clearly reveals** the eternal oneness of ALL the redeemed as being the Bride of the Lamb! **QUESTION: *Should we not read the Revelation, the Unfolding of Jesus, often?***

### **READ THE REVELATION LOOKING FOR THOSE REDEEMED BY CHRIST!**

**1. Revelation, chapters 1-20—** ALL through the Revelation, **those redeemed by the blood of the LAMB are seen on earth**, moving through tribulations and martyrdom; **and they are seen IN HEAVEN**. As John is moved by the Holy Spirit to write what we have as 22 chapters, which is all written to the churches— John introduces himself as, 'your brother and COMPANION IN TRIBULATION!' (Revelation 1:9) [At various places in the Revelation, the redeemed are called: God's elect, God's called out ones, those who follow the Lamb, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ!]

**While on earth**, the redeemed are often the subject of man and satan's HATRED AND WRATH. They are often PRESENT when God pours out some expression of His wrath, even as was Noah during the flood and even as was Israel on the night of Passover.

**But although affected**, they were never the subjects or objects of the wrath of God — not then, not now, not ever! The Revelation has ESPECIALLY been given to encourage the true SAINTS OF GOD IN CHRIST who have always BEEN and WHO ALWAYS will be persecuted. Jesus said, ***"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*** (John 16:33) The Revelation could well be called **Jesus' commentary on John 16:33.**

The Revelation is a reminder **that joy is not the absence of suffering but the presence of God and confidence in God** in the midst of the most trying of circumstances. **AGAIN**, the Christians who first read the Revelation were in a time of severe persecution with thousands being MARTYRED. **And so it has been for 2000 years of church history!** **NOTE:** The freedoms and liberties enjoyed by many Christians in the USA and the whole 'western' world are an exception. Today and for most Christians over the last 2000 years— suffering, privation, and persecution has been their lot. And yet, they were and are loved by Jesus just as much as those who are or have been blessed with freedom, wealth and the gospel! **Western Christians love preaching that promises rapture before any severe trouble, trials or tribulation. NEVERTHELESS**, the Revelation SHOUTS, ***"Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee the crown of life!"***

NOTE: Even if the pre-tribulation rapture belief is correct— it is without dispute that it is deadly to focus on 'escape' rather than upon faithfulness to Christ unto death. I can still see a sweet sister in Christ, coming to me with tears streaming down her face and saying, ***"Doesn't Jesus love us too much to let us go through such sufferings as the sufferings of the great tribulation?"*** **RESPONSE: 1. Doesn't Jesus love** the tribulation saints, be they Jew or Gentile? **2. Doesn't Jesus love** the saints of the last 2000 years and those today who suffer from man and satan the same kind of evil as are upon those in the great tribulation? **3. And MOST OF ALL**, there is one reality

that shows the LOVE OF JESUS for all saints and as John was writing to Christians in persecution— the Holy Spirit moved him to speak of Jesus who, “... LOVED US AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD!”

**2. Revelation, chapters 21-22—** ULTIMATELY, OUR LORD’S REDEEMED on/from EARTH become the complete BRIDE of the LAMB triumphant in Heaven— the Bride adorned for Her Heavenly Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Revelation gives needed re-assurance that Jesus is SUPREME, SOVERIGN, AND SUFFICIENT. HERE in 2014, we could use some of that same reassurance!**

## II. WHAT IS YOUR BIBLE READING/STUDY/MEDITATION PLAN?

**If you don’t have a Scripture reading/study/meditation plan— GET ONE IMMEDIATELY!**

**SUGGESTIONS:** For whatever else one may be reading from God’s Word, I would encourage you to set aside some months and do the following: **Read 5 Psalms and one Chapter of the Proverbs each day.**

Example: **On February 1—** read Psalm 1, 31, 61, 91, 121; and read Proverbs, chapter 1. In other words, whatever the day is, start with that Psalm and then add 30 each time... **as on February 7:** Read 7, 37, 67, 97, 127; and Proverbs 7. You can make slight adaptations on the shorter months with different amounts of days.

