



The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

April 1, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 13
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



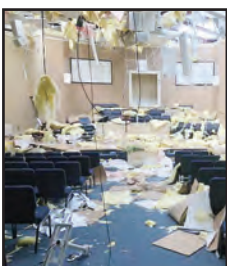
Cancer care ministries aid hurting families throughout the disease journey

◆ Page 9



Tarrant churches share pastor, cooperate to meet congregational needs

◆ Page 11



Calhoun County church destroyed by March tornado

◆ Page 13

REDEEMED

from the curse by

THE CROSS



Miracle of resurrection inspires wonder

By Timothy George

Distinguished professor, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

Galatians 3:10–12 has painted a very grim picture of the human situation.

The law requires a life of perfect obedience in order to be right with God. Yet no person can meet such a high standard.

Consequently, everyone in the world has become “imprisoned ... under sin’s power” (3:22), suffering the just condemnation of the curse of the law.

Given this state of affairs, we are prompted to ask with the disciples, “Then who can be saved?” (Luke 18:26). If what Paul said about the gravity of sin and the certainty of judgment is true, then human beings can only despair of ever obtaining divine favor.

Like the character of Sisyphus in Greek mythology, they are forever consigned to rolling a huge boulder

up a mountain only to have it come crashing down upon their heads again and again. Now this is precisely the situation of all persons who are under the curse of the law, a verdict that is universal in scope including both Jews and Gentiles alike.

Paul’s answer to the dilemma he had just posed came in the form of a confessional statement that may
(See ‘Forgiving,’ page 6)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.

Galatians 3:13

CELEBRATE EASTER APRIL 4.



Find us on

Instagram

TAB Media

instagram.com/tabmediagroup

OUR EXTENDED
ALABAMA BAPTIST
FAMILY

**ALABAMA BAPTIST
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS**
1-800-264-1225 | www.alsbom.org
Offices: Prattville
Leadership: Rick Lance, executive director

**ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES
& FAMILY MINISTRIES**
205-982-1112 | www.alabamachild.org
Main office: Birmingham
Leadership: Rod Marshall, president and CEO

**ALABAMA BAPTIST
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**
205-726-2363 | www.abhconline.com
Office: Birmingham
Leadership: Lonette Berg, executive director

**ALABAMA BAPTIST
RETIREMENT CENTERS**
800-264-1225, ext. 329 | www.abrc.org
Main office: Prattville
Leadership: Ray Burdeshaw, acting president

THE BAPTIST FOUNDATION OF ALABAMA
334-394-2000 | www.tbfa.org
Offices: Montgomery
Leadership: Barry Bledsoe, president

**SHOCCO SPRINGS
BAPTIST CONFERENCE CENTER**
256-761-1100 | www.shocco.org
Location: Talladega
Leadership: Russell Kliner, executive director

ALABAMA CITIZENS ACTION PROGRAM
205-985-9062 | www.alcap.com
Offices: Birmingham
Leadership: Joe Godfrey, executive director

ALABAMA WMU
334-288-2460 | www.alabamawmu.org
Offices: Prattville
Leadership: Candace McIntosh, executive director

JUDSON COLLEGE
800-447-9472 | www.judson.edu
Location: Marion
Leadership: Mark Tew, president

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY
205-726-2011 | www.samford.edu
Location: Birmingham
Leadership: Andrew Westmoreland, president

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE
251-675-5990 | www.umobile.edu
Location: Mobile
Leadership: Lonnie Burnett, president



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 13.

First person: Planning my daughter's wedding

EDITOR'S NOTE — TAB's client coordinator Haley Piersol has been preparing in recent months for her daughter Lyndsee's wedding April 18. She shares her thoughts below.

By Haley Piersol
TAB Media

I wasn't prepared for how hard it is to plan a wedding in five months. It seems like a long time, but it isn't in the wedding world.

I have had to stop and remember that God is in control, and it will all work out. I know Lyndsee and Jonny (her fiancé) are His children, and He will take care of it all.

I have prayed more about the future for them than the wedding itself. I want them to be happy, healthy and loyal followers of Jesus Christ. I have learned to lean on Him more and know that it's not about me or them — it's about Him and His glory.

I have made sure that we point people to Him in the ceremony and planning. If we can point just one nonbeliever at this wedding to Him, that is huge — and that is my ultimate goal.

Emotional roller coaster

Emotionally it is tough. She is my only daughter, and a few things go through my mind. Number one, is that my baby isn't a baby anymore, and second, this is for real. She is making a new life for herself.

I am very happy and have had fun doing things like dress shopping and picking things out.

She has helped me a lot by including me in every decision and totally making me feel as if my opinions matter. I know it's silly, but that has done more for my

momma heart than anything!

There is so much to do that we sometimes get caught up in that and forget to just enjoy the moments and memories we are making.

Emotionally, it is all a roller coaster from stress to happiness to worry about how it will all happen and get paid for. But as usual, God takes care of all of the details and makes it all work the way it's

meant to in His timing.

Wedding planning is fun, but it can also be stressful. There are so many things to consider. We had to find gifts for bridesmaids and groomsmen and the officiant. We had to get send-off sparklers (who knew!).

Speaking of those sparklers — I found a neighbor who was selling some wedding stuff. She had

some sparklers and display buckets, but there weren't enough for the wedding.

I went online to order more and realized they had bigger ones that lasted longer.

Of course, my mind says, "Well, I bet the bigger ones are better, and they are not much difference in price or size."

When the box arrived, I realized they are a LOT bigger!

My husband Rusty said, "Well, Haley, the ones you had are 20 inches long, and the ones you got are 36 inches long, and that is almost double."

The moral of the story is we need a bigger bucket!

Planning the wedding has kept us busy, but I vowed in the beginning not to stress and to enjoy the season we are in. I am thankful to God that we are able to provide a nice wedding for our daughter, and I know it will be perfect. 🌈



Photo courtesy of Haley Piersol
Haley (left) & Lyndsee Piersol

TAB Media

"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts Executive Assistant	Carrie B. McWhorter Content Editor
Maggie Evans Special Assistant	Grace Thornton Special Assignments Editor
Debbie Campbell Director of Communications	Margaret Colson Special Assignments Editor
Linda Harrison Director of Human Resources	Hannah Muñoz Digital Editor
James Hammack Digital Services Manager	Lauren C. Grim Creative Services Manager
Sarah Gill Digital Services Associate	Amy Hacker Creative Services Associate
Jessica Ingram Event Coordinator	Melanie McKinney Advertising Manager
Annette Brown Guest Services	Pam Holt Outside Sales Rep
Haley Piersol Client Coordinator	Susan Stevens Outside Sales Rep
Deb Lowery Financial Assistant	Charles Bradbary Student Intern
Richard Maddox Computer Services	Freelance and guest contributors

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Associated Press/Religion
News Service (AP/RNS), Morning Star
News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses,
and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge,
all of the ads in The Alabama Baptist represent
legitimate companies and offerings. However,
one should always exercise normal business
caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical
Council for Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011,
2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist
Communicators Association, Evangelical Press
Association or Religion Communicators Council

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts

What does it really mean to ‘be the hands and feet of Jesus’?

About 200 families in three areas of the state worked late into the night March 25 salvaging as many items as they could.

The “long-lived” tornadic supercells plowed through areas of Bibb, Shelby and Calhoun counties (see story, page 13).

And then neighbors and friends jumped into action to help those who surfaced from their safe places to find piles of rubble.

Report after report showcased how those with minimal or no damage ran quickly to help those with major damage.

Similar stories surfaced following the damage from more than 20 tornadoes that bombarded the state March 17.

It’s not surprising to hear — it’s instinctive to do everything we can in crisis moments.

We don’t worry about political party alliances or denominational preferences when a tornado devastates a community or another horrifying event occurs.

We merely see someone hurting and reach out to help.

The beauty of the moment can easily be missed because of the chaos swirling around the devastation, and once life settles

back down the giving spirit also can quickly grow cold again.

But Easter provides the perfect weekend to focus on what our daily lives might look like if we intentionally sought to serve others sacrificially, even outside of the crisis moments.

What does it really mean when we chat in our church circles about “being the hands and feet of Jesus”?

Do we keep that particular uniform — the Jesus shawl — hanging in our closet, only to pull out when we go on a missions trip or when a tragedy occurs?

How do we reconcile the sim-

ple concept in 1 John 4:19 — “We love because He first loved us” — with the way we think about and treat others who think or act differently than we do?

Are we able to see others through the eyes of Jesus? And are we willing to love them like Jesus loves them even when they have done wrong or are making bad choices?

Pain, disappointment, frustration and fear are part of all our lives, but that doesn’t mean we need to take it out on others.

Why purposefully turn others into enemies and work to destroy them rather than do everything we can to build each other up?

And why would we not look for every opportunity possible to show those who don’t know Jesus a glimpse of the love and grace He has for them?

Sometimes I try to imagine how I will explain myself to Jesus when I make it Home.

Will I be able to point to all the times I kept my eyes on Him, trusted even when the pain didn’t seem fair and obeyed despite not being able to see the full picture?

Will others have examples of when I genuinely reflected the light of our Savior, or will they quickly turn away, leaving me to the stark reality of the selfish motives of my heart? 🌈

Easter weekend challenge: Write down what’s upsetting you the most right now and let it go, at least until Monday

You may be rolling your eyes at me after reading the headline to the Easter weekend challenge, but trust me. You will be in a better place come Easter Monday if you give it a try.

If you are a believer, then you already know Jesus will carry our burdens for us if we will let Him, but you also know that while it may be a simple concept, it’s not always easy.

So, starting with a more manageable step will provide a

much-needed break for the heart and soul.

Think about it, three full days with permission not to fret about whatever it is that has you upset.

Most likely, the situation will be right where you leave it on Friday, but at least you’ll get some relief and feel a sense of peace. And what better time to submerge in a sea of peace than Easter weekend?

Focus on Christ and the events of Good Friday and Resurrection Day — and take some time to renew

your relationship with Him.

If you don’t have a relationship with Christ, then let’s definitely talk soon. Or reach out to someone in your faith community.

Also, during the “no worry weekend,” spend time with or talking on the phone to family and close friends — asking about them, not venting frustrations. Avoiding political and soap box discussions will help.

