

James Hamilton
November/December 2018

November/December 2018 Report - James Hamilton

VICTORY IN LOSS

The wisdom of God is truly amazing. His plan of salvation reveals and magnifies His wisdom. As the saved, the church makes God's wisdom known to all spiritual beings in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 3:8-13), and we are to proclaim the good news to every creature here on earth (Matthew 28:18-20). Paul also magnified God for His wisdom in Romans 11. It motivated him to diligently convert as many Gentiles as he could so that it would hopefully stir up his Jewish kinsmen to realize how they were missing all the blessings that God offers through Jesus Christ. The wisdom of God can also be seen in Paul's timing in going to Macedonia in Acts 16, and the furtherance of the gospel while Paul was imprisoned in Rome (Philippians 1:12-18).

We lost two members at Hwy. 5 to death in December. However, God's wise and powerful plan of His grace has turned our loss into spiritual victory for them and for the gospel. Praise be to God for His grace, wisdom, and power!

BENTON

Shortly after obeying the gospel on August 5, Michael Joe Crouch was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. It is noteworthy that the temptations to Jesus in the wilderness were immediately after John had baptized Him (Mark 1:9-13). Satan often strongly attacks a new Christian to shake his or her faith before it has a chance to grow, but this was not the case with Michael Joe. Chemotherapy and radiation treatments made him very sick, but he was at peace because he knew that he was right with God.

On December 5, I saw Michael Joe for the last time. He had a break in his chemo treatments, and he was able to be at the weekly study I have with the Ruby and Neal Hicks. He joked about getting a speeding ticket trying to get to the study on time. It was not the only time he did this, but Michael Joe acknowledged the rough life he had lived in the past, and he took 100% responsibility for the destruction of his marriage. It was a very good study, and Michael Joe looked and sounded better than he had in a long while. However, he caught pneumonia and passed away the following Tuesday, Dec. 11.

I spent time talking to family members planning a memorial service for him. This gave me an opportunity to share the gospel with family members and comfort them concerning Michael Joe's genuine conversion, and also to explain what the church stands for. Between these conversations and the funeral, the family members had opportunities to hear the simple gospel in its fullness. I also found out that Michael Joe had been very busy talking to his friends and relatives about his obedience to the gospel, just as Paul said about the faith of the Thessalonians went out before them so Paul did not need to say anything (1 Thess. 1:8-10). Michael Joe's conversion and very brief time as a Christian makes me think of Jude 22-23, *"Have mercy on some who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh."* How many more are there on the verge of dying who need to hear the gospel?!?

Exactly two weeks after Michael Joe's surprising departure from this life, Neal Hicks passed away. As with Michael Joe, I had Bible study with Neal and Ruby on Wednesday, and Neal died the following Tuesday, December 25, at home. Neal was a wonderful Christian. His disposition was very mild-mannered, but he was an aggressive evangelist and compassionate humanitarian as Jesus taught us be.

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The Hicks were instrumental in Michael Joe hearing the gospel. They also sent materials and visited prisoners in jails and prison for several years. They invested in spreading the gospel out of their own pocket in addition to regular contribution to the church collection and donations to the needs of the church (the sign, painting the building, etc.). Neal was very active in business meetings, and he kept the church on sound footing. Several people I know told me that he was the Bible teacher that they knew, his physical limitations made it difficult in later years to do as much as he used to do. Ruby certainly misses him, and we do, too. The whole church, and several former members, as well as family and friends, were at his funeral.

Karen J. had been in Texas since August 2017 trying to help her sister-in-law Lisa physically, emotionally, and spiritually after Lisa was diagnosed with cancer. She has returned to central Arkansas, with her brother David. She is planning to attend Fairview Park. Karen is a wonderful Christian, and we pray for her ministry as a Christian to be a great example and influence on her grandchildren, son, and brother, co-workers, and neighbors.

Marietta A. had a brother, Delbert, who was diagnosed with cancer last summer. She persuaded him to start attending the church in Bald Knob. She went with him and encouraged him to continue with the church there. Marietta's work schedule prevented her from attending every other week, and the free weekends she had were to be at Bald Knob with her brother. Delbert obeyed the gospel in September. We rejoice with Marietta and with Heaven in Delbert's conversion. The Lord used Marietta and brother Gary Moorer to plant and water so that he would provide the increase (1 Cor. 3:3-7). Delbert is having serious pain with a tumor behind his left eye, and more have been found in other places in his body. Delbert's conversion is another example of Jude 23. Marietta needs our prayers as she has faced a lot of her family's harsh words about her teaching Delbert.

We are averaging mid-40's on Sunday mornings, but some Wednesday and Sunday evenings have been slim. We meet on Sunday afternoons at 4pm now, and this helps some older people who cannot drive at night. Betty G. is looking to worship elsewhere.

My regular weekly studies are: Mildred P. (Acts), Ruby H. and her son Roy N. (Acts), Scott N. (First Principles), Jason C. (Christian Living), the Phillips family (Old Testament), the Dickerson family (Old Testament), Rhonda J. (Acts), Bunny T. (Proverbs), Joyce and Daryl M. (Matthew), The Manor (Matthew) and Thursday morning at Hwy. 5 (Hebrews).

Besides the home studies listed above, my weekly work includes personal visitation, two sermons, teaching Psalms to the adult Bible class, writing bulletin articles, and working with Don McClain on the radio program of the 65th St. church in Little Rock two days per week.

FELLOW WORKERS

I always enjoy reading Dan Peters' encouraging reports. He and Tami are working for the Lord in Constanta, Romania. The Christians there have a special place in my heart. The church has become stronger since the Peters have moved from western Romania to Constanta on the eastern edge of Romania by the Black Sea. The church has recently purchased a meeting place, and they have been growing in number since then with more visitors. Dan is a diligent worker and rock-solid doctrinally, with humility and manner of life consistent with Jesus' teachings.

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Thank all of you who are fellow workers by means of your support, prayers, encouragement, and/or examples. You are a blessing to me, thanks to the Lord. Please keep us in your prayers. May the Lord continue to abundantly bless you!

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