**THE VALUE OF THIS SYSTEM? The Proverbs** are filled with practical wisdom on many of life’s daily issues, temptations, etc. **The Psalms** empower prayer and praise to God. **The persecuted New Testament church, as they prayed set portions of Psalm 2 before the LORD: Acts 4:23-33!**

## III. WHY HAVE A BIBLE READING/STUDY/MEDITATION PLAN?

**To ‘get more out’ we have to ‘put more in!’ It starts with having a vision and hunger for God!** Without question, Jesus calls us to Christ-likeness, to discipleship, and He calls us to HELP EACH other in that process. In other words **we are called to be Disciples and Disciple-makers.**

**Helping each other to GROW as Disciples is a Work Achievable ONLY by the Word of God quickened to us by the Holy Spirit. Growth in Christ-likeness happens as,**

- (1) God’s Word more and more saturates the lives of Christians who are;
- (2) Joining themselves together in intercessory prayer for each other and who are;
- (3) Yielding to and encouraging **accountability** so as to help each other to win spiritual battles and grow in the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- (4) **The FRUIT will be** that more and more— we, (our families and church), will ADORN the gospel and not BLASPHEME the gospel before a watching world! Moreover, such growing in grace saints will also boldly proclaim the gospel! REVIVED CHRISTIANS proclaim the gospel to others: Psalm 51:12-15; Psalm 40:1-3!

## **AN ACCOUNTABILITY BIBLE READING/STUDY PLAN:**

**IN THIS SECTION of this article, be asking the question:** How can I... or How can we ADAPT this to a Sunday School class, to family and/or personal Bible Study and/or to a small discipleship group setting? **Having at least one person to be 'accountable with' is helpful.**

**PRAYERFULLY choose a Book of the Bible.** *Focus on one chapter each week—reading, studying, meditating.* **Prayerfully read** as many times as possible each week. **COME PREPARED** to a small Fellowship Meeting; or Discipleship group **ready to answer five questions:**

1. **What one thing** did I learn/see and/or discover from reading the ONE FOCUS CHAPTER this week that can make a real difference in my life?
2. **How** has my life this week demonstrated that Christ lives in me?
3. **Is** there any temptation or sin I have battled this week that I would like for us to pray about?
4. **What** lost person in my sphere of influence can we pray for this week and how can I be salt and light to them?
5. **What** personal praises/personal prayer needs can we pray for?
6. **AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS, Pray and find a different believer with whom to go through this process— NOW 4 BELIEVERS are being disciple... then, 8, then....!!**

**EMBRACE this reality:** If you are a Christian, then, you are a BELIEVER PRIEST. You have within you the MASTER TEACHER, the Holy Spirit. **Therefore, wholly embrace the need and call to be a WORKMAN:**

*"Study, give diligence, aim at winning God's approval, a WORKMAN with no reason to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. [Accurate in delivering the Message of the Truth; Correctly analyzing, delivering the Message of the Truth.]"*

## **MOREOVER, let us EMBRACE SOUND Preparation for good Bible Study!**

1. Every time we open our Bibles to study the Revelation (or other Scriptures) — WE MUST COME WITH PROPER HEART ATTITUDES! Let us Pray and proceed with Reverence, Expectancy, Dependency, Alertness, and a willingness to OBEY what God reveals!

2. Some of you may want to **OBTAIN a notebook**, something like a simple spiral notebook... and have it and a pen with you **WHEN you are reading a chapter from the Bible and/or WHEN YOU COME to the Sunday School Class, THE MEN'S FELLOWSHIP, and/or some other discipleship setting.**

3. **Before reading the Bible Chapter of the week:** It will be very important to FIRST read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 over and again until when as we start to Pray before reading our Bible chapter that **a part of our praying will be a submitting to the very purpose for which God has given us each chapter of the Word of God!**

4. **BRING THIS TO THE 'EARLY AFTERNOON' SERVICE... and share with fellow**

saints some of what God has been revealing to you, calling you to obey, etc.

