



M Grace Messenger

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

122 Walnut Street
Madison, AL 35758
256-837-8821

GBC HOMEPAGES

<http://www.gracemadison-al.com>
<http://sermonaudio.com/gbcmadisonal>

"Preaching the free grace of God which brings a change of lifestyles, masters, and destinies."

DEAN OLIVE, Pastor

— December 2008 Issue —

"Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24).



NURSERY SCHEDULE

DECEMBER

- 7 Linda Olive and Sonja Williams
- 14 Vicki Johnson and Sharon Bagley
- 21 Bob and Faye Williams
- 28 Kristy Hines and Jenny Lovassy

JANUARY

- 4 Joshua and Lori Hewlett
- 11 Jon and Tanya Amis
- 18 David and Mary Alice Olive
- 25 Nellie and Hannah McFadden

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2008

Budgeted expenditures (ytd)	\$101,867.99
Actual on-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 99,670.72
Actual off-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 215.95
General Fund offerings (ytd)	\$139,379.59
Love offerings (ytd)	\$ 6,470.00
Total offerings (ytd)	\$115,013.17
November Love offerings	\$ 100.00
November General Fund offerings	\$ 12,108.01
Building Fund balance	\$ 50,987.59
Missions Fund balance	\$ 10,878.87
General Fund balance	\$ 49,452.99

A CHRISTMAS FELLOWSHIP 2008

We will be joining our friends at Providence Presbyterian Church for a Christmas Fellowship on Sunday, December 21. We will eat a meal together and have a joint worship service.

▲ The Christmas Dinner will be served at 5 PM. The ladies of Providence Presbyterian are providing the main course and we have been asked to bring the desserts.

▲ The Christmas Service will follow the meal at approximately 6 PM. The service will consist of Christmas hymns and a message by Pastor Olive.

Everyone is encouraged to attend and join in the time of fellowship and worship.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

NORMAL SUNDAY SERVICES

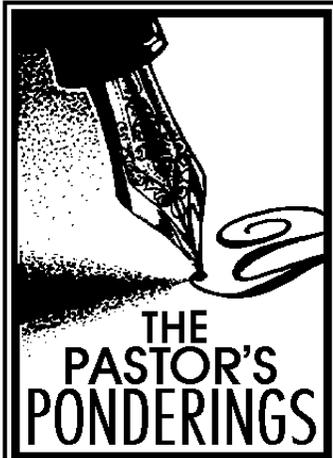
Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Bible Study and Prayer Meeting	7:00 PM
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FIRST SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Dinner at the Church	12:00 Noon
Afternoon Service	1:30 PM
(No Evening Service)	



THE FIRST GOSPEL SERMON

If asked, “When was the first gospel sermon preached,” how would you answer? Would you reply, “The sermon John the Baptist proclaimed when he said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world?’” Or would your answer be, “When the apostle Peter pointed men to

Jesus as Christ and Lord on the Day of Pentecost?”

The first gospel sermon was proclaimed, not by John or by Peter but by God Himself and the sermon is found in the book of Genesis. Genesis 3:15 gives us the first glimmer of the gospel in the Bible, or as Thomas Goodwin said, “The first promise to mankind fallen.”

God said, right after Adam and Eve sinned, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Jesus Christ was the promised seed, the One whom the Father would send to save mankind.

Promise is the word the NT uses more than any other to refer to the pledge that God made to deliver men from the consequences of sin through the intervention of someone who would redeem them and set them free. Genesis 3:15 is significant because that is where the promise begins. Spurgeon said, “There lies within it, as an oak lies within an acorn, all the great truths which make up the gospel of Christ.”

The promise of Genesis 3:15 focuses on the enmity that will come between Satan and the woman, and more specifically, between the seed of Satan and the seed of the woman. There will be a great conflict between the two.

The word “enmity” signifies personal hostility between the two rival kingdoms—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. The Seed of the woman, identified as Christ in the NT, is declared here to be the victor over Satan and his kingdom. The first promise contains prophecies of the Incarnation and of Calvary.

The promise of Genesis 3:15 prophesied the Incarnation. The victor over Satan is the seed of the woman, not the woman herself. It is her “seed.” What is significant here is that Christ is referred to as the seed of the woman, not the seed of man. Technically, a woman does not have seed, the man does. Clearly, the first promise of the gospel sets the stage for the Virgin Birth, which was later even prophesied in Isaiah 7:14.

