

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 44, No. 45, November 7, 2017 / 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; and 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 and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

REFLECTIONS UPON THE MURDERS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, TEXAS



Sitting many HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY it is easy to say and/or agree with RIGHT/CORRECT responses like: "Heavenly Father, not again. Not another unthinkable act of wickedness . . . so soon, too soon. We begin this day with heavy hearts, fearful hearts, angry hearts. Our hearts break for the family of believers at First Baptist Church, the community of Sutherland Springs, and those living in the greater San Antonio area. **We share their shock;** we enter their pain. Father, show us how to love in the place of so much loss. Show us how to pray in the face of such great evil. **We grieve** for families who lost

children and siblings, parents and friends. **We grieve** for a small town subjected to such a huge tragedy. **We grieve** for a church whose worship of Jesus was violated with gunfire and death. **We grieve** for ourselves; and we own our feelings of vulnerability and confusion. **And we hope.** Evil doesn't get the last word; Jesus does. His cross defeated evil. His resurrection routed death. His love trumps hate. His reign anchors our hope. His peace centers our hearts. His compassion moves us forward. His return will complete the Story. Hallelujah.

Father, with tears on our cheeks and hands raised in praise, we trust you. Lead us in these coming hours and days. May we grieve with hope, lament with peace, and love with abandon. So very Amen we pray, in Jesus's triumphant and tender name." (Quote is from Pastor Scotty Smith: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/scotty-smith/grieving-hope-lament-sutherland-springs-tragedy/>)

Yes, those are good words; but it is easy to nod agreement and not consider additional words that are so very needful, especially to Christians ON THE OUTSIDE of this tragedy, looking in! THE FOLLOWING ARE IN NO CERTAIN ORDER:

1. NONE of the SHOOTERS in any of the mass murders— be they attacks upon folks at a concert, a night club, theater, an army base, OR A CHURCH— **WERE or could have been HOLY SPIRIT FILLED, WALKING IN THE STEPS OF JESUS, GENUINE CHRISTIANS!** This is not a point of bragging or of pride. IT IS JUST THE POWERFUL REALITY of the GRACE OF GOD. Genuine Christians of today are like the genuine Christians of the New Testament—willing to suffer and even TO BE KILLED for the sake of CHRIST! And like the ex-demonic, they are now 'clothed, IN THEIR RIGHT MINDS, and SITTING at the feet of Jesus; and ready to be commissioned to GO TELL what great things JESUS HAS DONE for them!

POINT: To AVOID ever being headlined as a murderer— ONE MUST BE A **HOLY SPIRIT FILLED, WALKING IN THE STEPS OF JESUS, GENUINE CHRISTIAN!**

2. I do not know about the Sutherland shooter/murderer; but MOST of these murderers, in addition to being STRANGERS TO JESUS, are found to have been seeking to cope with life with the aid of psychotropic drugs. **Moreover**, many of the shooters are enslaved and blinded with Islam, a religion of murderous hate.

3. Pastor Scotty Smith seems SURPRISED at the Sutherland murders: “Heavenly Father, not again. Not another unthinkable act of wickedness . . . so soon, too soon.”

UNTHINKABLE behavior? *Just one more explosion of wickedness that is SO DIFFERENT FROM the MOST of us? ACTUALLY, the wonder is not that SUCH HAPPENED; BUT THAT it does not happen MORE THAN IT DOES!*

1) BECAUSE in reality, in a fallen world, WE ALL HAVE HEARTS of deep wickedness— Jeremiah 17:9

2) EVERY ‘natural’ man and woman and youth and child’s heart is ‘works of the flesh’ saturated: Galatians 5:19-21— *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery¹ fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, **hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murder** ¹drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

REALITY: The only power to overcome such wickedness of heart is the GOSPEL of JESUS CHRIST.

