

# GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

Volume 45, No. 1, January 7, 2020 / 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.***

## **STARTING 2020 with SWEET WATER— NOT BITTER WATER!!**

**"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away** from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; **lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;**" (Hebrews 12:14-15)

It is said that Amy Carmichael, [Missionary to India, years back], once made a comment about how **a glass brimming full of sweet water will not spill one drop of bitter water, regardless of how hard the glass is jolted!** Think about it! With the glass full of sweet water, it matters not how hard the jolt, what's going to come out? **Nothing but sweet water!** When you or I get jolted about by circumstances or by the REAL or IMAGINED failures of others, **nary a jolt will ever turn "sweet water" into bitter!**

**Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice**

**all come from within our own hearts— All nicely hidden until the jolt!**

**I. GOD COMMANDS ME: GET RID OF ALL BITTERNESS, WRATH, ANGER, CLAMOUR, EVIL SPEAKING, AND ALL MALICE!**

Now, of course, MANY OF US MAY have **a list of things we would like for others to get rid of**— RIGHT? But so far as you and I are concerned, we must embrace this truth— God is not speaking to them! He is speaking only to me, only to you, never to them! [Of course, He speaks to them— but the point is that it's not our business! That's His business and He does not need our help!] So, again you and I must tell ourselves the truth— God is not wanting to change them, but us!

**GOD IS not pointing His finger at the JOLTERS, but at the JOLTED!**

**The issue is never about who did what to me or to you! Rather, the issue is ONLY ABOUT HOW I or HOW YOU RESPONDED!**

**\*\* WE GOT JOLTED!**

**\*\* WHAT CAME OUT?**

**\*\* WHATEVER WAS IN US! “SWEET WATER?!” OR WAS IT “BITTER?!”**

Refusing to face reality at this point will destroy you [or me]; and we will become a bitter root and destructive to many others! (Hebrews 12:14-15)

Bitterness is a continuous, developing state of mind, a sourness, an absence of love. **BITTERNESS is a condition of the heart that openly or secretly broods over the wrongs (real or**

**imaginary!) of others.** It is quick to see defects, wrongs, failures. The bitter person often claims to have forgiven. But they [WE!] have only gone through the words and the motions of forgiveness! They continue to nurse old grievances. They never let the “offenders” forget how they wronged the bitter person. (Been there and done that— How about you?)

## **SOME CHIEF SIGNS OF BITTERNESS!**

1. BLAME-SHIFTING: When we are bitter, **we talk to ourselves and to others** over and over about how the offender has deeply wounded us and/or made us angry and/or made us emotionally upset. We pose as martyrs, who have been wounded and we want to be seen as valiant saints to be pitied. We confess to be struggling so hard to forgive and forget!

**In reality this is all too often a big Smoke-Screen to hide and deny responsibility for our self-manufactured “bitter water!”**

Moreover, Smoke-Screens and Blame-Shifting often serve to hide our own failures against others. From years of counseling, here’s an all too common situation:

The husband or wife has committed adultery. Adultery is sin. **There are lots of excuses for such sin; but no Biblically acceptable reasons!** The fallen can only blame what was in his or her own heart. But are such fallen souls the only fallen ones? **Is it wise to jump on the bandwagon of the “innocent party” and proclaim, “The innocent party has a right to divorce and to remarry? The innocent party, O what a shame that they have been so ill-treated!?”** **Response: That bandwagon is on the wrong trail!**

And here's why: **In every case that I have ever seen in 50 years of ministry— there was no innocent party! BOTH** husband and wife had contributed mountains of failure into their marriage. **For years, both** contributed some combination of neglect or hatred, wrath, strife, and envy (Galatians 5:20-21) to the marriage. Now, tragically, one of them adds adultery. (Galatians 5:19)

But then the plot thickens as, (usually with the support of lots of church folk), the so-called "innocent party" refuses brokenness over their own failures; and adds a refusal to forgive; **and a refusal to pour out redemptive love as Christ does, so that God can heal the marriage!** Innocent party? No, not at all! The "black pot calling the black kettle black?" Yes, indeed! \*\*\* (This IS NOT to minimize the suffering that a grievously sinned against spouse may experience! BUT THE POINT IS... that we are to WALK IN THE STEPS OF JESUS! Our sin against Him was never an excuse for Him to refuse to be redemptive on our behalf!)