Look for ways to make someone smile. —Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



Share your comments, letters to the editor, blog excerpts, social media posts

'Dead man walking': Power of resurrection

By Joe McKeever
joemckeeper.com

Wouldn't it be great to have people turn to Jesus as a result of beholding our lives? That's the plan actually.

Jesus told the former Gadarene demoniac, "Go home to your people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and that He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19).

Sadly, we need to point out the opposite is also true. Some turn away from Jesus when they see how we live. They see our hypocrisy, that we say one thing and do another. They see the absence of Christlikeness in us, and they want no part of Jesus.

The father of a troubled child had a story to tell. He had brought his son to the disciples, asking them to heal him. Give them credit — they tried. But they were unable to effect a cure.

As a result of their inability, the man was giving up hope. He said to Jesus, "If you can do anything, help us" (Mark 9:22).

Don't miss that. The failure of the disciples made the father doubt Jesus.

The Lord, however, turned it back on the man. "Sir, if you can believe, all things are possible" (v. 23). The "if" is on you, on us, not on Him.

When people look at you and me, they should see new life, spiritual

life, a power that has changed us forever from who we used to be into a new creature who is like Jesus.

They will believe we have been raised to new life when they observe our changed behavior. Our transformed values. Our reordered lives.

When David sinned with Bathsheba, he felt sure no one would know of his misdeed but the two of them. Later, as his treachery escalated, he added manslaughter to his list of sins. When the man of God confronted him, David crumbled and admitted what he had done. The prophet Nathan assured him that although God had forgiven the sin, there was collateral damage that had to be dealt with.

"By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," Nathan said (2 Sam. 12:14). Instead of their turning to God because of his faithfulness, they were scoffing at the Lord due to his sin.

The enemy has no answer for the power of the resurrected life. Hear the Apostle Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory. 'O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

So let us live boldly, Christian. Let us fear nothing on this earth except displeasing the Master. Let us live like the newborn people we are, exhibits of His grace and mercy and transforming power.

A heavenly visitor

"You did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44).

Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was accompanied by great cheers and loud adulations. It all seemed so wonderful! However, Jesus responded to the excited applause by crying (Luke 19:41). He knew the crowd wanted Him only for the fulfillment of their personal dreams. They were not interested in being delivered from sins nor transformed into people who could honor God.

Thus, while the people shouted praises, Jesus wept and gave them grave news: destruction and chaos lay ahead because they failed to "recognize the time of their visitation."

Jesus now moves through the streets of our lives — this is the day of His visitation. Do we cheer Him as a Savior who can fulfill our desires? Adore Him because He makes our dreams come true and our lives more comfortable? Is that what our relationship with Jesus is about?

Let us not miss this "day of His visitation" and bring sorrow to His heart by self-centered worship. Let us bow before Him and ask Him to do whatever is necessary to cleanse us from all sin and make us pleasing to God.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

Letters to the Editor

As demonstrated on a consistent basis, TAB reminds us that there are many acts and flavors of Christian ministry in constant motion.

It is sometimes true that we become so exclusively focused on our own pigeonhole of operations in the name of God that we forget that there are many others who are likewise giving themselves and their resources to God in ways that complement and/or exceed our own.

Thank God for Jennifer and all the loving and supportive staff at TAB for their ever-giving, ever-

growing, ever-flowing written and hands-on ministries.

Truly, you are anointed channels through whom God's will is being done. It would be a much more lonely road without the input and output of TAB.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

When I think of people who refresh others, I often am reminded of [TAB Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash]. She is the queen of nice!

Evangelist Junior Hill
Author of "The Refreshers"

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“People are looking for eternal hope even if they don’t realize it.”

SHANE PRUITT

Executive director of next gen evangelism, North American Mission Board

As the Easter season nears, one of the stories we’ll hear is that of the one we call “Doubting Thomas.” Thomas struggled with his faith after the Resurrection, and although he didn’t believe, what stands out is how the disciples treated him.

My friend Daniel Darling writes in his book “Characters of Easter” that the disciples pulled Thomas back toward Jesus, and of course, Thomas ended up believing.

Lately I’ve noticed Christ followers treating those who question more like enemies than the brothers and sisters with whom they will be spending eternity. Scripture makes it known that the world will know us by our love for one another, not by who won the social media or denominational battle.

We are being watched by the outside culture, but more importantly, we’re being watched by Someone greater than the world around us. If we model the behavior of the people of God, we will be fine. The letter to the Hebrews tells us this is not our home; we are just passing through. But how we conduct ourselves on the way home matters.

Maina Mwaura
Speaker and writer

Tomorrow’s leaders are going to come from somewhere. Should it not be from the church? In a world filled with darkness and despair should the church not be the cutting-edge producer of leaders?

Who in your church, your circle of influence can you encourage

and pray for Christian leadership as school teachers and administrators, for local government Christian leaders, for manufacturing plant Christian leaders, for sports team Christian leaders?

Who in your circle of influence should you be praying for, asking God to raise up as the next generation of leaders?

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

Our old history ends with the cross; our new history begins with our resurrection.

Watchman Nee
Chinese church leader and
Christian teacher (1903–1972)

A pastor once asked me, “How’s enrollment at the seminary?” I replied, “I will answer that question if I can first ask you one.” He agreed, so I asked, “When is the last time you preached on answering God’s call or even mentioned it publicly? ... Without you calling out the called, we will have no future enrollment.”

Calling out the called is both a responsibility and a privilege. ... We need future leaders.

Pray for God to call out more leaders, preach or teach on this important theme and nurture younger leaders as they take their first tentative steps toward leadership. More than future seminary enrollment is at stake.

Our future effectiveness in fulfilling our mission hangs in the balance.

President Jeff Iorg
Gateway Seminary

Often I am asked about missions opportunities. Usually the questions involve where, how long and what will we be doing. These are all good questions to ask but because of the global pandemic, the answers to where, what and how long may not be the answers we want to hear.

However, the mission has not changed. Perhaps the better question we should ask every morning is, “How can I live on mission today with the gospel?”

As we pray that prayer, God will open up so many ways for us to serve. Then we will begin to make missions a daily part of our lives and not something we do for a week or a month or a season. ...

Whether God has us in another country or state or whether He keeps us at our schools, homes and neighborhoods — whatever stage of life we are in — let us start every day praying, “God show me how I can live on mission for Jesus this day.”

Jake Duke
BCM minister
Baptist Campus Ministries
for West Alabama region

From the *Twitterverse*

@ianharber

I don’t think people truly want a universal understanding of theology to be “whatever serves me.” You want a recipe for tribal warfare? There it is. Theology that’s about God, who is always pouring out His self-giving love for others, is the true path toward peace and healing.

@MattSmethurst

If you’re not confident in the authority of the Scriptures, you’ll be a slave to whatever sounds right.
—@MattChandler74

@CSLewisDaily

“God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain.” —C.S. Lewis

@BillyGraham

“Integrity means that if our private life was suddenly exposed,

we’d have no reason to be ashamed or embarrassed. Integrity means our outward life is consistent with our inner convictions.”

#BillyGraham

@RevDuv

The Trinity is one of the founding and bedrock beliefs of Christianity. To deny it is to deny what Christianity is built upon.

@JohnPiper

“We are released from the law, having died to what held us captive, so that we serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). The old commandment-ruled rebel died. A new Spirit-led servant lives. The miraculous creation of a Christian.

@TimTebow

This place on earth is temporary ... for Christians it’s not our home. But I do believe we get glimpses of

our home with God when we align with His promises & purpose for our lives.

@trillianewbell

God wants us to be free from the slavery of sin and free from the oppression of working for our salvation. He provides that freedom through His grace.

@PaulTripp

If you live a contented and thankful life, you know that grace has visited you because neither is natural for a sinner.

@Rgallaty

Wiersbe: A pastor needs the heart of a child, the head of a theologian and the hide of a rhinoceros.

@isickadams

You will suffer wrong for standing for right. Stand anyway.

FORGIVING LOVE

Christ's death, resurrection overcome bondage of law once and forevermore

(continued from page 1)

well have circulated in early Jewish Christian communities as a kind of shorthand summary of the gospel itself: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us."

This is the first time in Galatians Paul used the word "redeemed," although the idea of rescue and deliverance through the self-sacrifice of Christ has been presupposed from the beginning.

The word "redeemed" means literally "to buy off," "to set free by the payment of a price." The root word for redemption in Greek is agora, "marketplace," the site of the slave auction where every day in ancient Rome, human beings were put up for sale to the highest bidder.

The word "redemption" declares that we have been bought with a price. "We are not saved by the Lord Jesus Christ by some method that cost him nothing." The "ransom" for our sins was nothing less than the very life blood of the Son of God himself.

Unblemished lamb

But in what sense could Christ have become a curse for us? Although Jesus was born "under the law" (Gal. 4:4), He did not merit the curse of the law for any wrongdoing He had committed because He was as "an unblemished and spotless lamb" (1 Pet. 1:19). Yet both the fact and the manner of His death brought Him inexorably under the curse of the law.

To prove this point from Scripture, Paul again reached back to Deuteronomy 21:23 and quoted the text: "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse." However, the original reference was not to crucifixion, a Roman style of execution abhorrent to the Jewish people.

The Talmud recognizes four modes of capital punishment that

were sanctioned by the Jewish people: stoning, burning, beheading and strangling the criminal as he stood on the ground.

After the execution had been carried out, the corpse of the criminal would then be hoisted onto a piece of timber, a stake or "tree," as an indication that this person had been justly condemned as a transgressor of the divine law.

It was important that the criminal's corpse not be exposed beyond sundown because this would dishonor God and defile the land.

Thus, according to John's Gospel, the bodies of Jesus and the two thieves crucified with Him were removed from their crosses before nightfall so as not to desecrate the Passover Sabbath (John 19:31).

Thus by being impaled on a cross, becoming a gory spectacle for all to see, Jesus exposed Himself to the curse of the law.

Paul's citation of the text from Deuteronomy shows that there was nothing accidental or coincidental about the death of Christ. The reference to Jesus' death as a "hanging on a tree" occurs frequently in early Christian presentations of the gospel as a witness to the fact that Christ's death on the cross was a fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture.