### **REMEMBER: The Word of God is for,**

- a. **DOCTRINE/TEACHING**— teaching us the Faith, teaching us the truth of both doctrines to believe and the true paths on which we are to walk.
- b. **REPROOF/refuting error**— showing us where we got off the Straight and Narrow Way.
- c. **CORRECTION/resetting**— showing us how to get back on the right path.
- d. **INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS**— showing us how to stay on the right path.
- e. **ALL FOR THE GOAL that we** be completely prepared and equipped for all good work, to the glory of God! (2 Timothy 3:15-17)
- f. **AND... THAT through the comfort of the Scriptures we might have HOPE!!**  
**(Romans 15:4)**
- g. **ABOVE ALL:** The Word of God has been given to us that we might KNOW and KNOW more intimately the GOD of the WORD! (Luke 24:44-48; Col. 3:16; Luke 16:29-31; John 14:21-25)

**BOTTOM LINE: When we open our Bibles to read a chapter from God's Word, the above 7 points reveal what God will be up to in our lives!**

**Therefore: (1)** We must not merely read... **(2)** We must also prayerfully STUDY and search for accurate UNDERSTANDING of what the Bible is actually saying and/or teaching... **(3)** We must be LISTENING for the Holy Spirit to QUICKEN personal applications of the Word of God to our lives.

**NOTE: DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN ON WHAT YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND! I** deeply suspect that **in most EVERY chapter in the Word of God that there will be** at least SOMETHING that each and every one of us will SEE and UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY— **major on and apply those truths. We will understand more later!**

### **Here are Some Excellent Questions to Keep in Mind as We Read Scripture:**

1. Are there SINS I need to confess?
2. Are there PROMISES I need to claim?
3. Are there ATTITUDES I need to change?
4. Are there COMMANDS I need to obey?
5. Are there EXAMPLES I need to follow?
6. Are there PRAYERS I need to pray?
7. Are there ERRORS I need to avoid?
8. Are there TRUTHS I need to believe?
9. Are there thing for which I need to PRAISE God and/or Give Him THANKS?

**The point being** that as I read the Word of God— it is very likely that I will find teaching about Godly attitudes or commands or errors, etc. Moreover, as I read a chapter over, day after day— **the Holy Spirit will see to it that the Chapter births PRAYERS of confession, repentance, petitions, praise and worship!**

**REALITY:** With this sort of prayerful and careful study of the Word of God— we will be gaining **INSIGHT**, we will be gaining **UNDERSTANDING**, we will be gaining **REVELATION** as to the will of God in various situations.

**REMEMBER:** Our goal is not mere interpretation. Our goal is **application and transformation MORE and more into Christ-likeness!**

**OBJECTION: This is all too involved; too serious. This will require too much time!**

**THE DEEPER REALITY:**

**1. The hour in which we are living is so late! 2. The spiritual warzone is so deadly! 3. MANY MEN, WOMEN and YOUTH are FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE throughout the land!**

**4. The stakes are so high— that only a great fool would NOT approach personal Bible Study in the year of 2014 in a much more serious way than has been our custom!**

Grace to one and all! James Bell

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!**

**\*\*\* EVERY WEDNESDAY: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! NOTE:** Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service. /

**YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm**

**LADIES BIBLE STUDIES— 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays, each month, 11:00am. / NEXT ONE: 1/23/14... meet in Ladies Sunday School room, next to church offices!**

**\*\*\*\* EVERY Saturday @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study \*\*\*\***

## **SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY: 19, 26**

**1. 9:30am- Sunday School → Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship**

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

**3. Noon: Fellowship 'covered-dish' Meal together!**

**4. 1:00pm-** Early Afternoon Service

**5. LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE: 1/19/14 at conclusion of Morning Worship**

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### **SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL!**

*Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected.* Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents!

**<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>** Call: 615-452-5951