

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 45, No. 31, July 31, 2018 / Southside Baptist Church / 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 Savior JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

A FEW 'HOT BUTTONS!'

This is an updated article, (shared on various occasions over the last 10 years), which sets forth a few issues which are at times turned into points of contention and/or division in churches. They are listed in no certain order. There is not space in this article to give thorough Biblical reasoning behind the positions set forth. Maybe that can be done on another day. Moreover, there has not been nor is there now any effort to get people to line up in 'cookie-cutter' fashion agreement on the details of these matters. As believer-priests each Christian is personally responsible and able to STUDY, discern, and apply the truth of the Word of God.

I. Divorce & Remarriage— Southside continues to maintain the position that Pastors/Elders and/or deacons (along with other qualifications) **must not have** a divorce in their background—even if it was prior to conversion. In our church family we are certainly blessed by men and women, (with marriage/divorce scars in their past), who faithfully serve the LORD in many ways. **As to Divorce & Remarriage:** I personally 'respect' the view

which states that the so called innocent party has a right to divorce and/or remarry when their spouse commits adultery. My personal understanding from Scripture is that EVEN IF there is 'permission' there is no command to divorce. Thus, I encourage reconciliation. I encourage folks in their present marriage to have a 'no divorce' position.

I counsel believers, (who are in a second marriage, etc...), to clear their conscience before God as to their part in the failure of the first marriage; and establish a NO DIVORCE mentality in their present marriage— for while they cannot be a model of God's intended Design, they can model the miracles of God's mercy. In our fellowship, dear saints with divorce and remarriage in their background have faithfully and wonderfully served— teaching classes, preaching, singing, leading various ministries, etc.

II. Charismatic Movement— Southside is not charismatic or Pentecostal. **My own understanding is possibly a little different** in that, I believe that ALL the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still available. However, in the Bible, the gift of tongues is consistently a gift of a genuine language— **not gibberish nor** a so called prayer language. **IF there is** a gift of *other tongues*— Biblically it is a language and I suspect it would most likely be manifested on some dark mission field. In a related matter, we must beware of REFUSING something (that has Biblical warrant) simply because a Charismatic does it. **For example, Biblically, there is the call to "lift up holy hands" in worship.** We have encouraged that freedom. From time to time, we have a few who do so. But the point is that **in all things, the Bible must be our authority.**

III. Legalism: We reject any form of salvation by works; or of adding works to grace as a requirement for salvation.

SALVATION is all of Christ, all of GRACE. Our acceptance before God is solely based upon being ACCEPTED IN CHRIST! **Thus, we reject** trying to relate to God based on our performance. We reject seeking to please God by any **man-made list** of ‘Do’s and Don’t’s’... Thus, (while we teach MODESTY of dress as set forth in the New Testament), the primary message is to call folk to Jesus for INSIDE heart transformation! [SAD REALITY: In our world, if one EXPOSES sin and seeks to make a Biblical stand for holy living, someone will brand you as a legalist.]

IV. Salvation: Divine Election, Calling, Predestination — this is an emotional HOT BUTTON for many folk. Sincere Christians do not agree. However, there is NO PLACE for being divisive, mean spirited, or having a spirit of rejection one toward another. **As a college student**, upon listening to the warnings of a seasoned pastor, I proceeded to deny and/or to fear words like predestination, elect, and/or election. **A good number of** Christians don't know what they believe. **Others will, as I did, believe** what they have been taught; but they have never personally worked out from Scripture their beliefs. They will say, "I believe _____" ... yet they cannot specifically base their beliefs, on the pure Word of God. (As in all things, each believer must function as a believer priest and SEARCH the Scriptures... and be persuaded in his/her own heart as to WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES!)

PEOPLE LOVE TITLES AND TAGS— such may be helpful for the business of ‘PIGEON-HOLING OTHERS!’— however such ‘tags and titles’ hinder the search for truth and may even cause many to say HORRIBLE things about the Word of God!

EXAMPLE: Several years back, I preached from John 17... and not once did I use any of the theological terms of man to describe doctrine. I simply quoted John 17:1-2, *“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the*

hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You [FATHER] have given Him.” I then simply rejoiced: “O Christian, you are not an ACCIDENT— JESUS PLAINLY TELLS US THAT WE were GIVEN by the Father to the SON!” That’s what that verse clearly states, along with other verses in the same chapter. **For that statement,** I was accused of ‘preaching Calvinism!’ **DANGER:** Please never SLANDER and show utter disrespect for the God breathed Word of God by ascribing a man’s name - any man’s name - to the pure Word of God!