While it is true that being hung on a tree was not the curse itself but rather the public proof that the one so impaled had incurred the curse, the clear inference of the New Testament is that the death of Jesus by crucifixion was not a quirk of fate but instead the deliberate design of God.

Thus in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he declared that Jesus was handed over to His executioners to be put to death by crucifixion "according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23).

The cross was neither an accident of history nor a divine emergency



Unsplash.com

measure brought in to remedy an unforeseen situation.

There was a cross in the heart of God from all eternity, for Jesus was "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world."

Stumbling block

Why was the cross such a stumbling block to the Jews, including presumably Saul of Tarsus before he met Christ?

Christians claimed that Jesus was the Messiah, and yet it was known to all that their Messiah had been brutally crucified by the Romans outside the gates of Jerusalem. The Messiah was the epitome of blessing, but one "hung on a tree" was by definition "accursed by God."

The only explanation could be that the Messiah had willingly taken upon Himself the dreaded curse that rightly belonged to others.

Here is the genesis of the Christian doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. Indeed, as John Stott has suggested, it may well have been reflection on the very text Paul cited in Galatians 3:13 that led the early Christians to understand the death of Jesus in this way.

Stott says, "The apostles were quite familiar with this legislation [Deut. 21:22–23], and with its implication that Jesus died under the divine curse.

"Yet, instead of hushing it up, they deliberately drew people's attention to it. So evidently they were not embarrassed by it. They did not think of Jesus as in any sense deserving to be accursed by God. They must, therefore, have at least begun to understand that it was our curse which He was bearing."

It is not only Jews of antiquity who have stumbled over Paul's theology of the cross, however.

The liberal Baptist scholar Ernest DeWitt Burton rejected the idea that the curse of the law was in any sense the real judgment of God.

Self-giving love

According to this view, Christ's work on the cross must be seen in purely ethical, not forensic, terms. No ransom was paid, no transaction occurred, no substitution was made. What Christ did by dying on the cross was to demonstrate the divine character of self-giving love and the divine attitude of forgiveness that flows from it.

Surely there is a large element of truth in this way of putting things. Jesus' death on the cross is a window into the character of God, and the example of His forgiving love is a vital force in the life of believers.

But such a view, when taken alone, trivializes the death of Christ by reducing it to the significance of

an advice column or a well-meant lecture on good behavior.

Jesus did not need to get Himself “strung up on a tree like a damned fool,” to quote Clarence Jordan’s jarring but accurate Cotton Patch translation of Galatians 3:13, in order to pass on pious platitudes about how human beings should get along with one another and make the world a better place in which to live. No, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Bringing several of these strands of thought together, we can summarize Paul’s understanding of Christ’s death in this passage in three affirmations.

1. Christ was cursed. As we have seen, Paul related the curse of the law to the specific prophecy concerning a criminal who had been “hung on a tree.” However, the curse in this context assumes an almost personified form, indicating the totality of God’s righteous judgment and wrath that finally will be displayed in the blazing fire and eternal punishment of those “who don’t know God” and reject “the revelation of the Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:7–9).

As Paul explains, the curse of the law for Jews had resulted in their bondage to the Mosaic legislation; for Gentiles, the curse had resulted in their slavery to the principalities and powers who hold sway in “this present evil age.” In both cases the curse of the law is damning, irrevocable and inescapable.

2. Christ was cursed by God. Some scholars have made much of the fact that Paul omitted the words “by God” in his quotation of Deuteronomy 21:23. However, the curse of the law that Christ bore was the curse of God’s law.

Although He was put to death by wicked men in a horrible miscarriage of justice, this happened, as we have seen, in accordance with the eternal purpose and predetermined plan of God. Thus Galatians 3:13 should be interpreted in the light of 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

From the perspective of salvation history, then, the curse Christ bore upon the cross was not a curse that

wrongly rested upon Him; it was a curse that rightly rested upon Him as the sinless substitutionary sacrifice “sent” by the Father for this very purpose.

3. Christ was cursed by God for us. The dilemma of Galatians 3:10 — all are under a curse — is resolved by the remedy of verse 13 — Christ redeemed us from the curse. Paul was working here with the idea of an “exchange curse” by which the sin, guilt and hell of lost men and women are placed upon Christ while His righteousness, blessing and merit are imputed to those in whose place He stands.

Luther spoke of this atoning transaction as “a happy exchange.” It was an exchange that involved a fierce struggle with the powers of darkness in which “not only my sins and yours, but the sins of the entire world, past, present and future, attack Him, try to damn Him and do, in fact, damn Him.”

Yet Christ emerged victorious over sin, death and the eternal curse. This He did “for us.”

For this reason, the doctrine of atonement can never be merely a matter of cool theologizing or dispassionate discourse. For us, the Son of God became a curse. For us, He shed His pre-

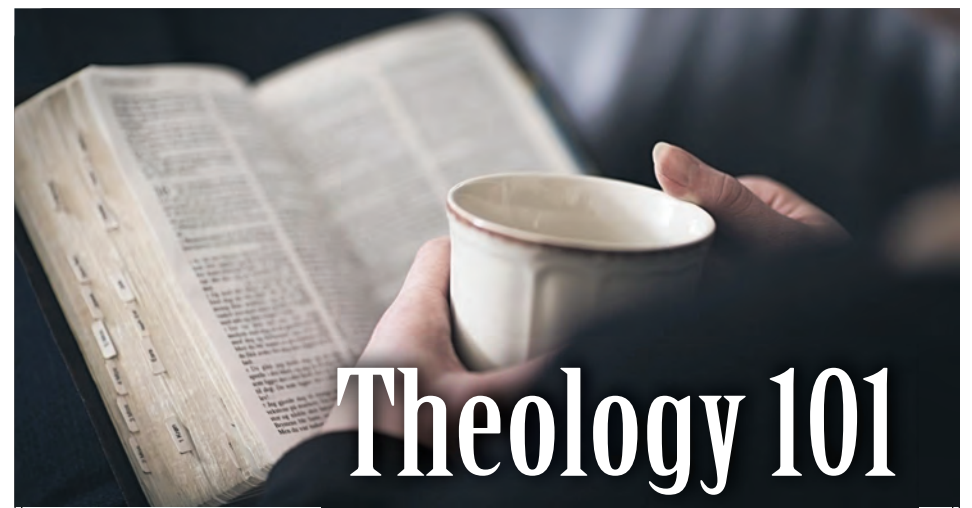
cious blood. For us, He who from all eternity knew only the intimacy of the Father’s bosom came “to stand in that relation with God which normally is the result of sin, estranged from God and the object of His wrath.”

All this — for us! What response can we offer except that of wonder, devotion and trust!

EDITOR’S NOTE — Timothy George is Distinguished Professor at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and the general editor of the 28-volume *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*.

This piece is taken from his recently released commentary on Galatians in the *Christian Standard Academic*, which aims to help “the reader understand each biblical book’s theology, its place in the broader narrative of Scripture and its importance for the church today.” The series is available from Lifeway and other booksellers.✚

Jesus’ death on the cross is a window into the character of God, and the example of His forgiving love is a vital force in the life of believers.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Easter Miracle

Reflections

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

Each week in this Easter month, Theology 101 will look at some aspect of that first Easter that suggests ongoing importance for Christians today. In these days before the dawn of Easter Sunday, we begin by reflecting on the miracle of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

When we read the four Gospel accounts of His crucifixion, we are left with the unassailable conclusion that Jesus experienced a real physical death on that Good Friday. The spear thrust into His side was climactic and convincing evidence to those who carried out His crucifixion.

Hence, any theory that Jesus fainted on the cross, only to revive in the cool of the hewn rock tomb, must be immediately dismissed. Roman soldiers were quite accomplished at securing a victim’s death by crucifixion.

‘Flesh and Bones’

Having died a real physical death set the stage for a real physical resurrection from the dead. Therein lies the Easter miracle.

Upon their first glimpse of the risen Christ, the disciples, who had not yet seen Him alive, again were invited to behold His hands and feet. Christ even invited them to handle His body in order to dispel any notion that they had seen a spirit.

Jesus said to them, “A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). He went a step further to ask the disciples if they had any food. In

response, “They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb,” which He ate in their presence (Luke 24:42).

He could have truthfully reminded the disciples that a spirit does not eat physical food as He was doing, but Jesus wanted His followers then — and wants us now — to stand convinced of the Easter miracle of a real bodily resurrection.

‘First fruits of resurrection’

Given that Jesus was the “first fruits” of the resurrection from the dead, those who are joined to Him through saving faith will experience their own bodily resurrection at the Second Coming.

This prospect lies at the core of Christian hope, as it is precisely put in 1 Corinthians 15:52–54: “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”✚

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



All In for Judson

On March 3, Judson College's trustees launched an aggressive 30-day \$5 million campaign to save the 183-year-old institution. Judson President W. Mark Tew asks the College's friends to demonstrate their support of our Alabama Baptist treasure by:

- Praying that God would work in students' lives.
- Tithing to your local Baptist church.
- Considering giving your "eleventh percent" to Judson.

Learn more at www.judson.edu/all-in.



JUDSON
COLLEGE

Restoring hope

Cancer ministries aid hurting families throughout the disease journey

By Lanell Downs Smith
TAB Media

Sandy was first diagnosed with cancer in 2017. A fear of the unknown was among her toughest battles in those early days, she said.

Church members offered Sandy support through calls, texts, grocery deliveries, rides to the doctor and companionship during her treatments. But the prayers of her Bible fellowship class meant the most during her fight with cancer.

“I felt every one of those prayers,” said Sandy, an Alabama Baptist. “They made all the difference.”

The American Cancer Society estimates that 1 in 3 people will be diagnosed with cancer, said Percy McCray Jr., director of faith-based programs for the Cancer Treatment Centers of America, during a recent TAB Talks podcast.

The church body is not immune. Almost every congregation prays for someone battling cancer.

Matthew 25 commands believers to tend the sick, noted McCray, but with cancer, that care should include not only praying and sending casseroles but also understanding how the disease operates.

