

Vox

Voice of Emmanuel Baptist Church

Volume 14

January 2021

Times Change but Faithfulness Is For All Seasons

Pastor Thomas Waters

Recently I was privileged to sit in on a phone interview of a church petitioning for membership in the Georgia Association of Confessional Baptist (GACB). The interview lasted some two hours and covered several topics. During the interview it was reported that 2020 was the most difficult and challenging year in the almost two-decade life of the church, as well as a most difficult year for the pastor. He reported it had been a year of schism and painful losses in the church and sickness and multiple deaths in his immediate family; yet through it all, God had and was sustaining the church and him.

Concerning the ministry, the Apostle Paul wrote, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

In chapter 11 of the same epistle, the apostle detailed more of the indignities and costs of the Christian ministry. He wrote, “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?”

Some people were challenging the authenticity of Paul’s calling, of his apostleship. In response, he juxtaposed the claims of the false, super-Apostles, skilled orators who fleeced the people and fooled them with flattering language and a false gospel, against his sufferings in and for the gospel.

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Finally,
be strong
in the Lord
and in the
Strength
of His might.
put on
armor
the whole
of God.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Trusting the
Lord in
Seasons of
Change

FAITHFULNESS



Men's Study Group: Beginning the 1st Sunday in January, 1/3/21, we plan to begin a men's advance study group which will meet every 1st Sunday afternoon starting around 1:30. Prior to this, there will be an officer's meeting from 12:50-1:25. The reason stating *ABOUT* on the time is because once the Covid threat is past, we will resume our 1st Sunday Covered Dish Lunches - so the time of meeting will have to be adjusted a little.

Our first study will be on Eschatology. Currently, in conjunction with other materials, we plan to use course material of D. Sam Waldron from Covenant Theological Seminary in Owensboro, KY.

Small Groups: Small groups will continue study in The Holiness of God by Dr. R.C. Sproul and will meet the 2nd and 4th Sunday afternoons. You may choose between 1:30 PM at EBC with Pastor John Hubbard leading **or** 4:30 PM with Pastor Thomas Waters leading at his home.

Prayer Service: 11:30 AM Wednesday mornings at EBC.

A Small Group Bible Validity and Focus

Acts 2:42 - And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . (46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people were added to the church in Jerusalem. In Acts 4:4, it is stated that the number of men who were believers in Jerusalem was about 5,000. If we factor in women and believing children to that number, it would swell considerably. So, where could such a sizeable congregation gather? One way we know that the early church met was in homes. In Acts 2:46, some disciples went to the Temple (viz., times of prayer - recall it was a transitional time), but disciples also met in homes. That is, of those 3,000 (later 5,000 +) smaller groups would gather in homes for study, fellowship, Lord's Supper, and prayer.

Clearly, home groups have been a part of church life since the beginning of the church. If possible, that is, if so

blessed by the Lord to have a home conducive to hosting such gatherings of believers, a believer should desire to use his homes for such work - Soli Deo Gloria! Sometimes, someone may say, I don't know what my gift is - well brother and/or sister - it may well be HOSPITALITY.

Home groups are a primary way within to promote fellowship and an excellent way to learn

how to pray for one another in a local church. We promise to pray for one another.

When? How? Where? In the intimate setting of a home group, with 6 or 8 other believers around a dining room table, is an excellent place to really come to know, love and pray for fellow members.



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EBC

Vox is a monthly publication of Emmanuel Baptist Church, www.ebcjesup.net. Address: 1618 Waycross Highway, Jesup, GA 31545; Phone: 427-4322

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Submit information to Chlo Dukes by the fifteenth of the month preceding publication by email, in person, or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Times Change but Faithfulness Is For All Seasons

(Continued from page 1)

As I read of this contrast, I'm reminded of Gospel peddlers, those with white smiles, nice words, bright lights, and posh lifestyles. In contrast to the counterfeit super apostles, Paul pulls up his shirt and says, "Where are the scars?" (*See poem at end of article.*)

"Look here! Here is evidence of true ministry. Scars from service, deprivation, and toil. No, I don't always charm people, because truth matters and your souls are too important for prater. No, I don't always smile and have a sunny disposition, because the war is serious and I'm fatigued from the battle and the weight of the work presses me down. But that does not mean I do not have joy, for I do. But my joy is not in idleness or the frivolous. I have learned that the treasure is not me. I am but a fragile clay jar. It is only the Lord's grace that preserves me. Oh no, it is not me, or any gift I may have that is the focus. God forbid. I did not redeem anyone. I do not preach the Gospel of Paul. No man is sufficient of himself for this work. Ministry reveals my flaws, my weaknesses, ah, but my weakness magnifies His power. Left to myself – I would fail. My prayer is, that Christ will be glorified and that I will remain faithful. I pray that the Lord will teach me not only to endure, but to be content in my weakness, bear the insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. Why? For when I am weak, then I am strong – not in my self or some method, but in Christ alone!"

For many of us 2020 has been a difficult year on many levels and fronts, physically, financially, emotionally, ecclesiastically and spiritually. Covid 19 has threatened our nation, our economy, our well-being, our 1st amendment rights, and it is a threat to EBC. At the writing of this article, there have been nearly 17 million cases of Covid and more than 300,000 deaths due to Covid in the United States. Many in EBC have been personally touched by this awful pandemic and EBC has suffered from it corporately. Moreover, we have yet to return to pre-covid normalcy at EBC and the question remains will we ever?