RELATED DANGER: I once heard a respected Bible teacher triumphantly proclaim, ‘JESUS WAS A CALVINIST!’ **RESPONSE: IT IS UTTERLY FALSE** and utterly dishonoring to the LORD JESUS CHRIST to EQUATE, to bring Him down to a mere, mortal man! **BY THE WAY,** there is NO SUCH THING as Arminian or Calvinistic verses in the Bible. Such terminology brings the holy Word of God down to man.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE of salvation?

1. There are many who believe that God provides salvation; however, they believe that it is UP TO HUMANS to choose salvation. A good number of these folk, (Free Will Baptists, General Baptists, and others) believe that one can lose his/her salvation. They are usually very keen of proclaiming man’s free will. THEY HAVE A CERTAIN SET of Scriptures to which they run and another set of which they avoid. Rare is the Southern Baptist who believes one can lose their salvation; but many have a strong focus on man’s ‘free will.’ They are not comfortable with and often reject GOD’S OVER-RIDING FREE WILL, or of His electing, choosing, predestinating.

2. There are others who, from their study of the Bible, say that God not only provides salvation; but that He also quickens, gives

life to those dead in their sins, empowering them to repent and believe. These folk are quick to run to certain Scriptures that promote the GOD-SIDE of salvation; but they may not be so fond of other verses which point to human responsibility and/or call for "WHOSOEVER!" to come to Christ.

IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE at Southside that for the last 40+ years we have had and have today dear folks at different persuasions on these matters. AS FOR ME? I **do not have** perfect understanding— **nevertheless, I am committed to RUNNING TO ALL of the verses!**

TO THE LOST SINNER, I do not hesitate to proclaim to one and all and/or to any— "JESUS DIED FOR SINNERS. God so loved the world that He gave... O Sinner, REPENT, BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST and THOU SHALT BE SAVED!" (John 3:14-21; 3:36; 5:24; Acts 8:35-39; Romans 10:9-13)

TO THE CHRISTIAN, I rejoice **in the verses that tell believers** that we were chosen in Christ, even before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 1:3-13); that we are specifically GIVEN by the Father to the Son (John 17:1-6), that we love Him **because He first** loved us (1 John 4:19), that we are foreknown [LOVED BEFORE TIME!] and predestined (Romans 8:28-39)!

ALL OF THESE and other verses directed to SINNERS and verses directed to SAINTS ARE simultaneously true. How that can be, is God's business!

PRECIOUS TRUTH FOR THE SAINT: ROMANS 8:29: "For those whom He FOREKNEW, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Many interpret this to say that God simply foresees who will believe on Him. Thus, the faith God foresees is ultimately and decisively our

work, not His work... that God does not cause our faith, He only foresees the faith which we cause.

HOWEVER, in the 'golden chain' of redemption set forth in Romans 8:29-30... it is ALL about and only about what GOD DOES, not what man does. **MOREOVER, as to God's foreknowledge**— of course, He knows everything, past, present, and future. BUT THAT IS NOT THE MEANING OF THE WORD, in Romans 8:29-30. NOTICE: In Genesis 18:19, God says of Abraham, *"I have known him..."* Amos 3:2, God says of Israel, *"You only have I known..."* Matthew 7:23, Jesus says to religious hypocrites on the day of judgment, *"I NEVER KNEW YOU..."* In Hosea 13:5, God says to Israel, *"I KNEW you in the wilderness..."* Genesis 4:1, *Adam KNEW his wife, and she conceived..."* IN ALL OF THESE contexts and more, TO KNOW... expresses the reality of personal intimacy, a personal relationship of love... **'Know' . . . is used in a sense practically synonymous with 'love' . . . "Whom He foreknow' . . . is therefore virtually equivalent to "whom He fore-loved.'** Foreknowledge, is God's sovereign, distinguishing love."... not God merely choosing those who first chose Him.

RATHER, the first act is God's in Romans 8:29— God foreknows His own people in the sense that He chooses them and loves them and cares for them. The Holy Spirit has Paul to speak of this later in the language of "choosing" or "election"— Romans 8:33; 9:11, 11:6, 7. **CHRISTIAN:** Romans 8:28, All things will work together for your good for you are called, and love God, **BECAUSE**, as verse 29 says, God has known you, and chosen you, and loved you, from before the foundation of the world!! (Ephesians 1:4ff; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8, 17:8)

I must not water down or add to any of these verses. I must believe and confess what God plainly says. I believe that all the verses are true. I do not fear proclaiming any of them. They are all needed and none of them needs to be

explained away. **I do not pretend to understand the mind of God as to** how all of the above verses to sinners and to saints are simultaneously true. I have a simple faith: **God said it; that settles it; I believe Him!** MOREOVER, I do not use the manmade theological terms, tags, and titles of men when teaching/preaching on the Biblical doctrines relating to salvation... because I am interested only in what GOD'S WORD SAYS.