Our Journey of Hope, a ministry sponsored by Cancer Centers of America, helps to inform and engage people with techniques they can use to encourage cancer patients



Photo courtesy of Misty Pointer

The cancer ministry team from New Harmony Baptist Church, Heflin, stands outside the church after completing training through Our Journey of Hope, a ministry sponsored by Cancer Centers of America. Pictured are (front row, l to r) Stephanie Morgan, Carrie Adams, Pastor Chad Morgan, Derrick McDaniel, Keith Yancy; (middle row) Kim Nolen, Misty Pointer, Kay Yancy, Nicole McDaniel; (back row) Brandie Cotton, Pat Turner and Lee Pointer.

and their families. The ministry provides free training and materials for churches seeking to start a cancer ministry. It also offers cancer education and weekly radio encouragement for patients and caregivers.

Cancer can be a private battle for some patients, and many are reluctant to share the news of a diagnosis with their church, said McCray, himself a cancer survivor.

But every community is touched

by cancer, he said, and talking about the issue is important. Sharing the journey fosters hope as well as physical and mental health for patients and their caregivers.

In 2018, New Harmony Baptist Church, Heflin, began seeking ways to serve families touched by cancer.

Sensing that God had a specific plan but uncertain of the vision, church members asked Him for guidance as they also prayed for two church families experiencing cancer.

New Harmony members Patricia Turner and Misty Pointer connected with Cancer Centers

of America and completed a two-day cancer ministry training workshop through Our Journey of Hope. As part of the training, the church was tasked with building a team of volunteers, and in October 2020, a 12-member team was certified for cancer ministry.

The coronavirus pandemic has limited some of what New Harmony's team had hoped to do for cancer patients and caregivers. Even so,

the church has printed team contact cards for distribution to families to let them know volunteers are available to help.

The congregation also prays for 25 local families who are currently battling cancer.

Meeting needs

Turner said the team works to meet whatever needs cancer families may experience, whether through sending cards, making phone calls and praying or by providing medical aids from the church's store of donated equipment. The team has supplied a hospital bed and walker to one family and delivered Thanksgiving meals to others.

The main emphasis of cancer ministry, Turner said, is restoring hope to individuals who may view a cancer diagnosis as a death sentence. Meeting needs in practical ways communicates God's love to hurting families, she added.

“We are called to bear each other's burdens, and everybody needs that hope,” she said. “We hope for healing, but there's hope after this. The [Our Journey of Hope] workshop taught us to explain that hope. Through Jesus, [cancer] is not a death sentence.”

Often, believers seeking to help will focus on the patient, McCray

noted, but it's important to support caregivers as well. That's why Our Journey of Hope offers education on caring for the caregiver along with the patient.

Turner, who served as primary caregiver for a

friend with cancer, was present when her friend accepted Jesus as Savior and later at her death. The experience, Turner said, helped her understand the individual needs of the caregiver.

“You're not just a sitter,” she said. “It's not just a job. You are part of that person's journey. Caregivers are so vital to the well-being of the patient. They get tired too and emotionally involved.”

How to serve families struggling with cancer

Support is important to cancer patients, said Percy McCray Jr., director of faith-based programs for the Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

Here are some ways to help:

- ▶ Seek education to understand the nature of cancer and how to cultivate hope.
- ▶ Be available. Allow them to choose what works best.
- ▶ Meet needs on their terms. Offer to leave food and supplies on the porch if necessary.

▶ Be a helping hand. Run errands or volunteer to do cleaning or yardwork.

▶ Pray for them, their families and their caregivers. Pray for healing; few or no side effects from treatments; comfort, hope, peace, renewed faith and salvation for those who don't know Jesus.

▶ Call or send cards and texts.

▶ Respect their privacy. Don't share details of their condition without permission. (Lanell Downs Smith)

For more information and free resources, visit ourjourneyofhope.com/ministry.

Hear more on McCray's work at thealabamabaptist.org/podcast/cancer-care-ministry.

I KNOW THAT
my Redeemer Lives

Job 19:25

Happy Easter from the
State Board of Missions!

Tarrant pastor serves two churches, one community

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
TAB Media

For the past few months, Sunday mornings have involved a different sort of “commute” for Pastor Joel Dison.

At 9 a.m. he preaches at Springdale Baptist Church in the Tarrant area of Birmingham. He’s been pastor there since August when the church’s previous pastor stepped back from ministry.

When that worship service ends, Dison drives about five minutes to Pawnee Baptist Church, where he has been pastor since May 2015, to preach again at 11. He is joined at both services by Springdale’s worship leader Terry Preston and organist Judy Coffey.

On Wednesday nights, the two congregations meet jointly at Pawnee, and on Sunday nights they gather at Springdale.

Partnership

So far it’s working. Dison officially serves as pastor at both churches — at least until October. The one-year experiment is not a merger, he said, and it’s not “fostering” or “adoption,” terms churches sometimes use when they work together.

“It’s something different,” he explained. “It’s a partnership. The concept



Members of Pawnee Baptist and Springdale Baptist churches meet together each week for D-Life (livethedlife.com).

we use is, ‘one mission, two churches.’”

Though October 2020 marked the formal connection, the two churches began working together in 2019. They had been part of associational church revitalization conversations — Springdale is in Birmingham Metro Baptist Association and Pawnee is in North Jefferson Baptist Association — and that common interest led to discussions about how the two congregations might work together.

A few Springdale members joined Pawnee in D-Life discipleship groups, which met at a local fast-food restaurant.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and things got

complicated. Dison had begun livestreaming Pawnee’s services in the summer of 2019 because the church, which averaged 30–35 on Sundays pre-pandemic, had a number of homebound members.

“When COVID hit, we never missed a beat as it relates to livestreaming,” Dison said. “We were already doing it.”

Springdale had no capability to livestream, however, so from March to May the 50 or so members had no in-person services or online presence, Dison said.

In June, Springdale members decided they would resume in-person gatherings but discovered a big problem — the building’s sewer system had backed up into the church. Church leaders asked if they could worship with Pawnee while repairs

were done, and from June to late August, both congregations worshipped in person together.

Cooperation

They also held a virtual Vacation Bible School, distributing materials to neighborhood children and cooperated in distributing food boxes in the community.

It went so well that leaders began to think they might be on to something.

“While we were meeting together, the leadership of both churches were meeting regularly to talk about why God might be bringing us together like this,” Dison explained. “We saw we could do more together than we could do separate.”

Members of both congregations prayed and sought the Lord’s guidance for the future, not just in

terms of leadership or programs but also outreach into the Tarrant area.

“Our community has changed a lot in the past 10 years,” said Gary Curl, a deacon at Springdale. “When I first

came here we had 215 attending. Now that’s 40–50. Our church has an average age in the mid-70s. We’ve got to change that or Springdale won’t survive.”

Curl sees a growing Hispanic population in the neighborhood surrounding the church and wants to reach them. Dison feels the

same way. Not too long ago the two congregations held an ESL (English as a Second Language) training event.

They want to offer ESL classes, find ways to involve more children from the neighborhood in children’s and youth ministries, and maybe even start a Spanish mission church.

They are working toward a joint children’s program on Wednesday nights and cooperative Easter outreach efforts. Outreach is something the two congregations can do together for the long-term, regardless of what happens in October, Dison said.

‘A win for both’

Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Association, called the agreement a “win for both churches.”

“It’s a sign of spiritual maturity on the part of both congregations,” he added. “It takes a level of humility and passion for the gospel to want to share a team of leaders.”

And Crain noted Dison’s love of the community, where he moved after becoming pastor of Pawnee.

“To have a leader who is committed to the people of Tarrant and has proven that because he lives there is really exciting for both congregations,” Crain said.

Still, it was not an easy process, Curl noted, and both churches have had to compromise at times.

“People love their church,” he said. “It took a lot of prayer and leadership on the part of deacons and others at both churches. And we had a lot of conversations about what God wants versus what we each personally desire.”

Dison agreed.

“God did this,” he said. “God providentially orchestrated every aspect of the circumstances that made this possible. This was us being obedient to God.”



DISON



Pastor Charles Lewis
recommends Jimmy Dixon

The Benefits of a Reverse Mortgage

- Get cash
- Erase mortgage payments
- Start a growing line of credit
- Purchase a home

Contact Jimmy Dixon

205-567-4800

jdixon@mcgowinking.com



Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

AVAILABLE
NOW

Find the Stories podcast at
www.tabonline.org/podcasts
or anywhere you get
your podcasts.

TAB Media





Screenshot courtesy of Doug Rogers

Ken Allen (left), director of the SBOM office of LeaderCare and church health, hosts a webinar on preventing burnout with guest Richard Blackaby of Blackaby Ministries International.

Combating burnout through relationships

Ministry burnout is a real concern following the stresses of 2020, but focusing on the Lord is the remedy, suggests Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International.

Blackaby spoke during a March 23 webinar, “Ministering out of the Overflow — How to be on Fire for God Without Burning Out,” hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Blackaby said it’s easy for a pastor to grow discouraged, but the familiar story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 can provide encouragement.

“Elijah had the best day he’d ever had,” Blackaby said. “The evil prophets were defeated, the drought ended and he thought the people would now return to God. That didn’t happen.”

Discouragement

Like Elijah, pastors can be attacked by critics or met by silence, either of which brings discouragement. The prophet also knew fear when the wicked queen threatened him, Blackaby said.

“Fear can put us in the wilderness too,” he said.

“One of the first signs of discouragement is isolation. This has been especially true in the pandemic when getting together with other pastors is harder. But healthy

ministers find ways to stay connected to others.”

Blackaby said there’s also a danger in filling our soul with divisive and angry things from the world.

‘Focus on the Lord’

“I don’t think our congregations want to know on Sunday that we’ve watched news for six hours the past week. They want to know that we’ve spent time in God’s word,” Blackaby said. “We have to guard our hearts.”

Blackaby said Elijah also found a gift in the “suddenness of God.”

“God sent an angel to encourage him with food, drink and rest,” he said. “I think the bread spoke not only of sustenance but of the love of God. Elijah could’ve found food in the wilderness but what’s better than freshly baked bread? I think this was God’s way of letting the prophet know He loved him and would continue to help him.”

Discouragement can be a way that God moves us from complacency to new things.

“Leaders get into a comfort role when life is normal,” he said, “Maybe God is leading us to make constructive changes and not put the furniture back exactly where it was before.” (Michael Brooks)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word.

For more information email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Talladega Creek Baptist Church, Talladega, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Upon the Lord’s guidance, please submit resumés to: slocke@crba.org.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Flomaton, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumés to: Flomatonfbc@gmail.com or mail to: P.O. Box 765, Flomaton, AL 36441.