Currently we all live in hope of a vaccine that is suppose to help us "return to normal." Yet, as a new year dawns, we also have other fears. As a new administration is posed to take over, we fear, among other matters, what unrestrained and ungodly social changes will occur in our nation. Also, with the impositions made upon our freedoms (e.g., 1st amendment right of speech, religion and peaceful assembly) during the Covid crisis, the obvious animus some in the government express for

Christianity, we have reason to be concerned what laws or actions may be enacted against our consciences, our faith, and our freedom of worship.

I write these things not to be pessimistic, but to be perspective. Often we look for just the right time or circumstances or place or whatever . . . to make good our intentions, pledges, resolutions and etc.

We have heard about the person who was in love, but would not marry their sweetheart UNTIL . . . Or, the couple who would not have any children UNTIL . . . Or, the person who was waiting to be baptized or waiting to serve the Lord UNTIL . . .

I'm not suggesting rashness, but I am stating that we are sinful creatures living in an imperfect, fallen world where nothing is ever going to be "just right." Therefore, if one is waiting on a better time to

serve the Lord, then that one is in for a LONG, LONG WAIT! If one is waiting on some Utopia before committing to Jesus, well, let me be the bearer of bad news, it ain't going to happen! There is NO Utopia in this life. Not in this world.

Yes, it is a new year, but we are still sinful folks living in the same ole sin-cursed world. So, what does the New Year hold? I would imagine much the same kind of things that last year did. For certain, the changing of the calendar does not fundamentally change a person or the world in which we live. Now, I'm not saying there are not exceptional years; years scarred by deep sorrows, personal losses and deep pain, there are.

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My Grace is
sufficient
for you, for
my power is
made perfect
in weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9

Times Change but Faithfulness . . .

(Continued from page 3)

The point, however, is that our hope and confidence are not in the changing of the calendar, but in the Lord who changes not! So, let's not fool ourselves by saying, "I will serve the Lord later . . . when things get better . . ."

"As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:15). Today is the day, if you hear His voice, follow the Lord. **Be faithful!**

Below is a poem I remember from years ago. As I recall, I first read it while I was at Culloden PBC when I was under heavy assault and pretty much alone during the Associational fights of 1983-84. I think I have a copy of it somewhere in my files from that period. I was able to Google it because I remembered some lines. One that I could recall was,

"Can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar?"

Hast Thou No Scar?

by Amy Carmichael

Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me.
But thine are whole; can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar?

O church, arise and put your armor on;
Hear the call of Christ our captain.
For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.

-K. Getty and S. Townend



Another Year Is Dawning

Hymn by Frances Ridley Havergal

Tune by Samuel S. Wesley

Another year is dawning, dear Father let it be
In working or in waiting, another year with Thee.
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving Thy presence all the days.

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of leaning upon Thy loving breast;
Another year of trusting, of quiet happy rest.

Another year of service, of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
On earth, or else in Heaven, another year for Thee.

Small Group Bible Validity and Focus

(Continued from page 2)

Many of us confess, "I don't know how to evangelize." Or, "I'm scared to evangelize." Well, most of us know how to invite our neighbors and/or family over for a cup of coffee. Again, such is the value of small groups. Invite your neighbor over for a cup. Tell them you plan to have a couple of friends over for some coffee, conversation and Bible Study. You may be surprised. You may be a greater evangelist than you ever imagined. Most evangelism is between family and friends. Well, that is what a small group promotes. Along the way, the friend you invited may well invite another friend who might invite another friend . . . before long, the elders will need to start another small group. Oh yes, it can happen! Continue to pray that God will raise up gifts and that even EBC will be used to plant other churches.

It starts, continues and ends with faithfulness and with the means God has prescribed: corporate worship, meeting from house to house, and faithfulness in the means of grace. -Pastor T.



January 2021

LORD'S DAY
BIBLE STUDY 9:30 AM
MORNING WORSHIP 10:40 AM

MEN'S STUDY GROUP
FIRST SUNDAY 1:30 PM

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY
SECOND & FOURTH SUNDAYS
1:30 AT EBC or 4:30 AT WATERS' HOME

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|---|--|-----|-----|--|---|
| | God please bless and protect your Church with truth. | | | |  | 2 |
| 3 Lord's Supper Men's Bible Study | 4 | 5  | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 EBC Business Conference Small Group Bible Study | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |  | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| | And though this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, We will not fear for God has willed His truths to triumph through us. | | | | | |
| 24 Small Group Bible Study | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |  |
| 31 | Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think... To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. -Ephesians 3:20 | | | | | |



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

01 Stewart Brooks
 17 Ella Brooks
 21 Patty Cunningham
 30 David Pate
 31 Libby Lightfoot

WEDNESDAY

PRAYER MEETING
11:30 AM-EBC SANCTUARY

THURSDAY & SATURDAY
6:00 PM VESPERS - FACEBOOK

I press on to toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
 in Christ Jesus. -Philippians 3:14

A Prayer for the New Year

Come, Holy Spirit,

Spirit of the Risen Christ, be with us today and always.

Be our Light, our Guide, and our Comforter.

Be our Strength, our Courage, and our Sanctifier.

May this new year be a time of deep spiritual growth for us,

A time of welcoming your graces and gifts,

A time for forgiving freely and unconditionally,

A time for growing in virtue and goodness.

Come, Holy Spirit,

Be with us today and always. Amen.



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