Frankly, the result is that if the true blue Calvinist is listening to me— He has and will call me a compromiser or an Arminian! While if the Arminian is listening to me— He has and will accuse me of being a Calvinist! I AM NEITHER; BECAUSE THE WORD OF GOD IS NEITHER! In reality, I simply preach the Word of God. **Moreover,** I am at peace and in wonderful fellowship with brothers and sisters who are at different places on these matters!

DANGER ZONE: It has been my experience that too many people go to their Bibles with a system of beliefs which they seek to justify with proof texts; **RATHER,** than simply going to the Bible and letting the Bible say what it says! Very often, the perfect Word of God, the Bible, does not perfectly fit into man's neat systems of theology.

THIS I ALSO KNOW: *** ACCORDING TO the Word of God, we saints have the awesome responsibility to be laborers together with God: We plant. We water. GOD gives the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6-7) *** We are commissioned to take the Gospel to the whole world. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) *** Ultimately a numberless multitude out of every kindred, tongue, tribe and people will be saved. (Rev. 7:1-17)

MOREOVER, I do not find New Testament believers nor saints in heaven **ever testifying that their salvation was caused, was the result of** their free will; or hear them proclaiming that THEY CHOSE CHRIST. **The Bible is CLEAR: GOD DOES THE CHOSING, while we were yet His enemies, He set His love upon us, Romans 5:8! _**

GOD'S ELECTION and HUNAN RESPONSIBILITY

1. Romans 8-11. In the midst of these chapters, Romans 8:28-39 (especially, verses 29, 30) present predestination. It is plain. It says what it means and means what it says. I cannot say less or more than those verses plainly say. And while those verses focus on the Divine side of salvation— Keep in mind, the Bible only speaks about predestination to those who are ALREADY saved. **I AM DEEPLY CONVINCED that it is wrong to use the word 'predestination' in relation to the lost in any shape, form, or fashion. God's Word does not, so neither should !!** [ALL SINNERS ARE ALREADY UNDER THE HOLY WRATH OF GOD... NO PREDESTINATION REQUIRED— John 3:36; Ephesians 2:1-3... Christians, WERE 'children of wrath... even as others!]

Moreover, in the midst of strong God-focused verses in Romans 8-11, as to calling and election — **AS THE BIBLE SO OFTEN DOES — in the same section of Scripture,** the Holy Spirit has Paul to pen verses that focus on MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY to believe: Romans 10: 9-13. I believe those verses just as strongly and often quote verse 13.

2. Ephesians 1:3-14, (verse 5 & 11) is the only other passage in the Bible that has the word 'predestinate'.... But again, this is precious truth to those who are already saved. I

cannot add to it. I cannot deny it. IT IS NOT addressed to the lost.

3. BUT, again and sadly, there are those who focus on Bible verses that speak of God's predestination, calling, and election; and they minimize or deny the verses that focus on man's responsibility and the free offer of the gospel to whosoever will, repent, believe, and thou shalt be saved. **There are others,** (as I was taught) who focus on man's side and deny or minimize the Divine side.

My encouragement is that we accept, believe, and rejoice in all the verses. **My encouragement is that we ALSO hold tight to our supreme witness: "By this shall all know that you are my disciples, IF you have love one for another!"** (John 13:34-35) Without God's love flowing among us— we are zeros in God's sight! (1 Cor. 13)

V. Women in Ministry— we believe that an elder must be the husband of one wife and I have never seen a woman who could accomplish that! In any place where deacons have any governing authority, they likewise would have to be men.

At the same time: The word used for deacon, literally means, "one who in his haste to do his Master's bidding, kicks up dust!" In other words, he is QUICK to obey and serve. In the broad sense of the term, Jesus is THE MODEL deacon— modeling to every Christian (Male or Female) the call to serve. **In this sense, also, Paul refers to Phebe as a deaconess.** All are to be deacons and/or deaconesses. Yet, the only specific instruction as to specific setting forth ones before the congregation relates only to men.