PASTOR

Union Hill Baptist Church in Oneonta, Alabama, is earnestly seeking God’s choice for the full-time pastor to lead our small-town congregation. Prayerfully consider mailing your resumé to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 2919 County Highway 39, Oneonta, AL 35121 or email: sparks@unionhillbaptist.org.

PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor to lead and shepherd our congregation. Under the Lord’s leading, please send resumés to: fbcloxleypastorsearch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church is seeking resumés for bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Avenue, Gadsden, AL 35903. padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Church of Guin, Ala. Receiving resumés and videos at church@fbcguin.com.

YOUTH PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Please send a resumé to: youthpastorsearchfbcloxley@gmail.com.

STUDENT MINISTER

Parkway Baptist Church in Creve Coeur, Mo., is now accepting resumés for a part-time student minister. The student minister would be responsible for leadership and vision-casting for an established middle/high school student ministry. The position has a competitive compensation package including benefit options. Interested applicants may send a letter of interest, resumé, references and statement of faith to: studentsearch@parkwaybaptist.net or by mail to: Student Search Committee, Parkway Baptist Church,

12465 Olive Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63141-6499.

OTHER POSITIONS

SHOCCO SPRINGS IS HIRING

We are currently looking for resident summer staff to join our team to serve thousands of guests this summer! If you are college-aged and looking for a job-ministry-life-changing experience — RSS is for you! Learn more and apply today at shocco.org/summerstaff. We also have seasonal, part-time positions open in all departments including guest relations, lodging services, lifeguards, food service, recreation and grounds. If you live within commuting distance to Shocco and would love to work alongside us in ministry this summer, we welcome you to apply at shocco.org/employment.

FINANCIAL MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville, Ala. This is a full-time job, Monday–Friday, with salary and BCBS health insurance and retirement benefits, as well as paid vacation and sick leave. Applicants need experience with QuickBooks Pro or Non-profit, using payroll, accounts payable, credit card and deposit functions; also experienced with Microsoft 365 Office. Experience with on-line giving/receipts a plus. Glynwood Baptist is a member of the Autauga Baptist Association and cooperates with the Alabama Baptist Convention and SBC. For an application and more information contact the church office at 334-361-9180 or email to: glynwoodbc@knology.net.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGNS

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com.

TRAVEL/VACATION

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct from Christian

family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years! Call Donna 251-656-4935, Don 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

FOR SALE

PIANO

Bergmann 4’11” Baby Grand. Ebony polish. Like new! \$3,950. 334-279-1636. Please leave message if no answer.

MINISTRIES

NEW: STORIES PODCAST

Have you checked out TAB Media’s new Stories serial podcast yet? If not, then you’ll want to catch the first season featuring Sammy Gilbreath, state missionary in evangelism with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. And if you have listened to season one, then be on the lookout for season two. It’s coming soon. TAB’s Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen to the Stories podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or at thealabamabaptist.org/explore/stories.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition The Alabama Baptist also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers’ email. The digital edition comes in pdf form as well as part of an app and is included with all subscriptions. The digital edition has the same content as the print edition — including full color on all pages — and can be accessed anytime as long as you have internet. The app edition also offers expanded content. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB HIGHLIGHTS

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered every Monday–Wednesday–Friday with the day’s top stories from the world of faith-based news. The complimentary service is managed by the TAB Media team. Headlines come from international, national and Southern Baptist coverage as well as one story that has been trending during the week. TAB Highlights also provides a link to the latest podcast released from the TAB Media team. To sign up, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Tornado cleanup efforts continue across Alabama

At least five people were killed and hundreds of homes — and at least two churches — were destroyed or damaged when tornadoes struck several Alabama communities on March 25.

The deaths occurred in Calhoun County in east Alabama, where Ohatchee and Wellington were hard hit.

Calhoun Baptist Association Director of Missions Roger Willmore said Wellington First Baptist Church, was “totally destroyed.” It is the second time the church has been hit by a tornado.

On April 27, 2011, the church suffered severe damage as the structure was rocked on its foundation, causing the backside of the building to fall off. That tornado also ripped away much of the church’s roof. The rebuilding project following the 2011 tornadoes was completed in late 2012.

Calhoun County Sheriff Matthew Wade said the twister cut a diagonal path across the county, striking mostly rural areas — something that likely kept the death toll from being higher, he said.

Bibb County was the first area in the state to experience the wrath of the “long-lived” tornadic supercells, according to the National Weather Service.

Extensive damage

Along with several homes and the airport being destroyed in Centreville, and Ashby Baptist Church, Briarfield, being damaged, there is extensive damage throughout the county.

Shelby County also took a direct hit from the storms.

Dozens of homes were damaged in the Eagle Point subdivision near US 280, and Oak Mountain State Park received extensive tree damage.

Chilton and Coosa counties experienced damage late in the day as a final round of storms moved into Georgia, where one person was killed in Newnan, according to news reports.

Brian Hastings, head of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, said at least 200 homes were destroyed statewide in the storms.



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle

A North Jefferson Baptist Association Disaster Relief volunteer is one of several working in Shelby County the day after the March 25 storms.

The NWS estimates the tornado that hit Shelby County before moving into Talladega County was on the ground for about 100 miles.

Ongoing efforts

Mark Wakefield, Disaster Relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said assessment is ongoing and command centers were being set up at press time.

For the Shelby County area, a command center will operate out of Indian Springs First Baptist Church. In Calhoun County, Hillcrest

Baptist Church will serve as a command center. The Bibb Association office will serve as a command center for the Centreville area. Other locations will be set up as needed, Wakefield said.

Local chainsaw teams were already at work in affected areas the next morning.

Those who wish to help residents of affected areas can give monetary donations at sbd.org/donate/ or by mail to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief, P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, Alabama 36068-1970. (TAB)

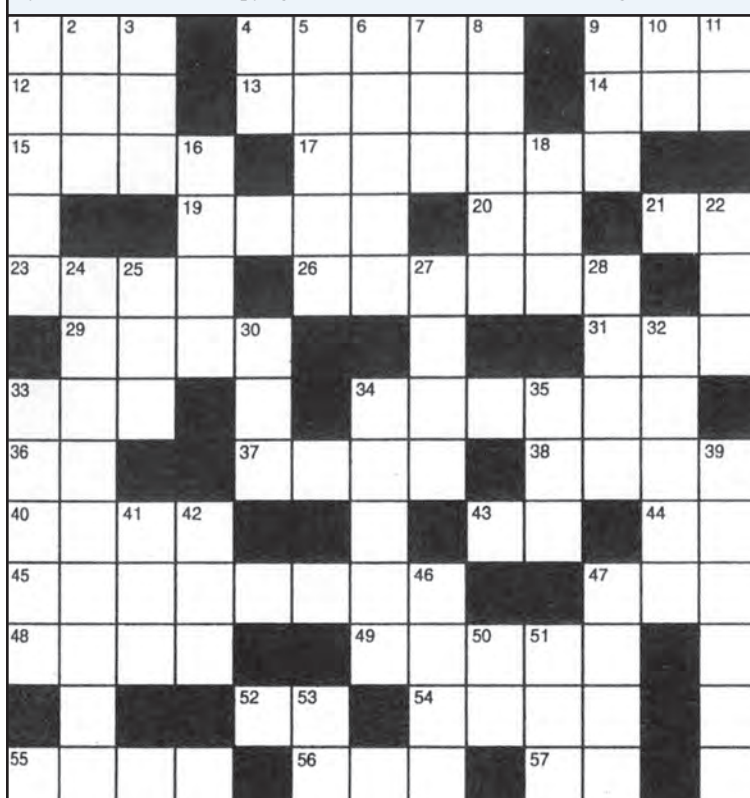


Photo by Jacob Bollinger

Wellington First Baptist Church in Calhoun County receives second blow in 10 years when a March 25 tornado blew the roof off the building, resulting in damage throughout the facility.

Christian Crossword

By Janice Buhl Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. ___ shall not live by bread alone. (Matt. 4:4)
4. And the darkness he called ___. (Gen. 1:5)
9. My heart was ___ within me. (Ps. 39:3)
12. Mine ___ is as nothing before thee. (Ps. 39:5)
13. Let us go and serve ___ gods. (Deut. 13:13)
14. No room in the ___. (Luke 2:7)
15. Lo, I have given thee ___ dung. (Ezek. 4:15)
17. The ___ also dwelt in Seir. (Deut. 2:12)
19. On this side Jordan may be ___. (Num. 32:32)
20. Grace ___ unto you. (Rev. 1:4)
21. Los Angeles. (abbr.)
23. Asa destroyed her ___, and burnt it. (1 Kings 15:13)
26. ___ unto me. (Ps. 55:2)
29. And a river went out of ___ to water the garden. (Gen. 2:10)
31. When ye pray, ___ not vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
33. I will ___ unto thy days 15 years. (Isa. 38:5)
34. It ___ to him that was possessed. (Mark 5:16)

36. The young men of Aven and of ___-beseth. (Ezek. 30:17)
37. Hast thou eaten of the ___? (Gen. 3:11)
38. So that my feet did not ___. (2 Sam. 22:37)
40. Praise him for his mighty ___. (Ps. 150:2)
43. And he cast stones ___ David. (2 Sam. 16:6)
44. Thou shalt feed ___ people Israel. (2 Sam. 5:2)
45. Then led they Jesus from ___. (John 18:28)
47. Therefore shall he ___ in harvest. (Prov. 20:4)
48. He built even Bethlehem, and ___, and Tekoa. (2 Chron. 11:6)
49. ___ went and dwelt in her father's house. (Gen. 38:11)
52. And God said, Let there ___ light. (Gen. 1:3)
54. ___ made him a great feast. (Luke 5:29)
55. Went up to ___, and fetched a compass. (Josh. 15:3)
56. The name of the wicked shall ___.

- (Prov. 10:7)
57. Short for Emily.

