



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

— March 2014 Issue —

"Do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the Lord with all your heart." 1 Samuel 12:20

NURSERY SCHEDULE

March

09 Jenny and Peter Lovassy
16 Melanie Myatt and Amber Solan
23 Troy and Jessi Moseley
30 Kristin Scarbrough and Lori Hewlett

April

06 Linda Olive and Vicki Johnson
13 Kevin and Sara Smith
20 Jenny and Peter Lovassy
27 Melanie Myatt and Amber Solan

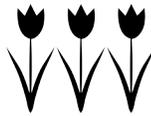
CHURCH CLEANING

March - Myatts
April - Moseleys
June - Amises
July - Amber Solan / Kristy Hines

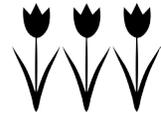
FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF MARCH 1, 2014

Budgeted expenditures (ytd)	\$ 24,803.66
Actual on-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 25,222.58
Actual off-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 1,065.00
General Fund offerings (ytd)	\$ 23,686.85
Designated Missions (ytd)	\$ 620.50
Love offerings (ytd)	\$ 200.00
Total offerings (ytd)	\$ 25,972.55
February Love offerings	\$ 0.00
February General Fund offerings	\$ 14,158.92
February Designated Missions	\$ 1,160.50
Building Fund balance	\$120,825.92
Missions Fund balance	\$ 2,863.64
General Fund balance	\$ 60,699.80

SPRING BIBLE CONFERENCE



APRIL 4-6



Conference Preacher:

Brandon Meeks

Pastor of Berean Bible
Church

Jonesville, Louisiana

- Friday Night – 7:00 PM
- Saturday Morning – 9:00 and 10:15 AM
- Sunday – 9:30 and 11:00 AM and 1:30 PM

*Light breakfast at 8:30 AM Saturday
Dinner on the grounds at 12:00 noon Sunday*

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

NORMAL SUNDAY SERVICES

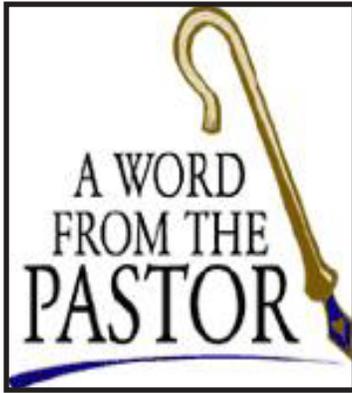
Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM

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)	



At The Cross

Ralph Hudson added a chorus to Isaac Watt's hymn, "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed." The chorus begins, *At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light.*

We were not *at the cross* literally when we were saved, but we

were *at the cross* in the sense that our sins were there when Christ was nailed to the tree. Every sinner who is saved is *at the cross* in that sense. So poetically and metaphorically it is appropriate to say, *At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light.*

Though we were not physically and bodily at the cross when we were saved, the New Testament does tell us about the conversion of two men who were literally at the cross and were saved when Jesus died. They observed him hanging on the tree and concluded that he was the Savior of sinners and they put their trust and faith in him and were saved from sin and hell. One was a thief and the other was a soldier. They were the firstfruits of the cross of Christ.

The first of these men converted at the cross was a thief. His story is told in Luke 23:39-43. When Jesus was crucified, two robbers were also crucified with him. Both cast reproach upon Christ along with the jeering crowd and mocking soldiers. But something happened along the way that thoroughly changed one of the thieves. He ceased mocking and rebuked the other thief for his words. He said, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong" (vv. 40-41).

Then with great faith he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (v. 42). And the Lord Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (v. 43). He put his faith in a dying Man and found salvation on his deathbed!

The salvation of the dying thief is perhaps the greatest illustration of salvation by faith apart from works that there is in the Bible. *He did not deserve salvation.* He was as bad as bad can be! He was a wicked, violent criminal. If salvation is by merit, there was no way he could be saved! There were many others in Jerusalem that day that deserved salvation more than him. *He could not earn salvation.* What could he do? His hands weren't free to do charitable works; his feet were not free to walk down the street and witness to someone; he couldn't be baptized and

he couldn't partake in communion; he couldn't do anything!

If the thief was to be saved he would have to be saved wholly by grace. And that is the only way any sinner can be saved! We are all bad and deserve nothing from God save wrath. We are all unable to earn salvation. But there is life for a look at the crucified One! The thief found this to be so. He was saved that very day *at the cross.*

The second man saved at the cross was a soldier. His story is recorded in Mark 15:39. "So when the centurion, who stood opposite him, saw that he cried out like this and breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!'" We do not know this man's name; he is only known as "the centurion."

