

**News & Notes**

**Kid's Review Class:** Tonight will be our 1st review class, and will take place shortly after the evening worship service **in Room # 7.**

**Afternoon Singing:** Afternoon singing will be next Sunday, February 8th (5pm).

**Ladies' Class:** Next class will be next week (February 9th @ 7pm), but **the planned location has been moved** to Angela Wisdom's home.

**Men's Class:** The next class will be conducted at the building on Sunday, February 22nd.

**Prayer Requests:** *Our brethren:* Kayla Cunningham, Marian Church (She is struggling with serious health concerns regarding her memory), Mildred Church, Betty Eubanks, Linda James (Suffering migraines more frequently), Leon Miller (Expecting to have knee replacement soon), Butch Morgan, and Dottie Reynolds.

*Our friends and family:* Please continue in prayer for the Stevens family, as well as for Larry Wisdom's mother (Canera Wisdom), Naydene Fields, Brian James, Hal Lewis, Gary Jones, (Paula Sullivan's brother, with fourth hip replacement), DeeAnn Sprott, Pat Dickey, and Waylon Townsend.

**Group Meeting:** Group (1) meets tonight after worship.

**Assignments for Worship Service**

**Wednesday Night: 2/4/15**

Song Leader: Ben Cunningham  
 Opening Prayer: Ronnie Henderson  
 Invitation: Charles Rawdon  
 Announcements: Mike Sadler  
 Closing Prayer: Nick Ross  
 Parking Lot: Colby Sadler

**Sunday Evening: 2/8/15**

Song Leader: Charles Rawdon  
 Opening Prayer: Jim Elliot  
 Lord's Table: Clay Sadler  
 Announcements: Larry Hicks  
 Closing Prayer: Eric Stevens  
 Parking Lot: David Williams

**Sunday Morning: 2/8/15**

Lord's Table: Clay Sadler (B)  
 Sherman Johnson (C)  
 Serving: Bucky Day  
 Trent Stevens  
 Song Leader: Bob Marschall  
 Opening Prayer: Paul Lloyd

Announcements: Larry Hicks  
 Closing Prayer: Nick Ross  
 Parking Lot: (9:00) Norm Blackburn  
 (9:50) Ed Lawson



**Lakeland Hills  
 Leader**

**LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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**ELDERS**

Larry Hicks (863) 899-7405  
 Leon Miller (863) 640-6378

**SERVICES**

Sunday  
 Bible Study 9:00 A.M.  
 Morning Services 9:50 A.M.  
 Evening Services 6:00 P.M.  
 Wednesday  
 Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

**DEACONS:**

Robert Marschall  
 Michael Sadler  
 Moses Stevens  
 David Williams

**EVANGELIST:**

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

***Are Faithful Christians Still "Sinners" ?***

In what appears to be an effort to not appear self-righteous or prideful, we often hear Christians use catch phrases that they have picked up somewhere that may not be scripturally accurate. Such phrases as: "After all we (Christians) are all sinners" and "The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints" indicating that the church is only made up of "sinners." Also, by saying such things repeatedly, it gives one the sense that he does not have the right to firmly correct those in sin – "after all we are all sinners." In fact, those who repeat such phrases may be robbing God of praise due Him.

Is that the way the New Testament talks about people who have been made righteous by the blood of Christ? In the 42 verses where the word sinner (singular or plural) appears only one could possibly be construed to be referring to Christians in their present state. That is 1Timothy 1:15, where Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." This is the verse that is cited by most who insist on constantly talking about what "sinners" they and all other Christians are, implying that those who do not join them in such self-abasement, are prideful and maybe even Pharisaic.

Let's look at this verse in context. This section of praise and thanksgiving by Paul begins with verses 12 and 13: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1Timothy 1:12-13 NKJV) Here Paul begins his praise for what was done for him as a former blasphemer. But he had been "enabled", "counted ... faithful", and "obtained mercy" – so that rather than in his former state he is now put into the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 14, he says, “*And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*” (1 Timothy 1:14 NKJV) Now he exclaim show abundant God’s grace had been in saving him from his former life of sin (blasphemy, persecution, and insolence). Then he injects verse 15. This is basically saying how wonderful and merciful it was that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Up to this point he is praising the Lord for saving a sinner like he had been. Yes, and he says, “of which I **am** chief” - in the present tense. (Incidentally, this is not the only time that Paul uses the “historical present” to describe his past life – See Romans 7:14ff). Given the context he is clearly showing the greatness of the salvation and ministry that he had been able to receive. To use his word, he “obtained mercy” despite the abundance of his sins of which he had now been forgiven. He is not saying that after he obtained that mercy that he continued to be the chief of sinners. If that was what he was saying then he contradicted everything that he said in Romans chapter 6 which begins with “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1-2 NKJV) and then continues to show that those saved by grace are no longer “slaves to sin” or “sinners”.