**How serious can all of this get? Well, have we forgotten?**

It's not only those who persist in a lifestyle of adultery, fornication, sodomy, idolatry, witchcraft, and drunkenness who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." BUT ALSO THOSE WHO PERSIST in a lifestyle of hatred, variance [strife], wrath [passionate anger], quarrels, contentious temper, fits of rage and selfish ambition! (Galatians 5:19-21)

**Moreover, the mark of genuine Christianity is not only a putting off of the works of the flesh, but also this:** The genuine Christian manifests the fruit of the Spirit... this is not an option! (Galatians 5:22-23)... and "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Galatians 5:24)

## **2. A CRITICAL SPIRIT, UNGRATEFULNESS, AND DEPRESSION**

When we are bitter we are masters at criticizing others, especially the ones we are holding hostage to our bitterness! Our words and our spirit toward our offenders **may appear to be** full of sweetness and forgiveness. However, so often those words, sincere or not, come with the price tag of regular reminders of what great offenses they have committed against us and of how we are being so noble as to forgive them! And therefore, they are ever in our debt!

**It is amazing how we can be so ungrateful for God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness of our own wretchedness. If God were to remember our iniquities against us, who could stand?**

How blessed that although God has never had a memory lapse - He remembers all we have ever done - **HOWEVER, HE REMEMBERS THEM AGAINST US NO MORE!**

Thus, never do we demonstrate a greater ungratefulness than when we refuse to be channels of His redemptive love and forgiveness toward those who have failed us!

**Moreover, God has ordained that those who do not truly forgive, will themselves experience the tormentors!**  
(Matthew 18:34-35)

Not all, but mountains of depression amongst Christians is but the result of their [our!] refusal to forgive others in the same way as God for Christ sake has forgiven us! **But, of course we just don't see it that way!**

In our view, we are sick, bitter, angry, and depressed only because

of the horrible things done against us by someone else! We are the “innocent” party, remember?! We’ve persuaded a number of folks as to how evil others are and how badly we’ve been wronged.

### **But wonder why we have no peace?**

**NOTE:** A serious and regular meditation upon what it cost Almighty God [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] to forgive us; and an honest assessment of how we have so deeply failed the one who has offended us— **These two meditations will,**

- (1) Humble us and prepare our hearts to repent of our own sin; and
- (2) Empower us with an infusion of grace to PUT OFF BITTERNESS AND TO PUT ON FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTIVE LOVE!

## **II. BEWARE OF HIDING SIN [ANY SIN...BUT, ESPECIALLY THE SINS OF THE SPIRIT, SINS OF EVIL ATTITUDES] UNDER THE GUISE OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD!**

Subtle lying may go something like this... and just to simplify, I will use ‘first person’ in the illustration: **“So and so [And I, of course, name the person!] has done such and such evil to me, but I know that it’s just because God is doing this to make me like His Son!”**

**Yes, God delights to use SUFFERINGS to help conform us to Christ. However, my deceitful flesh is prone to lie!** Again and again I have seen this used as nothing more than a ploy to get sympathy... and/or a deception to get people to think, “Wow, how spiritually minded he/she is!”

Also, the above ‘confession’ may be a lie— because I am making no confession or repentance of my sin **or of** my sinful response **or of** my sinful failure toward the other person. MOREOVER, I am confessing the other person’s sin to others, which I am clearly not to do! And I am claiming that the only reason for my sad state of affairs is because God is sovereignly using the other person for my sanctification!

MOST PEOPLE, EVEN COUNSELORS will be so caught off guard by this high sounding ploy... that they will not ask me about MY BEHAVIOR toward the person who has so wronged me!