4. This tragedy reminds us that God does not make even His blood-bought redeemed children IMMUNE to the horrific effects of sin: **Read Hebrews 11:35-40.**

5. Moreover, the words of JESUS in Luke 13:1-5 are SUPER IMPORTANT FOR US IN THIS HOUR: *“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; **but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.** Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; **but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.**”*

THE BIG QUESTION OF THE HOUR IS NOT why did God allow this or that tragedy to take place; but the real question is this: “WHY AM I STILL HERE? WHY HAS GOD BEEN SO MERCIFUL TO ME?” And above all, these are days to take very seriously the above response of JESUS: “UNLESS YOU REPENT YOU WILL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH!”

6. While the Sutherland murders seem to be rooted SIMPLY in the shooter’s personal lostness; and his hate toward family members—

REGARDLESS, there are worldwide growing ATTACKS on Christians and Christian Churches. Therefore, consider:

A pastor friend who serves the LORD in an African nation where Islam has MURDERED Christians and BURNED church buildings... a number of months back, asked me this question: ***“What do you think about this Islamic strategy of swallowing Christianity? Do we have to respond somehow?”***

Edited, RESPONSE I SHARED: I will seek to look at the question through the 'eyes' of the Word of God. ***First of all, Genuine Christianity will NEVER be swallowed up!*** Jesus has been, IS

building, and will build His church.... and all given to Him by the Father will be saved! (John 17) ***There has been, there is, and there will be persecution! (Matthew 10:16-42)***

At times one is hard pressed to find the true church...yet she has always survived and will not only survive but will be 100% triumphant in Jesus accomplishing all of His perfect will.

One of the big questions, of course, is this: ***When... at what point do we take up weapons and fight guns with guns... etc? OR DO WE AT ALL?***

I cannot say that there is NOT a time and place to defend one's family... or to try to do something to protect a congregation while they are worshiping... These are difficult questions.... and people respond differently.

[IN OUR OWN LOCAL ASSEMBLY, we are already seeking to be prepared to use various means to be protected from 'shooters'...]

WHAT I WILL DO HERE IS **TO PLACE OUR FOCUS on** that to which the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH was FOCUSED UPON! Therefore, looking at the Biblical revelation of the New Testament Church:

1. Bloody persecution came to the New Testament Church, as seen in the book of Acts; but the church never took up physical weapons. THEY PRAYED and KEPT ON PREACHING; knowing that they were INVINCIBLE UNTIL GOD CALLED THEM HOME! (Acts 4:23-33; 5:39-42; 7:1-60; 8:1ff; 20:22-24, etc.)

2. In 1 Peter 4:12-19.... Among the clear statements about persecution and responding to it; here is a warning NOT TO SUFFER AS A MURDERER! [This is from the Apostle, who before Pentecost had taken up a sword! And we must note that neither

he nor other apostles ever instructed persecuted Christians to take action, based on Luke 22:36!]

3. Revelation 13 unfolds an ultimate time of massive persecution and martyrdom. In verse 10, there is a warning about using the sword. The believers look FOOLISH for not taking the mark. THEY ARE MARTYRED. HOWEVER, in Chapter 14, those who took the mark ARE THE FOOLISH ONES; and they EXPERIENCE the wrath of God for all eternity!

4. In Revelation 15, the martyrs are worshiping and singing and FOREVER HAVE NO REGRETS— WE HAVE TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW! INTERESTINGLY: Those who have looked carefully at the History of the Church of Jesus Christ have long concluded that, ***“THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS IS THE SEED OF THE CHURCH!”***

HISTORICAL REALITY: BLOOD from swords or guns in the hands of the church has NEVER been the seed of the BRIDE OF CHRIST; but has been the seed of the torturing HARLOT!