Who the male descendent of the woman would be that would be raised up to defeat Satan was not immediately revealed. Eve probably thought Cain was he (Gen. 4:1). But the promise was Jesus (Matt. 1:21). He entered the world through a virgin’s womb and won the victory for all his people.

The promise of Genesis 3:15 also prophesied Calvary. In the struggle between Satan and Christ, wounds would be inflicted. The text says that the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman’s offspring, but the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. A bruise to the heel is not mortal. The picture is of someone crushing the head of a snake with his foot and being bitten on the heel. But a bruise to the head is a mortal wound; it is fatal and final.

By his sufferings, Jesus Christ crushed the head of the Serpent. Christ was wounded, he suffered, but it was by his sufferings that he triumphed! It was through his death that Jesus destroyed the devil (1 John 3:7-8; Hebrews 2:14-15).

One of the great purposes of Jesus Christ coming into the world was to defeat Satan. Satan thought he was the victor when Christ went to the cross, but Calvary was the place of triumph. Jesus was the Victor when he cried, “It is finished.” The results of the Fall were overcome in the substitutionary death of our Lord. Christ subdued our great adversary, the devil.

Genesis 3:15 tells us the outcome of all history. Christ wins! Satan is defeated! A hymn by William Williams speaks eloquently of this great deliverance.

*In Eden—sad indeed that day—
My countless blessings fled away,
My crown fell in disgrace.
But on victorious Calvary
That crown was won again for me—
My life shall all be praise.*

*Faith, see the place, and see the tree
Where heaven’s Prince, instead of me,
Was nailed to bear my shame.
Bruised was the dragon by the Son,
Though two had wounds, there conquered One—
And Jesus was his name!*

Christ personally, and Christ alone, has encountered and defeated Satan. He became a man so he could die a death that would atone for sin. Thank God for the promise of Genesis 3:15, for its development throughout the Old Testament, and for its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

WEB SITES



The web sites this month feature the English Standard Version of the Bible. Read up on this translation and put a hint in for one as a Christmas gift.

OFFICIAL WEB SITE FOR THE ESV –
www.esv.org/about/intro

ON THE ESV BY DR. VERN S. POYTHRESS –
www.wts.edu/resources/articles/poythress_esv.html

ABOUT THE ESV STUDY BIBLE –
www.esvstudybible.org/

READING THE ESV ONLINE –
www.biblegateway.com/versions/action=getVersionInfo&vid=47

ESV BIBLE BLOG – www.esv.org/blog/



DECEMBER 14 – Elizabeth Meade will update us on her mission work in the Sunday School hour, and her father, David Meade, former missionary to the Philippines and now director of Propempo International, an agency that assists churches in missions, will preach in the worship service.

DECEMBER 21 – We will be joining Providence Presbyterian Church for our annual Christmas service on Sunday evening, Dec. 21. The meeting will be held at their church this year, with pastor Olive preaching and our folk bringing the desserts.

DECEMBER 24 – No prayer meeting

DECEMBER 28 & JANUARY 4 – No Sunday School on these two days. Worship services will be at normal times, except the first Sunday meal and the afternoon service on January 4 (a communion service) will be an hour earlier.

FEBRUARY 1 – The annual church business meeting will be held in the afternoon after the first Sunday meal.

APRIL 17-19 – Our annual Spring Bible Conference is scheduled with Mack Tomlinson from Denton, Texas as the preacher.

SEPTEMBER 20-22 – We are hosting a regional FIRE conference at our church. The main speaker is David Ellis, from Stowmarket, England.

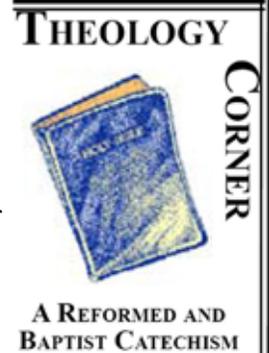
QUESTION #104 – What do we pray for in the second petition (of the Lord's Prayer)?

ANSWER – In the second petition (which is, *Your kingdom come*) we pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

SCRIPTURE – Psalm 68:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Psalm 51:18; Psalm 67:1-3; Romans 10:1; Revelation 22:20; 2 Peter 3:11-13

COMMENT – “Must we acknowledge our heavenly Father's kingdom? Yes: The Lord is king forever and ever (Ps. 10:16). And must we admire it? Yes: we must speak of the glory of his kingdom (Ps. 145:11). Must we own him to be our King? Yes: Thou art my king, O God (Ps. 44:4). Must we heartily wish well to his kingdom? Yes: Seek ye first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)” (Matthew Henry).

