

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ

8 11 26 V2n15-- THE DAYS ARE EVIL! WHAT IS GOD'S CALLING IN THE MIDST?

IN SOME PARTS OF OUR WORLD IN 2026, Christians live in this reality,

“They worship with windows and curtains closed. Surveillance. Raids. Secrecy ... is the daily reality for Christians living in countries where they cannot openly worship Jesus. Rather than meeting together in a church sanctuary, they meet in “house churches” which vary in size and structure. **They are the underground church, risking prison** (or worse) **because** they refuse to give up meeting together **and instead** continue to encourage each other, just as the Holy Spirit instructs in Hebrews 10:25, **to NOT FORSAKE assembling together!**

THE DAYS ARE EVIL! ONCE AGAIN, in our day, BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY is increasingly hated in the world, even in America!
WHAT ON EARTH SHOULD WE BE DOING?

When persecuted, the early New Testament Church

- (1) GATHERED FOR PRAYER;
- (2) REJOICED in wonder and awe at the SOVEREIGNTY of God;
- (3) Quoted from Psalm 2 to God in prayer;
- (4) and then FOCUSED on praying

for BOLDNESS to PREACH THE GOSPEL. (Acts 4:23-33)

LET US CAREFULLY, PRAYERFULLY READ PSALM 2!

PSALM 2:1-12: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. **He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.** Then shall He speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. **BE WISE NOW THEREFORE, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.**”

[**THEREFORE,**] **Psalm 2:11-12;** Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. **BLESSED ARE ALL THEY THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM.**”

AGAIN, When Persecuted, the Early New Testament Church (1) GATHERED FOR PRAYER; (2) REJOICED in wonder and awe at the SOVEREIGNTY of God; (3) PRAYED from Psalm 2 to God in prayer; (4) And then FOCUSED on praying for BOLDNESS to PREACH THE GOSPEL. (Acts 4:23-33)

THE EARLY CHURCH WAS not hindered by circumstances; INSTEAD, THEY remained FOCUSED ON GOD’S AGENDA: GOD’S AGENDA is the saving of a NUMBERLESS MULTITUDE of sinners out

of every nation, (Revelation 7, Jew and Gentile!); AND those whom He saves, team up as soldiers of Christ in HIS saving work, (1 Peter 2:9-12).

WHEN THIS IS ALL COMPLETE **the holy Wrath of God** will be poured out on all the earth; and this present world will be destroyed; and then there will, at last, be a new heaven and new earth, etc. (2 Peter 3:12-14). GOD'S ULTIMATE INTENTIONS and purpose of the REDEEMED, WILL BE REALITY — FOR ALL IN CHRIST, will See, Serve, Worship, and Reign with CHRIST for all eternity! (Revelation 21-22)

SO, WHAT ON EARTH ARE WE CHRISTIANS TO DO?

HERE IS USELESS ACTIVITY: (1) CURSING the darkness; **(2) Lamenting**, and/or longing for the America that used to be; **(3) Speculating** about "timing details" of the END OF THE WORLD — these are diversions from our God ordained gospel labors!

OK, SO WHAT MUST WE CHRISTIANS BE DOING?

1. LET US GO FORWARD EMBRACING our God-given ASSIGNMENT: that is, let us live Christ-like and preach the Gospel until Jesus calls us home. (Drink deeply of the Epistles of the New Testament and the letters of Jesus to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3 for details of this assignment — they are very clear!)

2. LEARN GOOD LESSONS FROM HISTORY: When China EXPELLED all Christian missionaries and became super oppressive against the CHURCH — INSTEAD of the church disappearing, she began to grow. **The BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS** has always been the SEED of the church.

MOREOVER, **the DEEPENING DARKNESS** of our time in history, are days of GRAND OPPORTUNITY for the GOSPEL to be lived and preached. **“REDEEM THE TIME!”**

[Meditate on Ephesians 5 and 6, for some specific assignments so that we will be ADORNING THE GOSPEL and not CAUSING the Gospel to be BLASPHEMED before a watching world!]

WALK IN LOVE:

Ephesians 5— “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ***For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.***

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them.”

WALK IN the LIGHT! YOU ARE LIGHT! SO, SHINE!:

“For you were once darkness, **but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light** (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. **And have no fellowship with** the unfruitful

works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore, He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

WALK IN WISDOM:

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ***redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*** Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit, speaking** to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **giving thanks** always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **submitting** to one another in the fear of God.

MARRIAGE— Christ and the Church:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such

thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.** Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

CHILDREN and PARENTS:

Ephesians 6— Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” **And you, fathers**, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Bondservants (SLAVES) and Masters: (Apply to Employees/Employers!)

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, **as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers**, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing

that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded **your waist with truth**, having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**,

and having **shod your feet with** the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, **taking the shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God;

praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication **for all the saints— and for me,**

that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; **that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**”

CLEAR REALITY:

These are serious, dark days in which we live. BUT AS WE CAN SEE from the Word of God—

- (1) The world has always been in darkness.
- (2) The Christian's CALLING is not to curse the darkness, nor to POINT disgusting or fearful fingers at those who are citizens of the darkness, NOR TO STOCKPILE guns and ammunition BECAUSE OF a passion to save one's present life in this doomed world.
- (3) [This is not denying a needed path of wisdom in protecting families; protecting church gatherings; but neither must we deny the example of the New Testament Church whose PRIMARY PASSION was not their physical safety at any cost; but the advance of the GOSPEL at great cost and abandonment!]

These are days to wholly embrace our God-given assignments, like those in Ephesians 5 and 6; and as in Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8. AND THESE ARE DAYS for repentance in the churches.

OF COURSE, the truth of the Word of God is offensive to a lost world. IT IS MORE THAN TRAGIC that the Word of God is REJECTED even in Bible believing churches.

NEVERTHELESS, it is time for pastors and people— FOR US to repent of our own rampart sex sins, and other forms of ungodliness.

unrighteousness, lovelessness, and bitterness so that we can start ADORNING the gospel before a watching world rather than blaspheming the gospel before a watching world.

O GOD, WE HAVE FOUND

THE CHIEF ENEMY

AND PROBLEM OF THE BIBLE-BELIEVING CHURCH

AND IT IS ME, IT IS US!

If godly Daniel could pray 'WE HAVE SINNED!'... Instead of 'they'... then, maybe we should pray like Daniel, in chapter NINE!

“THE DAYS ARE EVIL!” LET US GO FORTH “REDEEMING THE TIME!”

ABUNDANT GRACE TO YOU AND YOURS!

James Bell: jwillie123@aol.com / www.southsidegallatin.org

SUNDAY SERVICES for AUGUST 16, 23, 30

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes.

[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!

AUGUST 16 – LORD'S SUPPER after morning worship!

HOME GROUPS!

AUGUST 23 — EVENING WORSHIP, 5:00PM

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM — Men's Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!*) *AUGUST 15 - Romans, Chapter 12*

NEXT LADIES' BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 @ 10:00 AM ** [Study: Acts 15]

NOTE: This Ladies Bible Study... IS ONE HOUR EARLIER... BECAUSE SOME LADIES PLAN TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL OF CINDY CHANIN at Hendersonville, FBC, in their Chapel at NOON.

[NOTE: NEWSPAPER OBITUARIES SAY, AT 11AM ... BUT WE CHECKED WITH FBC – Visitation starts at 11am ... the MEMORIAL SERVICE starts at NOON.]

Young Adults! Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhī's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE:
BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO:
Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>