Beside QuietWaters

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.” — 1 Peter 1:6

It is peculiar to Christians to give thanks in adversity. To praise God for blessings, others can do, but to give thanks in danger is the highest pitch of virtue. “I do not see why I should suffer less; these things are very little compared to my sin. I deserve much more at the Lord’s hands!”

A Christian has taken up his cross. No loss can dishearten him, as the poet says: “If the world breaks and falls about my ears, I will not be afraid.”

Afflictions are for our good. They conform us to the Lord, our chief good. They prepare us for communion with the Lord and are fatherly tokens of love. Children must submit to the rod, and kiss it too. The Lord by afflictions prevents and purges sin. Do we not thank the surgeon who removes a damaged limb? Yes, we thank him, and take our bitter pills too.

The cross God lays upon is far below what we deserve. What is a drop of sweetened wormwood to the gall of bitterness? What is a little suffering to the lake of fire? Jesus drank the full cup of suffering for us. He drank it fully—we cannot, we need not. O thank God you have so little a share of it.

In affliction we learn what we could not otherwise. Wax unheated will not receive the impression of the seal. Man in affliction will receive the imprint of divine wisdom. It prepares us for glory. The potter beats the clay to make it well-tempered, molds it on the wheel, and then bakes it in the oven before use. A wooden vessel is turned and cut before it is fit. Gold is heated and pounded before it is complete. So every vessel of mercy must be treated before it is fit for glory. The cross sharpens our faith and sets a sharp edge and luster upon it. The stone is hewed, cut, carved, and polished. So suffering saints are prepared for the highest degrees of glory.


Ministry Perspectives

Searchin For A Pastor?

by John Murray

So, your church is seeking a new pastor and has chosen you to be part of the search team! The good news is that you are not alone. Not only is God with you, but He has intentionally placed you on the search team. Further, He has already provided people and situations necessary to accomplish the task He set in front of you.

Bob Schultz (Grace Baptist, Yuba City) says, “It is most important for [the committee] and the congregation to pray, to have fervent prayer for God’s will in a pastor. I have never been as closely dependent on the Lord as I was during that time. I couldn’t control anything. He gave me wisdom and discernment.”

Ephesians 4 speaks of the whole body “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effectual working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Since every person is necessary to the body, consider a representative makeup.

Mark Garro (Lighthouse Baptist, Brentwood) recommends that the search committee be “a diverse group of members, both male and female, younger and older adults, and any person who is in a church leadership position.”

I think of two votes: The vote to call the first candidate was 17 percent; the second candidate did not fare much better. After the search committee received input from the church’s younger families, the church was able to successfully call a new pastor.

Bob Schultz suggests having various committee members call the candidate’s references and then have other members call those same references, because each person asks different questions and gets different answers. This spreads out the work and provides a better understanding of the various candidates.

(See Pastor Search continued on back)
An Interview With Al Franklin
By David Gunn

On Aug. 23, veteran GARBC pastor Al Franklin retired. Al is one of the finest Bible expositors I’ve ever known. His 47 years of pastoral ministry—first at McKinleyville (Calif.) Baptist Church then at Grace Baptist Church of Redding, Calif.—has been characterized by passionate preaching, a commitment to the dispensational understanding of Scripture, and a vigorous defense of young-earth creationism. In celebration of his retirement, the Baptist Bulletin is pleased to present an interview with Al Franklin reflecting on the thrust of his ministry and the lessons he would pass on to the next generation of Regular Baptists.

If you were to identify three major focuses of your ministry, what would you point to?
Expository preaching, a literal hermeneutic consistently applied, and a dispensational focus on Scripture. Of course there have been others, but these three come to mind immediately.

Most preachers don’t really make it a point to talk about hermeneutics from the pulpit, but you have. What’s your rationale for doing so?
It really goes back to our view of inspiration. If we actually believe in verbal, plenary inspiration—that the Bible is to us. So I’ve made that a major emphasis of my ministry to make sure that our people have the right foundation.

Some people might say, “I’ll just model good hermeneutics for my congregants, but they don’t need to be instructed in it.” I take it you don’t share that opinion.
Every preacher should be able to explain hermeneutics in a concise, simple way that everybody can understand. For example, when I teach hermeneutics, I illustrate the process using a toolbox. I liken literal to the toolbox itself, grammatical to the tools that take apart, historical to the tools that dig, and contextual to the tools that measure. Everybody can understand that!

You’ve been at Grace Baptist for 40 years. The average pastoral tenure in America ranges between four and seven years. Why do you think the average tenure is that short, and what can be done to extend it?
Every church has a personality, every pastor has a personality, and the personalities have to match. I’m wired to focus on the Word and love the people. I’ve never knocked my people. So I credit my long tenure here to diligently preaching the Word and loving the people.

I also like to encourage people to cultivate hobbies. One of the reasons for my longevity is my interest in other things. I have a two-acre garden, and I hunt and fish and I’ve been involved in photography and fossils. Even though I’ve never taken a sabbatical, I’ve had hobbies that have kept me from burning out.

As a seasoned veteran of pastoral ministry, if you had to choose just one word of counsel to pass on to the next generation of Regular Baptist ministers and leaders, what would it be?
Preach the Word! Preach Biblical truth in Biblical proportions. I preached the Word for 40 years, and I never came close to running out of material.

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Pastor Search continued
Churches are divided on the question of a congregational survey. I recommend using a survey only if it is tightly and Biblically focused. Ask specific questions about spiritual health, ministry strengths or weaknesses, and the like.

One of the single greatest dangers to the search for a new pastor is the urge to rush the process.

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(see Al Franklin continued)