VI. SIN — there are many SINS set forth in the Bible, which according to many are no longer sins. Compassion is due to all

sinners. We must minister in humility, remembering that we were also once dead and blind in sin. **Nevertheless, God has not changed His mind about what is and is not sin.** One of the great tragedies of the day is that **many** (even in Churches claiming to be conservative and Bible-believing!) **no longer believe that the problem is sin and the solution is JESUS.** From the pulpit to the back pew, WRONG behaviors are no longer sin; and multitudes are seeking to cope with life by means of **psychotropic drugs.** **Therefore they will not tolerate preaching which exposes sin and points to deliverance by JESUS!**

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH TO BOTH THE 'PROTESTANT' Reformation and to a sound Biblical faith:

1. Scripture Alone— the Scripture alone is the final authority for what we must believe and how we must live. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had asserted and still asserts the authority of the Pope, tradition, and councils of Romanism as authorities along with the Bible and OVER the Bible. Against that view, the Reformers asserted ***sola Scriptura***: the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our only infallible source of authority for faith and practice. **NOTE:** Long before the Reformers or anyone else took that position; it was and it is the BIBLICAL POSITION.

2. Grace Alone— How can a sinful man become right with a holy God? This was the question that plagued Luther's conscience before he was converted. Rome had developed a very elaborate system in response to that question. Rome's answer involved human works and merit- a sinner must perform sufficiently well before God if he would receive the blessing of salvation. **But through the study of the Scriptures** the Reformers rediscovered that salvation is the gracious gift of God. Man contributes nothing to it. It is only by the sovereign grace of God. Bible words like *election* and *predestination*, were

rediscovered, having been largely forgotten or drained of their meaning by Roman Catholic teachers. **NOTE:** But I would, again, say that this is not merely the 'Reformed' position; but long before the reformers, it was and is the BIBLICAL POSITION.

3. Faith Alone— The Reformers taught that the means whereby a sinner is graciously justified before God is faith - **not faith plus merit or faith plus works - but by grace through faith alone.** Through faith alone the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed [GIVEN] to the one who believes. **NOTE:** Again, long before the Reformers, the BIBLE was and remains CLEAR: Sola Fide is the BIBLICAL POSITION.

4. Christ Alone— The Reformation rejected Rome's requirement that common church members put their faith implicitly in the church's teachings. Instead, they argued, Jesus Christ alone is the proper object of faith. JESUS CHRIST alone is to be trusted for salvation- not priests, popes, councils, or traditions. **MOREOVER,** the believing sinner does not need popes, priests, Mary, councils, traditions, etc... in order to REACH JESUS. **NOTE:** AGAIN, long before the Reformers, Solo Christo is the BIBLICAL POSITION.

5. The Glory of God Alone— In the best sense the Reformation can be seen as a rediscovery of God- a reawakening to the greatness and glory of the God of the Bible. It is God, not man, who belongs at the center of our thoughts and view of the world. And it is God's glory alone that is to occupy first place in our motivations and desires as His children. He created us and the world for Himself, and He redeemed us for Himself. Our purpose is to glorify Him. **NOTE:** Again, long before the Reformation, Soli Deo Gloria is the BIBLICAL POSITION.

BOTTOM LINE: I for one... never think in terms of 'What is the Reformed faith or the Reformed position— but, rather, what is the BIBLICAL position, what is the BIBLICAL FAITH? It is obvious that the Reformers did not invent these teachings. They simply rediscovered them in the Bible and brought them out into the

light for all of God's people to experience. Baptists have been greatly influenced by these Reformed themes.

Grace to all! James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Call the church office at 615-452-5951

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care Nursing Home. Meet at the front door at **5:15PM.**

WEDNESDAYS: → 6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities; → 6:30pm— **Youth** Activities and Bible Study— → **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE...** (Enter via IRON STEPS; or double doors by gym)

***** LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 14 @ 11:00am; Continuing in LUKE. ENTER at the back of the church building, [Doors *open* at 10:30am... *re-locked* at 11:10am]**

***** MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! (*STUDY: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN!*) ENTER AT THE back of Church building... under the drive-thru awning. **FELLOWSHIP, Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts WAITING, starting at 7:30am!****

WATCH and SHARE the Preaching of the Word of God!
http://www.southsidegallatin.org/Listen_to_other_sermons_on_sermonaudio/

SUNDAY SERVICES: August 2018— 5, 12, 19, 26

Sunday School at 9:30am & Worship at 10:45am

SPECIAL NOTES:

1. August 5, Fellowship Meal, following morning worship

2. August 12, 5:30pm— Faithful Men's Equipping

3. August 19, LORD'S SUPPER at end of Morning Worship

HOME GROUPS, 5:00PM

***4. August 26, 6:00PM... Monthly Evening Service,
(Present focus: Shepherding the Heart of a Child)***