A centurion was a soldier of significant rank. This particular centurion had the responsibility of carrying out the orders of Pilate to put Jesus to death by crucifixion. But what he observed in this ordeal convinced him that the Man on the middle cross was no ordinary man. This hardened soldier came to the conclusion that the prisoner over whose death he had been supervisor was the Son of God.

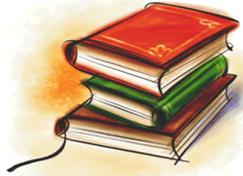
The centurion had witnessed everything – the scourging, the mocking, the spitting, the actual crucifixion itself – in fact, he took part in all this. But now his heart was changed. In all likelihood, he did not take Jesus very seriously at first. But the more he observed him, the more he listened to him, the more he became convinced that this was no mentally deranged man out of touch with reality.

The centurion made the same confession as Simon Peter did. When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15-16). Jesus went on to say that Peter's confession was not the result of his exceptional ability to see things that others were not able to see but because the Father in heaven revealed it to him (v. 17).

This was true also of the centurion. The Holy Spirit opened his eyes to see the glory and the majesty of the crucified Savior! Luke tells us that the centurion "glorified God" (23:47). A confession that Jesus is the Son of God that is followed by praise and worship is evidence of conversion. He came to faith *at the cross.* At the cross he saw the light and the burden of his sins were rolled away!

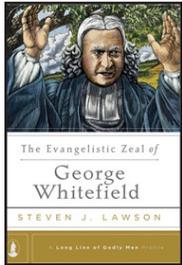
A robber and a Roman soldier were converted *at the cross* and so too are we. *At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day.*

BOOK REVIEW



The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield

Steven J. Lawson, Reformation Trust, 2014, pp. 156.



This book is the latest entry in the Long Line of Godly Me Profiles series, by Steven J. Lawson, pastor of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama. Called the “Grand Itinerant” for his unprecedented preaching ministry, Whitefield crossed the Atlantic Ocean numerous times and lit fires of revival on two continents. Whitefield was a man whose extraordinary evangelistic fervor was marked by remarkable piety and deep theology, and whose unswerving devotion to his God led him to risk all that he had to preach the name of Christ.

“There is little doubt that George Whitefield is one of the most remarkable preachers in the history of Christianity; his preaching was central to the Great Awakening that refashioned British society on both sides of the Atlantic; it gripped the mind and imagination of so many in his era, and led to the conversion of thousands; and most importantly, it set forth plainly and faithfully the biblical gospel. To be reminded of all of this and much more of Whitefield as a preacher is vital in our day, when far too many professing Christians disparage preaching and are questioning key facets of the gospel of Christ that Whitefield preached” (Michael A. G. Haykin).

“When Whitefield came to town, everything stopped, everyone listened. And what did they hear? They heard the gospel plainly, powerfully, and persuasively proclaimed. Read this book, and you’ll learn the amazing story of George Whitefield – and then pray that God will use this book to raise up Whitefields in our day” (Stephen J. Nichols).



MARCH 9 – Daylight Savings Time begins. Be sure to set your clocks forward one hour on Saturday evening and be on time for the morning worship service.

MARCH 23 – Darren Thole, pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, Madison, AL, will be preaching in the morning worship hour and Dana Crowell, pastor of Prosperity Presbyterian Church, Yukon, TN, will be preaching God’s Word in the evening service (dv).

APRIL 4-6 – Spring Bible Conference with Brandon Meeks, pastor of Berean Bible Church, Jonesville, LA.

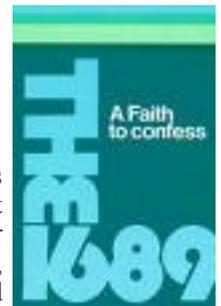
OCTOBER 5-7 – Geoff Thomas, pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales, is the preacher for our Fall Bible Conference in conjunction with our hosting the regional FIRE conference.

We Believe

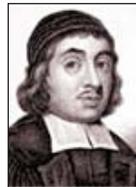
The 1689 Confession of Faith

CHAPTER 30 (PARAGRAPHS 5-8)

THE LORD’S SUPPER



5. The outward elements in the Lord’s supper - bread and wine - duly set apart for the use appointed by Christ, bear such a relation to the Lord crucified that, in a true sense although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the names of the things they represent, namely, the body and blood of Christ, even though, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before being set apart for their special use.
1 Cor. 11:26-28
6. The doctrine commonly called transubstantiation which maintains that in the supper the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ’s body and blood through consecration by a priest or in any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason. Furthermore, it overthrows the nature of the ordinance, and has been, and is, the cause of all kinds of superstitions and gross idolatries.
Luke 24:6, 39; Acts 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:24-25
7. Those who, as worthy participants, outwardly eat and drink the visible bread and wine in this ordinance, at the same time receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and receive all the benefits accruing from His death. This they do really and indeed, not as if feeding upon the actual flesh and blood of a person’s body, but inwardly and by faith. In the supper the body and blood of Christ are present to the faith of believers, not in any actual physical way, but in a way of spiritual apprehension, just as the bread and wine themselves are present to their outward physical senses.
1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26
8. All persons who participate at the Lord’s table unworthily sin against the body and blood of the Lord, and their eating and drinking brings them under divine judgment. It follows, therefore, that all ignorant and ungodly persons, being unfit to enjoy fellowship with Christ, are similarly unworthy to be communicants at the Lord’s table; and while they remain as they are they cannot rightly be admitted to partake of Christ’s holy ordinance, for thereby great sin against Christ would be committed.
Matt. 7:6; 1 Cor. 11:29; 2 Cor. 6:14-15



