

Grace

focus

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF GRACE IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH
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The Old Rugged Cross

This song is often an anthem for believers in other countries who do not have the freedom to express their love for Christ publicly. So much truth and richness found in this hymn.

During the early years of his ministry, Rev. George Bennard was “praying for a full understanding of the cross and its plan in Christianity.”

Consequently, he spent many hours in study, prayer and meditation, until he could say, “I saw the Christ of the cross as if I were seeing John 3:16 leave the printed page, take form and act out the meaning of redemption.”

During these days the theme of what was to be his most successful song came to him.

He was staying in the Methodist parsonage at Pokagon, Michigan, while engaged in series of service in the Pokagon Church when he finally perfected his song and wrote down the words and music.

“Old Rugged Cross Day” is observed annually at this Church, and on a large stone nearby is carved the names of the original singers and the significance of the event.

The song became immediately popular.

Introduced before a large convention in Chicago, its fame spread rapidly throughout the Christian world.

Today, a twelve-foot high wooden cross stands on a roadside near Reed City, Michigan, honoring the composer. On it are the words “Old Rugged Cross.” A sign reminds passersby that this is the “Home of Living Author, Rev. Geo. Bennard.”

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood
so divine,

A wondrous beauty I see;

For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered
and died,

To pardon and sanctify me.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,

Till my trophies at last I lay down;

I will cling to the old rugged cross,

And exchange it some day for a crown.

Church Events

- **Apr 1st – Bible Study in 1 Tim 4/YOUTH GROUP**
- **Apr 2nd – Retired Men's Meeting**
- **Apr 5th – Easter Sunday**
- **Apr 8th – Bible Study in 1 Tim 5/YOUTH GROUP**
- **Apr 10th - Men's Meeting**
- **Apr 15th - Bible Study in 1 Tim 6/YOUTH GROUP**
- **Apr 22nd - Bible Study in 2 Tim 1/ YOUTH GROUP**
- **Apr 29th - Bible Study in 2 Tim 2/YOUTH GROUP**

The Thief on the Other Cross

A Good Friday Monologue –written by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

I don't belong here. I really don't. Paradise is the last place I expected to end up after all I've done. Let me tell you my story.

I am — I was — an armed robber, I guess you'd call it. Me and Jake and the others would live in caves in the Judean hills near the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We made our living by violence. We wouldn't take on people in the big groups that passed. They traveled together for safety. But a family alone would be an easy mark, as well

as anyone fool enough to travel by himself.

Brandishing a strong staff would usually do the trick. Threaten them with a beating and they'd give up without much of a fight. But I've been known to break a few bones in my day, God forgive me. I don't think I actually killed anyone, but then I never stayed around long enough to find out. The first time I meet Jesus is when I am invited to a party in his honor in Jericho at the home of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. I

am introduced, we shake hands, and Jesus looks me in the eye for a *long* moment. He can see right into me, who I am, every crime I have ever committed. Then he smiles this big friendly smile. "You know," he says, "there's forgiveness for you in my Kingdom. How about it?"

I drop my eyes, say something non-committal, and shuffle away. The next day I'm in the crowd, hanging on every word he says. Jesus is talking about his Kingdom, comparing it to a mustard seed, calling it the Kingdom of Heaven. I want so much to go up to him after he has finished and take him up on that forgiveness thing, but I just can't bring myself to do it. I wish I had. It isn't much later when me and my friend Jake — the guy on the third cross — get caught by a Roman patrol. The others run off, but they catch us, beat us silly, drag us... us ...in

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This story is fictional, of course, though it is based on the account in Luke 23:32-43. In this story I take the thief as a highwayman or bandit, like the one who had robbed the man in Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR
mess
HE IS WRITING YOUR
message

Youth Summer Camp

We have such a great group of youth here at Grace, many of which will be going to camp this summer. Wouldn't it be so great if we could send all of our youth to camp completely paid for!?! If you would like to put a gift of money towards sending out youth to camp, please be sure to note that on your tithe envelope.

Meet Our Youth

Morgan Wagner is 11 years old and is one of our awesome youth! She loves to talk to friends and sleep, but most of all, she loves her sleep. Morgan's hobbies include playing basketball, cheerleading and singing (she has a beautiful voice), and her favorite worship song is *Great I Am*, by *Natalie Grant*. Due to years of cheerleading and other activities, Morgan has an ability to pop random joints in her body on demand (i.e. shoulder, hip...). Though she has plenty of time to figure out what she wants to do in the future, Morgan currently wants to go to cosmetology school and do hair professionally. Morgan is becoming more aware of the needs other people have. The things that she, and most of us, take for granted are not promised and Morgan's prayer is that the Lord would provide for those in need and help her to be continually thankful for the things He has given her. #yes



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...into Jerusalem, and throw us in prison. No mercy for the likes of us.