Down

1. Geuel the son of ___. (Num. 13:15)
2. Hast thou not heard long ___? (2 Kings 19:25)
3. Behold, all things are become ___. (2 Cor. 5:17)
4. God is ___ respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34)
5. Whose name was ___ an Israelite. (2 Sam. 17:25)
6. Then Abraham gave up the ___. (Gen. 25:8)
7. Made he a woman, and brought ___ unto the man. (Gen. 2:22)
8. There is one ___ cut off from Israel. (Judg. 21:6)
9. Abraham lifted up ___ eyes. (Gen. 22:13)
10. Moses gave you ___ this side Jordan. (Josh. 1:14)
11. Tennessee. (abbr.)
16. Neither shall the ___ of thy foot have rest. (Deut. 28:65)
18. And David sent out 10 young ___. (1 Sam. 25:5)
22. I ___ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)
24. King David ___ unto the Lord. (1 Chron. 18:11)
25. The ___ number of them is to be redeemed. (Num. 3:48)
27. Saul abode in Gibeath under a ___. (1 Sam. 22:6)
28. Their ears are ___ of hearing. (Acts 28:27)
30. He will ___ suffer thy foot to be moved. (Ps. 121:3)
32. And daubed it with ___ and with pitch. (Ex. 2:3)
33. And he came ___, and drew near. (2 Sam. 18:25)
34. Abraham ___ Isaac. (1 Chron. 1:34)
35. Established. (abbr.)
39. The wild goat, and the ___. (Deut. 14:5)
41. Aunt. (Spanish)
42. Short for Samuel.
46. And the east border was the ___ sea. (Josh. 15:5)
47. And they filled them up to the ___. (John 2:7)
50. He shall be to ___ a son. (Heb. 1:5)
51. Avenue. (abbr.)
53. Elmodam, which was the son of ___. (Luke 3:28)

3 stories you should know



Photo by Cookie Baker

Etowah Baptist Association Disaster Relief volunteers were deployed to Jackson, Kentucky, in mid-March to help with cleanup following major flooding in the region that occurred Feb. 26–March 1. At least 49 Kentucky counties issued disaster declarations, according to Kentucky Emergency Management Director Michael Dossett. About 1,000 people were evacuated from their homes because of their proximity to a dam. (TAB)

Christians report better outlook amid pandemic

Practicing Christians fared better than American adults overall during the pandemic in terms of satisfaction with their social lives, work-life balance, mental and emotional well-being, and hope for the future, a Barna study reveals.

Barna checked in with U.S. adults on the toll of COVID-19 six months into the pandemic. Christians were more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with their social lives (21% vs. 12% of all U.S. adults) and their mental and emotional well-being (25% to 15%) during the pandemic.

As church leaders continue to work through adaptations to digital and hybrid ministry, most church adults (63%) believe churches should continue to leverage digital resources for discipleship, once the pandemic is over. (TAB)

Bible sales up, Bible reading down in 2020

Americans bought more Bibles in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic spread, but a major study shows Bible engagement during the pandemic was no greater than the previous year.

Both Lifeway Christian Resources and Thomas Nelson Bibles reported increases in Bible sales.

But the American Bible Society, in conducting both its annual State of the Bible research in early 2020 followed by a special COVID-19 study months later, found that Bible engagement fell to pre-2019 levels after the pandemic began.

Scripture engagement in January 2020 was at its highest level since 2011, ABS said, with 27.8% of adults engaged. But by the first week of June, engagement had fallen to 22.6%. Read more at tabonline.org/scripture-engagement. (BP)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

Several Southern Baptist churches support the work of Renewal Ranch, a Christian drug abuse prevention and recovery program in Conway, Arkansas. Renewal Ranch, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, has a 60% long-term success rate among its approximately 350 graduates, compared to about 4–5% among treatment centers that are not Bible-focused, Renewal Ranch Executive Director James Loy said. “I’ve seen God’s work in Renewal Ranch, and so I’ll do everything I can to help them,” said Larry White, senior pastor of Woodland Heights Baptist Church in Conway.

Florida

Family Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida, is one of seven Florida Baptist congregations that supports Care Net Pregnancy Services of the Treasure Coast, which recently added a third

pregnancy center in an underserved location of the Port St. Lucie community. The church connected Care Net with Southern Baptists’ Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, which provided an ultrasound machine, valued between \$25,000 and \$30,000, for the newest pregnancy facility, the Florida Baptist Witness reported.

Kentucky

The Western Recorder, the 195-year-old Kentucky Baptist news publication, will cease regular publication after the March 2021 issue, Kentucky Today reported. Several regular features from the Western Recorder will be published on the Kentucky Today website.

Louisiana

University Baptist Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana, escaped the brunt of Hurricane Laura’s wrath in 2020 and has opened its doors to three

other congregations that were not spared. Each Sunday, University Baptist Church opens its facilities to three other Lake Charles churches: Emmanuel Baptist and its Hispanic mission, as well as Calvary Baptist Church. The church also hosts services by Johnson Funeral Home, which was demolished by the hurricane, the Baptist Message reported.

Mississippi

Mississippi College students are gearing up for participation in the April 8 Dance Marathon to benefit the Children’s of Mississippi Hospital, the state’s only children’s hospital. The six-hour event will raise money and awareness for the hospital that treats about 150,000 children annually. Since the launch of the Dance Marathon in 2016, Mississippi College students have raised close to \$150,000. Organizers hope that 500 students will participate in the 2021 Dance Marathon.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Aaron Eutah Stone**, who served the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions as a special worker in discipleship, died Feb. 3. He was 89.



STONE

Stone worked closely with then-Alabama Discipleship Training Director John Sawyer and Billy Hunt, then-director of missions for St. Clair Association.

He was a veteran of the U.S. Army and retired from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Stone was preceded in death by two sons, Roger and Randy. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Gwen; son, Bob; daughters Mary Jane and Marsha; 14 grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

► **James Alvin Grindstaff**, longtime pastor of Stamp Baptist Church, Valley Head, in Sand Mountain Baptist Association, died Feb. 17. He was 76.



GRINDSTAFF

Grindstaff served at Stamp Baptist for 29 of his more than 50 years of ministry. Church members say he raised a “whole generation” and knocked on every door in the community while he was there.

Before serving at Stamp Baptist, he also served at Victory Baptist Church, an independent Baptist church in Rainsville, and Mount Olive Baptist Church, Fort Payne, in DeKalb Baptist Association.

Grindstaff was preceded in death by his former wife, Susan. He is survived by his wife, Peggy; daughter, Amy; stepson, James; four grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

► **Matthew Wright** is the new pastor of **Bethlehem Baptist Church, Clayton**. He previously served as pastor of Post Oak Baptist Church, Ozark. He and his wife, Sheila, have two adult daughters.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Brandon Walker** is the new youth minister for **First Baptist Church, Elba**. He previously volunteered with the church’s youth ministry.



WALKER

MUD CREEK ASSOCIATION

► **Matt Kimberly** is the new pastor of **Big Creek Baptist Church, Adger**. He previously served as associate pastor of Lakewood Baptist Church, Birmingham. He is a graduate of the University of Mobile and UAB and has completed additional coursework

at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

TENNESSEE RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **David Talley** is the new pastor of **Victory Baptist Church, Stevenson**. Talley had been filling the pulpit at Victory for more than a year. He and his wife, Amanda, have four children.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► On March 7, the congregation of **Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**, opened their 100th anniversary celebration with “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” a hymn sung a century ago at their very first service.

At the celebration, the church “focused on God’s faithfulness — what He has done and looking forward to what He has for us,” said Jennifer Mills, Alberta Baptist’s worship minister.

Mills said a highlight of the service was a video produced by John Matthews that showed historical highlights including a clip from a service held in a tent after the church’s building was destroyed by a tornado in 2011.

During the service, David Nelson of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission also presented a plaque to the church.

Kyle Bryant, college minister, and Jared Roggli, student minister, have served as interim pastors during this time. The church is planning more anniversary celebration events in April, June, September and November.



Photo by Lonette Berg

Gilbreath recovering after heart episode

Sammy Gilbreath, event evangelism strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was planning to speak at the turkey rodeo at Fairview Baptist Church, Selma, March 20. But that morning, Pastor Denny McClendon got a message from him saying he was at the hospital and possibly having a heart attack.

Gilbreath was later airlifted to Huntsville where doctors successfully placed two stents. He was released from the hospital March 23 and is “doing great,” he said.



GILBREATH

It’s another chapter in Gilbreath’s ongoing heart story — more than 30 years ago, he was told he had a potentially fatal heart condition, and in 2004 he survived a heart attack, blood clot and aneurysm.

The day of the turkey rodeo, McClendon said he ran the whole gamut of emotions, from concern about his friend to amazement at what God did. Not only was Gilbreath OK — he also led the nurse attending him to Jesus.

“She said, ‘Are you nervous?’ and he said, ‘Not at all,’” McClendon said, noting that Gilbreath explained that if he died, he would be home with Jesus, and that was fine with him. “She said she wished she could feel that way too, and Sammy led her to the Lord as he was lying there in a hospital bed.”

McClendon told Gilbreath’s story to those at the turkey rodeo and shared the gospel. Several of the 23 hunters responded.

To hear more of Gilbreath’s story, check out season 1 of the Stories podcast, available now at tabonline.org/stories. (Grace Thornton)

Persecuted church

February another deadly month for Christians in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani herdsmen continue their violence against Christians, killing 12 in north-central Nigeria in the first 17 days of February.

Fulani target Christians to take over their land and impose Islam.

► Feb. 2: An attack in Dudu village killed one Christian instantly; another died later at a hospital.

► Feb. 7: Five Christians were killed in Kishosho and Zirshe villages.

► Feb. 14: Three Christians were shot to death near Ri-Babwa village; in a different

village also named Zirshe, one Christian was killed.

► Feb. 17: A Christian student died in an attack on a boarding school for boys in Kagara, and 42 Christians and non-Christians were abducted.

Between November 2019 and October 2020, 3,530 Christians were killed and 990 kidnapped in Nigeria, the highest figures in the world. On Dec. 10, 2020, an International Criminal Court

prosecutor called for an investigation of crimes against humanity in Nigeria.

Nigeria is No. 9 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



Morning Star News photo

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



ALABAMA BAPTIST DISASTER RELIEF TRAINING

Training in all areas of disaster relief will take place throughout March and April. All statewide training events will take place at the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, 118 Jesse Samuel Hunt Blvd. in Prattville. Register and find more information at sbdr.org/events.

