

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

March 07, 2011

Last week I wrote about how Paul said that the Jews had been blessed with an advantage over Gentiles in that they had received the oracles of God. The Jews had received a revelation from God to lead them and guide them. So despite the fact that some Jews had been disobedient to the law and some Gentiles had been obedient through conscience the advantage for the Jews was not nullified.

I also mentioned last week that much of Paul's message revolves around the rhetorical questions he poses. Another one of those rhetorical questions comes in chapter 3 of Romans immediately following the one about the advantage for the Jews. This one says, "What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?" (Romans 3:3). And Paul answers his own question, "By no means!"

This is an important question that we need to hear in our day. We might phrase the question this way. "Does human unfaithfulness to God nullify God's grace?" And the proper answer to this question has to be the same as the answer Paul gave. "By no means!"

Sometimes salvation gets framed in such a way as to imply that salvation is totally dependent upon our human response to God, as if to say that a refusal to acknowledge God's love for humankind and God's offer of grace through Jesus is nullified by human refusal to acknowledge that grace. Such is not the case. God's grace continues to stand.

The first letter of John says that "it is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (I John 5:10). God's grace precedes. It always goes before. And just because a person does not acknowledge that grace that can and will save doesn't mean that such grace is no longer there, no longer available. The Book of Hebrews says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). The crucifixion of Jesus forever stands as the atonement for human sin. It does not go away. It does not change. God's grace is there. It is ever present, even though we human beings may deny it or turn our backs on it. The prodigal son turned his back on his father's love and went out on his own, but his father's love for him never ceased to be. It always remained.

Now the difference turning our backs on God's grace and Jesus' crucifixion makes is that we cannot experience in our own lives the power of that grace to transform our lives. I'm sure we've heard this before, but God will not force his grace upon us, and even if God did, we would probably rebel against it, which is one of the basic definitions of sin. And we still would not receive the benefit of God's grace in our lives if that grace was forced upon us. We have to let God's grace in. We must open the door. The life of discipleship is about gift and response. A life transformed is about the marvelous gift of God's saving grace through Jesus and our being willing to allow that grace into our lives. The latter we call faith. We trust God's saving grace in Jesus and let into our hearts.

Our refusal of God's grace does not nullify the power of that grace to change lives nor does it nullify the presence of that grace. What our refusal of grace does is to nullify in our own person the saving power of that grace.

We cannot reap the benefit. The refusal to believe in God's salvation through grace does not nullify its existence. It just keeps that grace from bringing its transforming presence to our lives personally. Just because we fail to acknowledge something doesn't mean it is not there. Just something to think about.

Until next time,

Bro. Jim

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN SPRING MEETING

Mark your calendars today! The Pulaski District UMW Spring Meeting will be held at Antioch United Methodist Church on Saturday, March 19th. We will take the van and leave the CLC west end parking lot at 8:30 a.m. If you prefer to drive your own vehicle, registration begins at 9:00 a.m. The theme for the day is "Answering God's Call" and Cynthia Hopson will be the guest speaker. A training session for local unit officers will be held. Lunch will be served for \$5.00. Please bring reusable eyeglasses, Campbell Soup labels for Red Bird Mission and kits for UMCOR. If you have any questions, call Mary Ann at *****

4TH 5TH AND 6TH GRADE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The 4th, 5th and 6th grade Sunday School class has been busy! On Sunday, March 6, we held a bake sale during the Sunday School hour. Thanks to the generosity of our church, we raised \$110! All of the money will go to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to assist victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Our class believes that service to others is a big part of living a Christian life, and we thank you for helping us live our faith.

THREADS OF HOPE

The youth are helping with the Threads of Hope Outreach ministry. This outreach was unwittingly launched from one simple act of compassion for a hurting family in the Philippines. Now hundreds of families in the Philippines have a steady income from the profit of these bracelets. These beautiful hand-made bracelets are crafted by men, women and children living in impoverished areas in the Philippines. If you would like to help support this ministry, purchase a bracelet for only \$5. All proceeds will go directly to the Threads of Hope Ministry. Bracelets can be purchased in the Church office. Thank you.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The Youth Sunday morning class welcomes all students to attend who are in grades seventh through twelfth grades. The class is held in room 221 in the Education building on the second floor across from the Upper Room Sunday school class. Our class studies a bible lesson that corresponds with a Christian music video and then discussion and we close in circle prayer. Here are some of the comments the students made about our class. "As a class, we aren't shy at all, so we are always having guests, sometimes even students from other countries. We like having fun too, which Mrs. Gayle incorporates into our Sunday school." Lance Egly "Sunday school is my favorite part of my worship day. I love engaging in the deep conversations we have during class, and learning about God." Abby Clayton "I like that everyone is friendly and caring, even if it is pretty early in the morning." Cory Ricaurte "I enjoy coming to Sunday school to help deal with issues in my life and be closer to God." Lucy Benson "I like watching music videos and how they tie in with the lesson." Adam Clayton "I like the closeness of our class and how we stay on task and learn something every Sunday." Katie Wayne "The Junior and Senior class is truly wonderful! Each Sunday I look forward to coming to Church. We are blessed with the best teacher ever, Mrs. Gayle Wright! Thank you for everything you do." Breonna Lindsey "It is very fun and entertaining" Anonymous "I like the warm and loving family we have in this Church." Anonymous. By joining this class, I think it would bring a spiritual and joyful meaning to your life.

Blessings, **Gayle Wright**

WITH ONE ANOTHER

Scott Healthcare

&nb sp; **Mrs. Scottie McMackin**

&nb sp; **Mrs. Bea Thigpen**

&nb sp; 2380 Buffalo Road

&nb sp; Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

NHC Healthcare

&nb sp; **Mrs. Jean Cone** (Rm. 212)

&nb sp; P.O. 906

&nb sp; Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

&nb sp; **Martha Whitten**

&nb sp; (Lettie Richardson's mother)

&nb sp; 374 Brink St.

&nb sp; Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

The Summit

&nb sp; **Mrs. Vernon Belew**

&nb sp; (Bobby Belew's mother)

&nb sp; 186 Prosser Road

&nb sp; Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

Country Cottage

&nb sp; **Mrs. Freddie Mae Jackson**

&nb sp; (Rm. 26)

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