And so it happens that on the same day that they crucify Jesus, they crucify me and Jake -- one of us on his left, the other on his right. This ain't no normal crucifixion. Mobs of people are there just because of Jesus. Self-righteous Pharisees are swaggering and mocking. "If you're some kind of messiah," one sneers, "come on down from that cross. If you're a savior, save yourself — *if you can!*"

Jake begins cat-calling, too, if you can imagine that. I yell over at him, "You miserable thug, don't you have any fear of God? Can't you see that we're going to die just like he is? Show a little decency! We're getting exactly what we deserve, but he ain't done nothing wrong."

Jake quiets down and the Pharisees lose interest. But I can't get Jericho out of my mind. I can't forget Jesus' eyes, his words, his invitation. And so I call over to him, though it's getting hard to breathe and talking makes it that much harder.

"Jesus!" I say. He turns his head towards me. "Jesus, I was there in Jericho. I met you at a party at Zacchaeus' house. Remember?"

He looks at me for a moment and then nods his head just a little. He *does* remember.

"I never forgot what you said. I wanted to say yes, but just couldn't. And now look at me — look at *us!*"

He is in bad shape — exhausted, in excruciating pain, back oozing, breath labored. He isn't going to last long. I can see that. But somehow I can see *beyond* all that. He *was* the Messiah, *is* the Messiah, no matter what those priests and Romans and Pharisees have done to him. And when he dies, he will be with God. In a few hours, maybe less, he will be vindicated. He will reign in that Kingdom he told us about.

"Jesus," I call again, quieter now.

He opens his eyes. They are the same eyes, the same piercing, loving, honest eyes.

"Jesus," I say, "when you come into your Kingdom, would you remember me?"

His words are labored, his lips parched, but I can still hear him pretty well. "Truly, I say to you..." His voice cracks, then is stronger for a moment. "Truly, this very day you will be with me in Paradise."

His eyes droop. He is fading quickly now. But I believe him. *I do!* That's what gets me through those next few hours until they break my legs to kill me. *I do* believe him!

And then I find myself here in heaven, in Paradise. I sure don't deserve to be here, but here I am anyway. I guess that's what a man like me gets when the King himself grants a pardon. Full forgiveness. Pretty amazing, don't you think? ■



Missions Spotlight

Rodney and Cindy Fontaine have been part of the Grace family from a distance for more than 30 years.

If you have been around Grace Immanuel for any amount of time, it is likely that you have heard of Brother Rodney and Sister Cindy. We love them and look forward to every chance they get to head North and see us! We are privileged to be a hand in supporting this ministry.

Here is a little update on the Fontaine's:

On April 7th Rodney and Cindy leave for China. They will be there for 21 days. Rodney has been asked to become the Apostolic covering for over 300 churches in Southwest China, which will be taking place during this trip.

In January, they started a new branch of ministry called Compassion Counseling Center. They are helping people who have been struggling with thoughts of suicide, grief counseling, marriage counseling, parenting, etc... The counseling will work by phone and computer, using Skype and Messaging.

We will be lifting Rodney and Cindy up in prayer during this trip, as well as during their ministry while home in Florida.

We look forward to having them with us at the end of their trip to China!



Top 4 Bible Apps

Announcements

- This goes out to all of the men who attend men's meeting. If you can make it out to the men's meeting once a month, please do. It is such a privilege to have a solid group of men who can encourage each other in the Lord. I know firsthand, how much we, as women, benefit from you all going.
- The warmth is coming!! It will be here...I promise. With that said, if you have any suggestions or ideas for community outreach this summer, please bring it up! You can either let us know in person, or email at info@mygraceimmanuel.org. We love to hear your thoughts!
- Anyone who is interested in learning about the sound system at church and how it works and operates, please let Drea know. We are going to be doing a Saturday morning class on becoming familiar with the sound system for anyone interested. Date is TBD.

1. **OLIVE TREE:** This is my favorite of all the Bible apps. The main reason I love it is because you can download the entire Bible and you don't have to be connected to WIFI or the internet in order to read. This app is available for Mac, PC, Iwhatever, Android, Kindle and Nook. They've got their bases covered and then some.
2. **YOUVERSION:** is available in over 100 languages. When it comes to taking the gospel to the world, YouVersion means business and I love that. However, for a frugal mom like me who only uses WIFI to save money, you have to be connected to the internet to have full access to reading. If I'm visiting a church or event stadium that doesn't have WIFI, I have no access. So I love YouVersion...just not as much as Olive Tree, for said reasons. They do have a tad more versions of the app: Blackberry, Java, Windows Phone, and more. So if you have a smartphone and no worries about the amount of time you connect, this could very well be the app for you.
3. **BLUE LETTER BIBLE:** I am on this website via the laptop every.single.day. I just love the way their versions are on the dropdown menu and I can read any verse in all versions with one click. The app is free and available for Iwhatever use, BUT some versions are available locally (on the device) and some require internet connection. The NIV is not available on this app at all. Because I love their site, I'm confident this app will grow in flexibility and user friendliness.
4. **BIBLE GATEWAY:** Another fabulous site that I frequently use for reading and studying the Bible. This app is great AND as of the writing of this post, the NIV is available on the app for download! Can I get a woohoo?! Available for IWhatever and Android, you won't be disappointed in the way this app performs.

Verse of the Month

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