ILLUSTRATION – A godly man and woman had an only son, named Thomas, who to the great grief of his parents, began to turn out wild. A worthy minister named Rees, went to lodge at the house, and the father and mother with many tears, informed him of the ungodliness of their son. The following morning, before family prayer, the minister took hold of the young man's hand, and spoke very seriously and affectionately to him respecting his salvation. In family worship he prayed for him with great enlargement, and amongst others, used the following expression: ‘O Lord, say to *this Thomas*, “be not faithless, but believing.”’ The words, to use the young man's own expression, entered his heart like a sword, and a permanent change was effected: he soon became a church member, and was an ornament to his Christian profession till death.



Puritan Gems

PRAYER AND NEW LIFE

WILLIAM GURNALL

“Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.”

IS IT LEGITIMATE TO QUESTION GOD?

AL MOLHER

A recent caller to my radio program raised an issue of obvious personal urgency. He explained that he and his wife had recently experienced the death of a young child. He spoke of his faith in Christ and of his desire to be obedient. "But, can we question God?" he asked.

Of all possible tragedies, the death of a child is singularly horrific. The caller did not relate details of this tragedy, but we all heard enough to feel the unspeakable grief experienced by this young Christian couple. Do they have a right to question God?

It seems to me that the answer is both yes and no. Beginning with the biblical affirmation that God is omnipotent and omniscient, sovereign and ever-reigning, we start with the understanding that whatever comes to pass does so by the express command, ordination, or permission of the Father. Thus, the Creator is at all times responsible for his creation -- and for his creatures.

So, is it legitimate to question God?

Perhaps we should consider how God has revealed himself to us as Father. Considering a human father for a moment, we can recognize two different ways of questioning his ways. The first way would be to rest secure in his love and fatherly care, but to express confusion over his ways. Even the most faithful and trusting children wonder about their parents at times. What are they up to? Why did they make that decision rather than the other? What was the purpose of that action? As close as children are to parents, parents often perplex children by acting like adults. In this mode of questioning, the child never questions the father's love and faithful disposition, but does admit

confusion -- and perhaps even disappointment.

The other way of questioning a human father is to question his character, his faithfulness, or the authenticity of his love. This is an altogether different mode of questioning. In this second pattern of questioning, the child questions the father's heart, not merely his actions and ways.

"TO QUESTION GOD'S FAITHFULNESS
IS TO ASSAULT HIS CHARACTER."

Now, move from considering these two different modes of questioning a human father to a parallel set of approaches to questioning our heavenly Father. It is not unfaithful to admit and to articulate a sense of perplexity and pain in observing the ways of God. There are times when we cannot offer an explanation of God's ways. At times, we cannot even detect any possibility of a purpose. We can admit this to ourselves, to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to our heavenly Father.

The other mode of questioning God, on the other hand, constitutes sin and implies unbelief. We cannot remain faithful and question God's own faithfulness. His love for those who are in Christ is beyond question. His character is a constant and his love never fails. He is not loving and gracious toward believers at one moment, only to turn into a malevolent deity the next. He never changes.

In this light, it would be sin to question God in this second sense -- the sense in which we might question whether God really loves us, or if He is really faithful to his promises. This is not the questioning worthy of a believer, but of an unbeliever.

In Numbers 23:19 we read: "God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has He spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" To question God's faithfulness is to assault his character. Finite human beings are incapable of understanding the wisdom of God, except when that wisdom is mediated to us through the miracle of revelation. We are not promised that all of our questions will be answered on earth.

We are promised, however, that on the Day of the Lord every believer's eyes will be dry, and every tear will be wiped away. We will understand all things in a transformed light. We will know in a fully revealed sense what it means when we are promised that nothing can separate us from the love of God. On that day will not be God's interrogators or questioners, but worshipers who will see him face to face.

Is it legitimate for a believer to question God? Yes and no. Even the Apostle Paul admitted to being perplexed [2 Corinthians 4:8], but by his own affirmation he was not crushed. We have no right to question the steadfast love of God for us, however, because this insinuates that God is either unable nor unwilling to keep his word. As the Bible reveals, He is neither unable or unwilling. He is ever faithful, even as his ways are "past finding out" [Romans 11:33].

One day, we will be beyond asking any questions about God's ways. Until then, it may help to remember that even the Apostle Paul was sometimes perplexed. Perplexed, that is, but not unfaithful.