

## Pastor's Corner

### Jew or Gentile, don't take God's Salvation for granted

*You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I may be grafted in."*

— Romans 11:19

*Well said, "Because of unbelief they were broken off and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear." For if God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either.*

— Romans 11:20-21

#### By Joe Barnes

Many people in America claim to be Christians and I am sure around the world we have many that claim also to be Christians. Yet when we look at society and the way people live we can't help to asked ourselves, "Are they really Christians?"

Now while we ask the question, we still have no right to count that our conclusion is accurate. Why? Because only God and that person knows for sure. But what should be the result of such "fruit inspection" as called in some Christian circles? It should cause us first to pray that those in question would grow into showing more evidence of their relationship

with Jesus Christ and also challenge us to look closely at our own walk to determine what kind of fruit we give evidence too. So let's look a little closer today, so we don't fall in the trap of taking our salvation for granted.

Paul writes here in the eleventh chapter of Romans to encourage his Jewish audience that God's rejection of Israel is not total but more for a wake-up call for them not to take their relationship with God for granted. But in his encouragement to the Jewish people it is also a wake-up call to us Gentiles not to take our salvation for granted either.

There was a lot of confusion and probably still is in the Jewish community concerning salvation and likewise it exists in the Gentile community. What do I mean by this statement? Well if you were an Israelite and this includes today many believe that this automatically grants you the promise of being God's people and therefore under the promise. I also hear many unbelievers today that say that Jesus died for everyone according to John 3:16 and therefore everyone is saved. So let's look at how Paul explains this here in the eleventh chapter of Ro-

mans to clear the confusion for both the Jew and the Gentile.

Paul tells us that "branches" were broken off that I may be grafted in. These branches referring to the natural branches, in other words the Jewish branches were cut off. Why? Because of their unbelief and therefore allowing you and me the Gentile branches to be grafted in to God's promise of becoming His people. The Gentile branches are referred to as "wild olive branches" being grafted in. That is what verse nineteen establishes for both the Jew and Gentile.

In verse 20 there are two important words that begins the process of us understanding the "fruit inspection" as mentioned earlier. Remember it is just as important if not more important to inspect your own fruit then it is for us to inspect others fruit. Now these two important words in verse 20 is *unbelief* and *faith*. These words indicate what is truly necessary in order to be among those that the promise of God and His salvation is given.

Much of the confusion comes from churches and believers that put too much concentration on getting

people to confess with their lips that Jesus Christ is Lord. There has been for too much lip service given and far too less obedience to His word. The Jewish would say, "Because I am a Jew by birth then I automatically qualify to be God's child." The Gentiles say, "Because I said I believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God then I automatically qualify to be God's child." This is the evidence of haughtiness and Paul warns of the danger for thinking this way.

No when we leave unbelief and walk by faith then our lives will reveal it in the way we live as much as the way we talk. Faith is trusting in Jesus Christ to save us and we show it by obeying His word knowing that His way of living is the right way to live. So my friend if you are depending on words that you said and your life does not witness it then I encourage you to inspect your fruit and ask God to help you reveal your relationship to Himself by giving the evidence through living in obedience to Him and not taking your salvation for granted today.

— Joe Barnes is pastor of Marion Baptist Church.

## Letters

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### Why Crisfield needs a plan

Councilman Mark Konapelsky published a letter Sept. 7 describing his plan for Crisfield. That letter pays testimony to precisely why Crisfield continues its history of decline. It represents a continuation of the practices that have been in place for decades: proceeding project by random project, chasing grant money, without any specific comprehensive plan. No one sets out to move a community forward, operate a business or construct a building without a plan. Mr. Konapelsky suggests that the city should continue to review ideas brought forward by one or many groups, project by project, in the hope that somehow this will result in success for the people of the community.

It is a fundamental truth that nothing good comes without leadership, and leaders work to a plan. Where is the plan for Crisfield?

If we wanted to build a building, we wouldn't simply call up a bunch of subcontractors and let each one execute their individual ideas about how the building should be constructed. You must first have an architectural plan, an engineering plan, a financial plan, and a committed and knowledgeable developer before work begins. The same concept applies to building a community.

The Greater Crisfield Action Coalition's plan IS such a comprehensive plan for community and

economic development, focusing upon tourism, marketing, branding, advertising, job training, business development, housing, home ownership, youth, and recreation. The plan drew upon the many more generalized plans developed for Crisfield and was written by experienced professionals in their respective fields, based on public input obtained at community meetings. Two elected city officials contributed directly to the plan's development and every elected city official and the city manager either did meet or were invited to meet with the plan's developers.

The completed plan, in its entirety, was given to state and county officials, each member of city council, the mayor and the city manager in February along with a request for comments. No other plan like it exists for the revitalization of the Crisfield area.

Mr. Konapelsky says he can't support the plan because it is too big. Too big?! Crisfield needs to think big! But he apparently wishes to continue moving forward idea by idea, grant by grant, on disjointed projects, somehow expecting the outcomes to be different from those of the last 20 years.

Mr. Konapelsky's letter also asserts that the city should control all funding. This shows just how narrow a view of economic development that he and his colleagues share. GCAC has already used public and private funding to put together job training programs in conjunction with Wor-Wic Community College. Why should the city have controlled that funding or control it moving forward? As a workforce development

professional, I can assure you that it is not done that way!

And why should the city control funding for marketing, branding, advertising, developing trademarks, certifying the skills of workers or validating the quality of services offered by businesses? The city's focus should be on infrastructure and public health and safety. Beyond these areas, private foundations in Maryland make grants of over half a billion dollars annually. This is funding much of which is not offered to cities, but could be pursued by a community and economic development corporation that has the backing of its local officials.

The Lofton Report, for which the community paid \$30,000 in 2002 recommended the city provide funding for and turn over economic development responsibilities to a private economic development corporation, as has been done in other communities around the country. GCAC is proceeding in the spirit of the Lofton Report without asking the city for funding. Mr. Konapelsky, on the other hand, is trying to obstruct the progress that he knows GCAC can deliver and that the community deserves.

Entrepreneurs, investors, developers, and grant-making agencies have a vast choice of localities in which they can spend their time, effort, and money. They seek locations where there is an agreed-upon vision, a common sense comprehensive plan, and a track record of public and private sector cooperation. They seek areas where there is an established group of business people and community development advocates

who can work on their behalf and mediate with local officials. While development is progressing in Princess Anne, Pocomoke and Smith Island, what is happening in Crisfield? Crisfield holds all of the assets but is not producing the results. Why? I believe that the vote by City Council on Aug. 24, the promise of a meeting yet to be scheduled between GCAC and the city, and ideas such as those advocated by Councilman Konapelsky speak unambiguously about why Crisfield is not moving forward.

**Keith S. Campbell**

— Mr. Campbell is a board member of the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition, Inc. and serves as Director of Workforce Development. A retired executive from The Hershey Company, he and his family own several pieces of residential and commercial property in Crisfield, dating from 2006. His services are being made available to GCAC without charge.

### Thanks for the special care of boat during recent storm

I would like to sincerely thank you, Tom and the crew at the Somers Cove Marina for taking care of my boat during the recent storm on Thursday, Sept. 29th.

Crisfield has a top notch marina with exceptional management skills. You and your crew have a great attitude and went above and beyond to pump out my boat.

Again, thank you so much for your kindness. Sincerely,

**Jay Tawes  
Crisfield**