Thomas Watson Puritan Preacher & Author

“The temple had a *fire* burning on the altar; take heed of strange fire. But keep the fire of zeal and devotion flaming upon the altar of your heart; do *temple work* and offer up the *sacrifice of a broken heart*. When the heart is a consecrated place, a holy of holies, then God will walk there. Many a man’s heart is a pest-house, a bedlam, being polluted with sin. This is to put *swine* into God’s temple! This is to let the *devil* come into God’s temple! David’s heart was a dedicated temple (Psalm 119:38).”

Preaching for Conversion

Brandon Meeks

One of the great tangles created by revivalism, and by the reaction to it, is a misunderstanding of what it is to preach for true conversion. In the tradition of revivalism, evangelistic preaching is a basic recruiting tool which you use to get people saved, then later on you offer a different set of classes for those who enlisted, if they ever should decide that they want to learn something. In reaction to this, many sacramental churches have downplayed the need for conversion preaching at all. "Of course I am a Christian," the thinking goes. "Why else would I have been sitting in this pew, watching that guy in a robe, at least I'm pretty sure it's a guy, for thirty years?"

But in truth, an effective preacher always preaches for conversion, regardless to whom he is preaching. This is because an effective preacher always preaches Christ, and in a fallen world, there is not a hearer of sermons out there who does not need to turn to Christ in some respect, in some way, every day of his life. *Converto* is the Latin verb meaning I turn. When a man first becomes a Christian, there is a fundamental turning, of course. He turns "from idols, to serve the living God." This is initial conversion; this is regeneration. But is the need to turn to Christ abolished after that? Is the need to call men and women to come to Christ gone?

It is a mistake to preach conversion to everybody in a Christian congregation as though they had not turned to Christ in this fundamental way. And it is just as big of a mistake to preach sermons that pat the backs of the hands of lackluster Christians, sermons that neglect

the need to be converted to Christ, constantly. In his famous 95 Theses, Martin Luther pointed out that when the Word says to repent, it meant a lifelong repentance that was in view. We never get to check the box next to "turned to Christ" and say, "I did that. What's next?" We always must turn to Christ, and the people of God must always be summoned to do so.

The preacher must understand that humanity is divided into two great classes, the converted and the unconverted, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. True enough, one of these groups has not come to Christ at all, and the other has. But suppose a man is preaching to a congregation where they all have turned to Christ in this fundamental way. How does he preach for conversion now?

Jesus is not an X on the floor where you can come and stand, and, if you have come to stand there, there is nothing further to do. No—we used to know Christ after the flesh, but we do so no longer. Further up and further in.

To preach Christ is to preach the One to whom we have come. If Christ is preached in power, then a congregation of saints who have loved Him for thirty years will delight in the message, and respond. They will grow and flourish under this kind of conversion preaching. But if you just assume that nobody there has ever really been converted, and you explain to them how to "become Christians," then the sermons are just so much vain jangling. It makes no sense to gather a bunch of Christians together and explain to them that they aren't, after all, Christians. There is a type of Reformed "preaching" which specializes in kicking God's elect all over the sanctuary, smiting them hip and thigh. If you want proof of the election of these suffering saints,

and of their persevering grace, here it is. No one but the elect would persevere through such bad preaching and press into the Kingdom. The apostle did say that we would enter the Kingdom through much tribulation, but I don't believe that he was referring to the sermons.

There is a way of discovering Christ that is utterly distinct from what it was to discover Him for the first time. There is a way of growing in Him that is conversion to Him. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19). The Bible describes our justification as Christ, and it describes our sanctification as Christ. It further describes our glorification as Christ as well. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:21-23).

To live is Christ, to depart is more Christ. To be justified is Christ, to be sanctified is Christ. Growing in wisdom is growing in Christ. Flourishing in our redemption is Christ. So then, the preacher must always preach Christ.

As he does so, he will be issuing a clarion call for conversion. This conversion will be a glory and a joy to those already converted, and it will be the power of God unto salvation for those who are not yet converted.