Here are the dates and training topics:

Chaplain, April 8-10
Cleanup and Recovery, April 9
Chainsaw, April 9-10
Mass Feeding, April 9-10
Child Care, April 24



This ministry is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

APRIL

- 4 Easter Sunday
- 8 The Emerging Church Library in Today's Church Culture, VIRTUAL, Debbie Dickey, ext. 2218
- 8 Church Libraries Making the Shift to Today's Church Cultures, VIRTUAL, Debbie Dickey, ext. 2218
- 8-10 Disaster Relief Chaplain Training, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 9 Disaster Relief Cleanup and Recovery Training, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 9-10 Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 9-10 Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 10 Renew... a day away with friends, Eastmont, Montgomery, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 12-14 Transitional Pastor Training, SBOM, Prattville, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 15 Men's Swap Shop: Discussing Effective Tools for Discipling Men in Alabama, Westmeade, Decatur, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268
- 15 South East Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, Ridgecrest, Dothan, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 15 North Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, East Highland, Hartselle, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 15 Thinking Outside the Library Promotion, VIRTUAL, Debbie Dickey, ext. 2218
- 16-18 Interlink Youth Minister Wives Retreat, Gulf Shores Beach Retreat, Gulf Shores, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
- 17 Mom & Me Spring Fling, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 18 South Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, First, Prattville, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 18 North Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, Lakeside, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 19 South West Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, First Tillman's Corner, Mobile, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 19 West Central Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, Fairhaven, Demopolis, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 19-20 Alabama Baptist Discipleship Conference, First, Fultondale, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240
- 20 North East Regional Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, Mt. Zion, Alexandria, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 22 Concourse Library Software, VIRTUAL, Debbie Dickey, ext. 2218
- 22 Men's Swap Shop: Discussing Effective Tools for Discipling Men in Alabama, Taylor Road, Montgomery, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268
- 24 Disaster Relief Temporary Child Care Training, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
- 25 Cooperative Program Sunday, Lori Lockett, ext. 2304
- 27 Men & Money, VIRTUAL, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268
- 29 Men's Swap Shop: Discussing Effective Tools for Discipling Men in Alabama, Cottage Hill, Mobile, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268
- 29 Atrium - An Internet-Based Library Software Program, VIRTUAL, Debbie Dickey, ext. 2218
- 30-May 1 Church Weekday Education Conference, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263

MAY

- 2 Senior Adult Sunday, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 3 Revive 2021 (Senior Adult Evangelism Conference), First, Birmingham, Britney Thivierge, ext. 2258
- 4 Get Acquainted Day, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
- 9-16 Christian Home Week, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 20 LIFT! - Defining Worship Conference, First, Trussville, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318

Persecution of believers in Iran 'very high'

By Dianna L. Cagle

TAB Media

Less than 1% of Iranians consider themselves Christians.

Islam is practiced by a majority of citizens in the country of 83.5 million, according to recent estimates from Open Doors USA, which released its 2021 World Watch List in January.

The WWL ranks each country by the level of persecution believers face inside its borders.

At No. 8, Iran is among the top 12 countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. The list ranks the top 50 violators, with Nos. 1–12 labeled as “extreme persecution” and Nos. 13–50 labeled “very high persecution.”

‘A year of fear’

David Curry, CEO of Open Doors, called 2020 “a year of uncertainty and fear.” The organization estimates 340 million Christians have suffered “high levels of persecution and discrimination” — 1 in 8 Christians worldwide.



IMB photo

A man and his wife have tea beside the road near Namin, Iran. Picnics are a custom in Iran, especially in the scenic mountainous area of northwestern Iran.

One of the trends highlighted in the report is the use of surveillance technology. Curry mentioned an incident in Iran in which believers were targeted through cell phone technology used to record private meetings among believers.

Saghar, an Iranian Christian, told Open Doors her phone was tapped by the government.

“They could sort of record my conversations, and so in our meetings, we would turn off our phones and put

[them] in another room,” she said.

Saghar believes the government has a team to hack emails and other forms of social media.

“And I know that they spend lots of money for this, and use the technology to have surveillance on Christians,” she said.

Surveillance tools

The WWL highlighted China and India for increasing surveillance and the use of artificial intelligence software to spy on their people.

The report said Chinese companies now export technology to at least 63 other countries, including Myan-

mar, Laos, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

“As free people, we must stand with those who seek freedom of conscience, the ability to decide for yourself what you believe,” Curry said. “We have to share their stories. Churches, places of worship, even worship itself, it must remain sacred, free from discrimination, so that everyone has the freedom to think, to study and to practice the faith of their choosing — even if they choose not to have any faith at all.”

According to the report, Muslim-background believers are persecuted the most. Secret churches are often raided; those arrested are charged with “crimes against national security.”

The Iranian government views conversion to Christianity as a Western-led attempt to undermine Islamic rule.

Evin Prison, where the majority of Christians are jailed in Iran, is known as the “torture factory.”

Middle Eastern countries, like Iran or “some of the Gulf countries that have historically repressed their religious and ethnic minorities,” observe what is happening in China and desire to use the same technology

to maintain power, said Chris Meserole, director of research and policy at the Brookings Institution.

No other country can match “the sheer scale of surveillance technologies that China has developed and also deployed,” Meserole said. But China is sharing the technology with other nations.

Expanding reach

“It’s not a problem that’s going to stay in China,” Meserole warned.

Open Doors shared three prayer points:

► Pray for isolated believers. Many Christians don’t know any other believers and depend on online resources to learn more about God.

► Pray for Christians who are currently imprisoned for their faith. The pandemic has only made prison conditions worse.

► Pray for those who advocate for the rights of Christians in Iran, both within and outside the country, that they would be listened to and that God would protect them.

EDITOR’S NOTE —

Name has been changed for security reasons. 🌈



**LISTEN TO
TAB TALKS ON
WXJC EVERY
SATURDAY AT
2PM CST**

**FM 101.1
AM 850**
IN ALABAMA

**OR ON THE
WXJC RADIO APP**

**ALSO FIND A VARIETY OF
CHRISTIAN RADIO PROGRAMMING
EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK.**

**WXJC
RADIO**

WXJCRADIO.COM
(205) 879-3324



**Reliable
SIGN SERVICES**

“Celebrating Over 25 Years”

**DIGITAL
SIGNS**

“Our church is blessed with a great location with thousands of vehicles passing daily. Reliable Signs helped us take advantage of this location by enabling us to communicate with both community newcomers and weary commuters needing to know that someone cares. The process from start to finish was seamless and the folks from Reliable were a pleasure to work with. The new sign has created excitement in both our congregation and community!”

Pastor Roger Parks, Heritage Baptist Church, Prattville

www.reliablesigns.com • 1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 4

Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



RESURRECTED Luke 24:1–12

I remember men in seersucker. Women in bright colored dresses. Plastic eggs cushioned in that fake, green plastic grass in those thin wicker Easter baskets. Cadbury chocolate. Mom and Dad letting you eat some of it for breakfast, even before church! The very happiest of church services. Extra-special music. Extra-loud singing. Extra-long preaching, with some “Amen!” and “Glory!” thrown in from the deacons.

Sure, every Sunday is a Resurrection celebration. But there’s always been something special about the day on the calendar when we remember the Nazarene who put death to death. Luke’s dramatic account captures that sense of wonder, unfolding excitement and thrill of hope as the disciples begin to marvel at the empty tomb.

Return (1–5a)

As is often the case in Luke, Jesus is faithfully served by women. They are the first to arrive to the tomb to tend dutifully to Jesus’ cadaver (see also John 19:38–40) and will be the first messengers for the Resurrection (v. 9).

The women, concerned over how they could move the stone (Mark 16:3), “found” the stone moved. Curious, they enter the tomb but do not “find” Jesus’ body.

Then they are stunned by a vision of two men dressed in heavenly garments. And they are what any of us would be: terrified. They do what any of us would do: bow face-down. In that way, our sisters are our example.

It is clear that the women do not yet know what has happened to Jesus. What is clear is that they know that God is up to something, and they are in a proper posture of humility to learn and obey whatever He has for them.

Similarly, perhaps God is working in our lives in ways that we, like these women, have yet to understand. Are we, like them, readying ourselves to trust and obey?

Remember (5b–7)

The angels mildly rebuke the women and explain that Jesus has done exactly what He told them He would do.

We can speculate as to why the disciples failed to make sense of the empty tomb on their own. Perhaps the meaning of it was concealed from them (9:44–45); perhaps they forgot Jesus’ earlier instructions about it (18:31–33); or, more likely, perhaps the whole notion of a physical resurrection was so bizarre that it was an implausible conclusion.

Even these faithful women had a hard time believing the outlandish claim of Christ that He would literally rise from the dead.

But the word of our Lord did not and will not ever fail. Do you believe that? That His promises to you of abundant life, eternal fellowship and the new heavens and the new earth, are “Yes” and “Amen”? We may struggle to believe it from time to time but let the sign of the empty tomb legitimize all God’s promises for you. For “the Living One” is faithful, and He will do it.

Report (8–12)

I know it’s difficult to convince our lost world to believe in the Resurrection, but it was just as difficult to convince Jesus’ best friends.

The women begin to share the news, but they are met with incredulity, even from the apostles. With the exception of Peter, who appears still skeptical, those closest to Jesus “would not believe.” Nonetheless, our sisters bore witness to what they had seen and heard. They were faithful, even if their listeners were “slow of heart to believe” (v. 25).

And that’s our calling as well — to go and tell all people what we have heard and what we know: that there is an empty tomb in Jerusalem, and its former occupant sits now, very much alive, at the right hand of the Father.

Amen. Glory. Hallelujah. Happy Easter. Let’s worship as they did at Bethany, “with great joy” (v. 52). 🌈

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS John 20:3–9, 19–23, 27–29

John 19 presents Jesus’ death as the crucifixion of the Messiah, the promised King of Israel. God promised David he would have a son who would have an everlasting Kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12). The Gospels present Jesus as this promised Son of David. As David’s son, Jesus fills up the experiences of David’s life.

David cried out in Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As the suffering Son of David, Jesus also cries out these words in His crucifixion (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). The division of Jesus’ garments in John 19:24 fulfills David’s words in Psalm 22:18: “They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.”