**1. Now, there are occasions when God’s saints are being persecuted solely for righteousness sake!** In the Bible and thorough out history, such special ones, however, find it supernaturally easy to rejoice, to forgive, to pray for, and bless their persecutors. Praise God! But if such wonderful “suffering grace” is absent, that’s an awesome sign that the source of my suffering is not righteousness!

**2. THE reality is that,** much more often than we would like to confess, we are simply being ***“buffeted about for our own faults”*** (1 Peter 2:18-21)... ***and finding no joy in such buffeting,*** (Even as the Bible promises!) we begin to look for scapegoats and blow smokescreens!

**3. Yes, there are those occasions when righteous [but not perfected!] saints are purposely marked by God for DISPLAY IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS!**

According to God’s measure, Job was a righteous man, none like him! So, God initiated a discourse with satan. God gave satan permission to “touch” Job within God’s perimeters.

And in the end not only was satan openly proved to be the liar that he is; but Job was humbled, given greater understanding of God; and he was further sanctified.

**4. Yes, we often read in the Old Testament of God moving the hearts of some evil nation or king to attack a backslidden Israel.** But what was the proper response from Israel?

Was it, “Sovereign God has sent this wicked king to conqueror us?” Or, “God has sovereignly sent the snakes to bite us... simply because He is committed to our sanctification?”

**Note:** One of the most deadly aspects of the slanderous lies of hiding behind the sovereignty of God is that **the lie is mixed in with a measure of truth!**

**THE POINT IS THIS:** God has decreed “sowing and reaping”... God has decreed chastening. Very often we are “in the mess we are in” because of our own sowing!

And the only proper response is that of the prodigal! “I HAVE SINNED...!” Israel’s only proper response was to own up to their own sin and rebellion, “WE HAVE SINNED...!”

Is God sovereignly at work in all things and in all situations in what He brings and in what He decrees and in what He purposely allows?

YES! A THOUSAND TIMES, YES!

***But as for all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice, Sovereign God says to you and me: “PUT IT AWAY FROM YOU!”***

**And instead, “Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you!”  
O blessed “Sweet Water!”**

Grace! Peace! Love in Christ! To All Saints! James

[www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

\*\*\*\* **SHARE the Preaching of the Word of God!**

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## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:**

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

### **WEDNESDAYS:**

➔ **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE**

➔ **Enter via IRON STEPS, side door.**

**WEDNESDAYS:** ➔ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— enter, side double doors.

**WEDNESDAYS:** ➔ **6:30pm— Young Family Prayer Time!** THIS IS a time of Bible study and prayer geared toward **families with children in the nursery and pre-K class.** Enter at double doors, under AWNING.

\*\*\* **LADIES BIBLE STUDY: NEXT MEETING** scheduled for **JANUARY 21<sup>th</sup> 2020 @ 11:00am; NEW STUDY ==> LESSONS FROM WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE!** ENTER at the back of the church building, *[Under AWNING, open at 10:30am... re-locked at 11:10am]*

**\*\*\* MEN's Fellowship/Bible Study: EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: (WE ARE STUDYING THE GOSPEL OF JOHN!) ENTER AT THE back of Church building... DOUBLE DOORS, under the drive-thru awning. [DOORS OPEN FOR FELLOWSHIP, Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts at 7:30am!]**

## **SUNDAY SERVICES FOR JANUARY 2020**

**SUNDAY SERVICES: January 5, 12, 19, 26..... 2020 — ALL SUNDAYS:**

**\*\* Sunday School at 9:30am // \*\* Worship at 10:45am**

*ADDITIONAL NOTES... ABOUT EACH SUNDAY:*

- 1. January 12...** Faithful Men at 5:30pm
- 2. January 19...** LORD'S SUPPER, at conclusion of the Morning Worship service; Home Groups, most at 5pm
- 3. January 26...** CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP... currently completing a VIDEO series on Husband/Wife relationships, at 6:00pm