Then, in what sense then can he say, “of which I **am** chief”? Was it because he had not been forgiven and still had to bear the guilt of all his sins? Of course not. Was it because the magnitude of his present sinning as a Christian was so great that he was still chief of sinners? Who can believe that? He is obviously speaking of his life’s history as a whole and that God’s mercy was so great that it could save and clean up a sinner like him. He was always aware of what a sinner he **had been**. That awareness kept him deeply hum-

ble and grateful for the grace of God that put him into his present condition.

Then in verse 17 he shifts back into the past tense by saying, “*However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that **in me first** Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*” (1 Timothy 1:16 NKJV) For what reason? The reason that Christ came into the world was to save sinners and by whom Paul obtained mercy. Then he uses himself as an example or pattern (“that in me first”) for all who are going to believe. In other words, if Paul as chief of sinners could obtain mercy and be saved, cleansed, and freed from his sins anyone can.

In the New Testament, “sinners” are those whose life is dominated by sin. The opposite of those who “practice righteousness” (cf. 1 John 3:7 NKJV). The faithful Christian’s life is dominated by righteousness.

Notice some of the contrasts between the righteous (the saved, Christians) and sinners:

*“If the **righteous** one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the **sinner** appear?”*(1 Peter 4:18 NKJV)

*“Knowing this: that the law is not made for a **righteous** person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for **sinners**, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,”* (1 Timothy 1:9 NKJV)

Notice the contrast between the “**you**” [the Lord’s disciples] and **sinners** in Luke 6:32-34:

*“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.”*

*: For as by one man's disobedience many were made **sinners**, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made **righteous.**”* (Romans 5:19 NKJV)

*“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”* (Romans 6:17-18 NKJV) Here Paul says that “slaves to sin” (sinners) are what you were, but “slaves to righteousness” (righteous) is what you are and be thankful to God for it. If Christians are still sinners, then what assurance do they have that God will hear them? (John 9:31).

The church is not made up of sinners, but of righteous people, made and kept righteous by the pardoning power of the blood of Christ. They are righteous because they practice righteousness (1 John 3:7) and when they fall short they depend on the cleansing blood of Christ to keep them clean (righteous) by forgiving them as they confess their sin. (1 John 1:7-9). They are righteous people, though not self-righteous, because they know they did not, nor could they, make themselves righteous. They also know that they could not remain righteous were it not for the continuing access that they have to blood of Christ. They are humbly thankful that they have been made righteous (no longer sinners) by the power of the gospel of Christ in which the righteousness of God is revealed (that is, God’s power and way to make men righteous), thus saving them from being sinners (a people living a life of sin). In fact, if one in the church goes back to being a “sinner” (one dominated by sin) he is to be “put away from among yourselves” if he will not repent and turn back to God (1 Corinthians 5:13).

When one humbly refers to himself and his brethren as God’s chosen people, and no longer sinners but righteous, he is not being self-righteous. Nor is he glorifying God when he constantly refers to himself and other Christians as all being “still sin-

ners.” What glory is it to God to say, “Even though He sent His Son to save sinners, I must still proclaim I am yet a ‘sinner’ in order to praise Him and not exalt myself?”

Saying one is righteous does not mean that one is sinlessly perfect any more than saying that one is sinner means that one is totally depraved. “Sinners” will sometime do righteous acts, and the “righteous” will sometimes do sinful acts. I am happy and thankful to be counted “righteous” (by the grace of God) and no longer counted a “sinner.” Bible “sinners” are those whose lives are dominated by sin and the “righteous” those whose lives are dominated by righteousness. Paul urges meekness or gentleness on the part of those who are spiritual (Christians) as they restore those overtaken in a trespass (sin), not “because we are all sinners” but “lest (we) also be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)

Christians are made and kept “righteous” by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is why we have no right to boast except to boast in the Lord – but we do have that right: “just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.’” (1 Corinthians 1:31 NASB). “But HE WHO BOASTS, LET HIM BOAST IN THE LORD.” (2 Corinthians 10:17 NASB) We boast in the Lord because we, as redeemed people, are **his** Workmanship, not our own. In looking at our present condition in Christ one can see what God has done and can do in taking a vile sinner and transforming him into a saint created unto good works (Cf. Ephesians 2:8- 10). Praise the Lord that God did not leave us “sinners” but made us “righteous” through the redeeming power of the death of Christ! “To **Him** be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21 NKJV)

- Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.