FURTHER REALITY: ONE OF THE ROLES OF A COUNTRY’S GOVERNMENT IS TO PROTECT THEIR CITIZENS, EVEN USING FORCE: (Romans 13). HOWEVER, AS WE KNOW, at times it is one's own government who is the arch enemy of Christ and His people! (THERE ARE MANY THINGS I DO NOT KNOW...) **BUT FOUNDATIONAL REALITY IS THIS:** THE NEW TESTAMENT FOCUS WAS PRAYER; PREACHING; and BEING FAITHFUL EVEN UNTO DEATH! (Rev 2:10)

***** Stephen, the first Christian martyr**, dying offered two prayers. One was for himself: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The other was for his foes: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

***** The Apostle Paul said:** “The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and imprisonments await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”

***** Gregory Nazianzen said:** “Do they cast us out of the city? They cannot cast us out of that which is in the heavens. If they who hate us could do this, they would do something real against us. The only thing we have really to be afraid of is fearing anything more than God.”

***** To the King of Navarre, Beza said:** “Sire, it belongs truly to God’s church rather to suffer blows than to strike them; but let it be your pleasure to remember that the church is an anvil which hath worn out many a hammer.”

***** Leighton said:** “The church has sometimes been brought so low and obscure a point that if you can follow her in history it is by the track of her blood, and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt.”

***** Jortin remarked:** “To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion is not the Gospel of Christ, but the gospel of the devil. Where persecution begins, Christianity ends. Christ never used anything like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in.”

***** Milner said:** “Persecution often does in this life what the last day will do completely— separate the wheat from the tares.”

JESUS SAYS: “You shall have tribulation: but be loyally faithful unto death. For though you may be killed, I will give you the crown of life! Be not afraid says our Lord, my help is nigh! Indeed! Rejoice!” (Revelation 2:2:10-11).

***** Praise God for the ultimate witness and most effective soul-winning strategy:** namely, that when we who are alive in

Christ are delivered unto death for Jesus sake, the resurrection life of Christ is mightily manifest! (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

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

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.

WEDNESDAYS: ☐ **6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities;** ☐ 6:30pm— **Youth** Activities and Bible Study— **(Enter via double doors by gym)**

☐ **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... (Enter via double doors by gym)** ... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

***** LADIES BIBLE STUDY—** the Gospel of Luke, 11:14-26! ... Cindy Bell, teaching. **RESUMES** on Tuesday, JANUARY 2, 2018, Tuesdays.

***** MEN:** EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! **(Present Study — HEBREWS 11:1-40— LIVING BY FAITH!)** AT THE back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning, walk forward! **Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts WAITING starting at 7:30am**

SUNDAY SERVICES November 12, 19, 26 —

☐ **November 12 —**

9:30am - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service

Noon MEAL

☐ **November 19 — 9:30am** - Sunday School
10:45am - Worship Service // LORD'S SUPPER
[NO MEAL or Early Afternoon Service]

5:00 - 7:00pm— HOME GROUPS

☐ **November 26 — 9:30am** - Sunday School
10:45am - Worship Service / **Noon MEAL**

**5:30PM-7:30PM— FAITHFUL MEN,
 16 Concepts of a New Testament Church**

**WATCH and LISTEN to the Preaching of the Word of God!
 AND share the LINK with others!**

http://www.southsidegallatin.org/Listen_to_other_sermons_on_sermonaudio/

ADVANCE NOTICE for 2017 December Sundays:

1. Sundays, December 3 & 10 & 17— Regular schedule

SPECIAL Note: on 12/17— *IN PREPARATION for the LORD'S TABLE...*

The Word of God will be preached;

The Choir and/or others... will lead us in

Special PRAISE and THANKSGIVING to GOD THE FATHER,

For HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT OF JESUS!

2. Sunday, December 24:

9:30am- CHURCHWIDE BRUNCH in fellowship hall; 10:45am-
 WORSHIP

(During the Worship Hour, we will again COME TO the LORD'S TABLE... for when Jesus came to earth... HE WAS ON THE WAY to CALVARY!)

3. Sunday, December 31—

9:30am Sunday School and

10:45am Worship