If we read Psalms 22 and 69 carefully (both of which John used in his narration of Jesus’ death), we will also see that David trusts that God will deliver him from his suffering. We see David’s “death” (i.e., suffering) and resurrection. In Psalm 22, David says that God “lay me in the dust of death” (v. 15). And David pleads that the Lord would deliver him from his enemies who seek his death (22:19–21). The psalm moves to hope when God heard David’s plea (22:24). And God’s salvation will be proclaimed (22:31).

The empty tomb gave proof Jesus is alive. (3–9)

The Son of David fulfilled Scripture in His crucifixion and resurrection. For the apostles, the death and resurrection of Jesus were “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3–4). When Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter came to the empty tomb and did not find Jesus’ body “they still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.”

Jesus proved He is alive. (19–23)

Even with the testimony of Israel’s Scripture, Mary and the disciples needed Jesus Himself to testify to His resurrection. It is only after Mary hears Jesus’ words that she re-

alizes He is alive (John 20:16).

Jesus also appeared to some of the other disciples who were meeting together. Jesus shows them His hands and side, breathes the Holy Spirit upon them and commissions them.

When Jesus commissions the disciples to forgive sins, this means that those who believe in the message about Jesus’ life, death and resurrection will receive the forgiveness of sins. Those who believe will become part of the restored humanity.

As God breathed into Adam (i.e., “the human being”) and Adam became a living being (Gen. 2:7), so now the resurrected Christ breathes on the disciples and restores humanity.

The resurrection of Jesus secures the restoration of humanity, and those who believe in the testimony of the disciples are the restored humanity who have the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins.

We are blessed when we believe Jesus is alive. (27–29)

There was one disciple who did not believe the testimony of his fellow disciples — Thomas. When the disciples who saw Jesus’ hands and side told Thomas about the resurrected Christ, Thomas did not believe them (v. 24).

Thomas demanded definitive proof. He wanted to see and touch Jesus’ hands and side for himself (v. 25).

While Jesus appeased Thomas’ request, Jesus makes clear that we should not expect the definitive proof of Jesus’ resurrection that Thomas received. Our thirst for a Thomas-like proof won’t be quenched. This is why Jesus says, “blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed.”

We must trust the testimony of those who witnessed the resurrected Christ — the apostles whose testimony we have in the New Testament.

And if we believe their testimony, we will receive the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, and we will become the restored humanity. 🌈

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

TAB Media

Netflix's 'A Week Away' is a first as a faith-based teen musical

What would happen if you combined the best elements of a Disney teen musical with the inspiring, hope-filled message of a faith-based film — and then tossed in songs by Steven Curtis Chapman, For King & Country and other Christian artists?

The answer is “A Week Away,” a new family-friendly musical that launched March 26 on Netflix and breaks new ground in the Christian film genre.

It's the first faith-based teen-centric musical, and it's as impressive as anything you'll ever watch on Disney. The best part? It has a powerful gospel-focused message.

The film tells the story of a troubled teen named Will who agrees to attend a summer camp in order to avoid juvenile detention.

Much to Will's surprise, the summer camp is a Christian camp. Over the course of a week, Will discovers romance and — most importantly — the hope found in the gospel.

Will gets a much-desired second chance in life.

It's one of the best inspirational movies you'll ever watch, partially because of the message but also because of the talent.

It stars Kevin Quinn (Disney's



“A Week Away”

Netflix photo

“Bunk'd”) as Will; Bailee Madison (“Bridge to Terabithia”) as his romantic interest, Amy; David Koechner (“Anchorman” series) as the camp owner; and Sherri Shepherd (“30 Rock”) as a camp worker.

It was written by two veterans of faith-based films: Alan Powell (“The Song,” “Like Arrows”) and Kali Bailey (“War Room,” “Woodlawn”). It also includes popular songs from Christian artists Chapman and for King and Country, as well as Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith. And if you're curious: Yes, the choreography remains in the family-friendly realm.

Madison said she hopes the audience feels a “sense of hope and faith and warmth and love” as they watch “A Week Away.”

“For teenagers growing up, social media is really a crazy thing,” she said, referencing the tendency for teens to compare themselves to others. “So I think also the message to teenagers [is] you were created to be exactly who you are and uniquely you.”

“A Week Away” includes no sexuality, violence or coarse language.

Also streaming this month:

Adults/teens

► **“Animals on the Loose: A You vs. Wild Movie” (Netflix)** — Perhaps you can't go on a real-life exploration with Bear Grylls, but this is the next-best thing. “Animals on the Loose” is an interactive adventure film in which you tell Bear what to do. (You do this by pushing buttons on your remote.) Don't worry: He survives every time. TV-PG.

► **“Brian Regan: On the Rocks” (Netflix)** — Comedian Brian Regan, now sporting gray hair, tackles such issues as aging and obsessive behavior. It's a family-friendly stand-up act that is guaranteed to make you laugh. Rated TV-G.

► **“The Man from Nowhere” (Video on Demand)** — An aging author nearing death tries reconnecting with his estranged son. It's a faith-based film that has elements from the parable of the prodigal son, only in reverse. It was produced by

Master's University and includes well-known talent, including Nick Searcy (“The Shape of Water”). Unrated. Visit ManFromNowhereMovie.com to find a streaming platform.

► **“Made You Look” (Netflix)** — It's a fast-paced documentary about the largest art fraud in American history. Over the span of several years, New York art gallery Knoedler & Company sold \$80 million in fake art. Some blamed its president, Ann Freedman, but she claimed she was duped. Rated TV-14.

Children

► **“Raya and the Last Dragon” (Disney+)** — A teen girl sets out to save her world from an evil plague that's ravaging the land. To do that, she'll need to find the last magical dragon on earth — a dragon that has powers over the plague. “Raya and the Last Dragon” has positive messages about friendship and trust. But it also has elements that may trouble some families (dragon magic and a moderate amount of cartoon violence). It's also implied dragons are worshipped. Rated PG. Animated.

► **“The Muppet Show” (Disney+)** — One of the most creative comedy shows in television history finally lands on Disney Plus. “The Muppet Show” ran from 1976 to 1981 and followed Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy and their friends as they stumbled their way through a hilarious variety of sketches. TV-G. 🦋

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.

MEET THE REVIEWER

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

FAITH IN ACTION

Los Angeles Lakers' center Jones focuses on athleticism, faith in NBA

By Bill Sorrell

TAB Media

From hoop dreams in high school to playing for some of the hottest teams in the NBA, basketball has taken Damian Jones a long way.

"The journey isn't over. I keep on working," said Jones, who recently completed a short-term contract with the Los Angeles Lakers.

From a high school state championship in Louisiana to two NBA championships with the Golden State Warriors, Jones has always enjoyed "cutting down the nets," a tradition after a basketball win, and hopes to get another chance to do that as an NBA player.

Jones got Vanderbilt University's attention while playing at Scotlandville Magnet High School in Baton Rouge, where he was a Rivals.com 4-star recruit and averaged 15.4 points, eight rebounds, four blocks and two assists as a senior.

At Vanderbilt he played 99 games averaging 13.3 points, 6.4 rebounds and finishing second in school career blocks with 167. His 56.6 percentage from the field was third best in Vanderbilt history.

After being First-Team All-SEC at Vanderbilt his sophomore and junior seasons and helping the Commodores secure an NCAA tournament berth in 2016, Jones was drafted by Golden State in the first round of the 2016 NBA Draft

(No. 30 overall). He was the starting center for 22 games in 2019.

Through professional basketball Jones, who was traded to the Atlanta Hawks in 2019 and spent time with the Phoenix Suns before being signed by the Lakers in February, has been able to share his faith and provide a platform for "trying to live the right way and share the good life with others," he said.

'Have to rely on faith'

His faith is always in mind.

"Any tough time that I have been through, I have to rely on faith and continue to read the Word and pray.

That was always a part of me,"

said Jones who was taken to church by his parents, David and Dana Jones, while growing up in Baton Rouge. He is a member of Living Word Church and was baptized there in his early teens.

"I needed Jesus. He is everything, salvation. [And] after death we get to go to heaven!" he said. While playing for

the Hawks, Jones and teammate forward/center Bruno Fernando attended pre-game chapel services at home and on the road.

"We [would] call on each other and make sure we [didn't] miss chapel," said Fernando, who said he often saw Jones' faith in action.

"He is a person who believes in God. He follows the rules of God, the testaments of the Bible," Fernando said. "To see him live



Photo by Scott Cunningham — NBAE/Getty Images

Damian Jones (dunking) played for the Atlanta Hawks during the 2019 NBA season.

through that every single day, being able to see him make his devotions to the Lord, being able to be that person is a reminder for us in the locker room."

Kevin Huerter, a guard for the Atlanta Hawks and former teammate, agreed that faith is "a big part" of Jones' life.

Jones is encouraged by his mother, who sends him Bible verses daily.

During 49 games with the Warriors over three seasons from 2016 to 2019, Jones averaged 5.4 points and 2.3 rebounds.

Playing for the Hawks allowed him to be back in the South and closer to family. During the 2019–20 season Jones averaged 5.6 points and 3.7 rebounds in 55 games.

The NBA suspended its season in March 2020 after some players tested positive for COVID-19.

In November, Jones signed a contract with Phoenix. In 14 games with the Suns, he averaged 1.6 points and 1.3 rebounds per game.

In February, he was waived by the Suns and signed by the Lakers

on a short-term renewable contract.

Jones' athleticism is his strength.

"His presence at the rim being a shot-blocker, big-time lob [a type of pass] threat, he fits our system really well, being able to catch and finish a lot of lobbs. He has gotten a lot better," Huerter said.

As Jones absorbs coaching, he knows he can improve on different areas of his game.

Building relationships

Another of his strengths is bonding with teammates.

"I get along with people well. I've just really clicked," said Jones, who tries to help others by community outreach activities.

Playing NBA basketball has provided an income, so he doesn't have to depend on his parents any longer.

"Having a job that can really provide for you helps," he said.

But faith continues to lead him.

"You try to stick to it. I try to keep pushing my faith and keep on going," Jones said. 🙏



Photo courtesy of LA Lakers

DAMIAN JONES

*"Any tough time that I have been through,
I have to rely on faith and continue to read
the Word and pray."*

Damian Jones
NBA center