



*Volume 10 Issue 9*

# *West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church*



*September 2023*

*Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

## *The Five Points of Calvinism*

By contrast, Calvinism insists that salvation is by grace from beginning to end. Salvation is a gift, in every sense of the word—God’s gift for undeserving sinners who cannot be redeemed apart from God’s saving grace. The gift is given to those to whom God chooses to give it; and although it is offered to everyone, it is not given to every one. When God does choose to grant this gift, however, He effectively places it in the hands of his child; and once it is received, it can never be lost, stolen, or damaged. Truly it is the gift that keeps on giving!

These gracious principles were defined and defended in *The Canons of the Synod of Dort*. As mentioned previously, an international team of theologians met at Dort to consider the Arminian position. Their deliberations resulted in a series of carefully worded doctrinal propositions that represented a century of mature theological and practical reflection on the great truths of the Reformation. In short, the Synod concluded that the decrees of election and reprobation were based on God’s sovereign choice rather than on foreseen or unbelief; that although Christ’s death was sufficient for all, it was efficient only for the elect; that humanity was totally corrupted by the Fall, and thus unable to choose salvation prior to regeneration; that God’s grace is effective to convert the unbeliever; and that God so preserves believers that they can never totally fall from grace. These five basic points can be organized as follows:

*1. Total depravity.* The words “*total depravity*” are not the best way of speaking about the doctrine of utterly pervasive sin, or man’s inability in spiritual things, because they suggest that we are all as bad as we can be and that everyone is equally sinful. That is not true, of course. Some sin more than others and will suffer greater punishment in hell for their sins. As theologian John Gerstner used to say, we are not as bad as we could be, because in each of us there is infinite room for *deprovement*!

Rather than signifying that the unregenerate person is wholly evil in everything he does, total depravity teaches that nothing he does is ever completely good. Sin has pervaded every part of our physical, mental, and emotional makeup so that there is nothing about us that remains untouched by sin. In the interests of accuracy, therefore, it is better to speak of *radical* depravity, comprehensive iniquity, or the pervasiveness of sin. Our motives are never entirely pure, and thus to one extent or another all our actions are corrupted by evil desires. This corruption invades every aspect of our being, so that nothing we are or do is completely free from sin.

In this sad and pervasively sinful state we have no inclination to seek God, and therefore cannot seek him or even respond to the gospel when it is presented to us. In our unregenerate state, we do not have free will so far as “believing on” or “receiving” Jesus Christ as Savior is concerned. In fact, such is our slavery to sin that we cannot understand our need of Christ until God first gives us spiritual understanding. Even faith must come as a gift, because prior to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit our depravity renders us impotent to cooperate with God’s saving grace.



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2. ***Unconditional election.*** If the condition of the human race is as bad as the biblical doctrine of depravity indicates, then salvation must originate with God. It must be a work of the triune God, accomplished and applied by him without any assistance on our part. Since we are never going to seek him, he is going to have to reach out to us and save us (if, in fact, we are to be saved). And this is what God does. The first step in this reaching out is God's determination to do it, which is what the word election refers to. It means that what happens in an individual's salvation is determined by the prior decision of God, who established the decrees of salvation in Christ before the world began. "Unconditional" indicates that this decision is made apart from any -thing God might foresee in the sinful creature. If election were based on anything that the sinner might be or do, then ultimately salvation would depend on human merit. But in order to prove that salvation is all of grace, election is a loving act of God's sovereign will. Faith in Christ is not the cause of election but one of its results.

3. ***Limited atonement.*** Of the five doctrines summarized by the TULIP acrostic, the most difficult for most people to understand and accept is limited atonement. Part of the problem is the terminology itself, because here the words really are misleading. "Limited" atonement suggests that somehow the death of Christ did not do all that it could do or ought to do, that it was ineffective in some way. That is not what the doctrine of limited atonement is meant to affirm, however. What Reformed people want to say by these words is that the atonement had a specific object in view, namely, the salvation of those whom the Father had given the Son before the foundation of the world, and that it was effective in saving those persons. Thus it would be better to call this doctrine definite atonement, or particular redemption. Particular redemption signifies that the death of Christ has saving efficacy for the elect, and for the elect only. Christ made satisfaction for sin when he died on the Cross, offering himself as the perfect substitute for God's chosen people. Therefore, according to the plan of salvation, Christ's death atoned for the sins of the elect but not for the sins of those who never come to him in faith.

4. ***Irresistible grace.*** Somehow the benefits of the atonement must be applied to the elect. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose inward operation enables sinners to repent and believe in Christ. In addition to the outward call of the gospel, made to everyone, the Holy Spirit issues an inward call. This inward calling is made only to the elect and inevitably draws them to faith in Christ. Because God is sovereign in their salvation, it is not possible for them permanently or effectively to reject this effectual calling. God's grace is irresistible and invincible; the Spirit never fails to accomplish his saving purpose in the mind, the heart, and the will of God's chosen people. This is how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes the Spirit's gracious, efficacious work: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace" (Chapter 10, Sec. 1).

5. ***The perseverance of the saints.*** Sometimes this doctrine is called the doctrine of "eternal security." It has two parts: 1) that God perseveres with his people, and 2) that because God perseveres with his people, they also persevere. The saints are simply the people of God, those whom God considers holy through the work of his Son. The perseverance of the saints really is the preservation of the saints, for their perseverance depends on God's preserving grace. It is the faithfulness of Christ, rather than the faithfulness of the Christian, that brings the saints to glory.



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Each of these five doctrines makes a unique contribution to our understanding of God's grace. Each can be analyzed separately and also defended separately, as we shall see. However, these five doctrines are logically and theologically interrelated. They all serve to emphasize the grace of God in salvation. Warfield wrote,

*Now these Five Points form an organic unity, a single body of truth. They are based on two presuppositions that Scripture abundantly supports. The first presupposition is the complete impotence of man, and the second is God's absolute sovereignty in grace. Everything else follows. The meeting place of these two foundation truths is the heart of the Gospel, for it follows that if man is totally depraved, the grace of God in saving him must of necessity be sovereign. Otherwise, man will inevitably refuse it in his depravity, and will remain unredeemed.*

The doctrines of grace stand or fall together, and together they point to one central truth: salvation is all of grace because it is all of God; and because it is all of God, it is all for his glory.

To fully appreciate the glory of God in the doctrines of grace, it helps to recognize the role of each person of the Trinity in the Five Points of Calvinism. Election is the choice of God the Father. The atonement is the sacrifice of God the Son. The grace that draws us to Christ and enables us to persevere to the very end is the work of God the Holy Spirit. Thus salvation is all God's work from beginning to end—the coordinated work of the triune God—as it must be, if we are to be saved. Consider: if we are actually dead in our sins (radical depravity), then only God could choose us in Christ (unconditional election), only Christ could atone for our sins (particular redemption), and only the Spirit could draw us to Christ (efficacious grace) and preserve us in him (persevering grace). Therefore, all praise and glory belong to God alone: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!" (*Romans 11:36*). ~ *The Doctrines of Grace - Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel - Dr. James Montgomery Boice*

## *The Five Points of Arminianism*

Although the doctrines of grace have been taught throughout the history of the church, the so-called Five Points of Calvinism were developed in response to the theology of Jacob Arminius. Arminius taught systematic theology at the University of Leyden. In 1610, the year after the professor died, his followers drew up five articles of faith that summarized his understanding of salvation. The Arminians, as they came to be called, presented these doctrines to the state of Holland in the form of a protest (or Remonstrance), arguing that the Dutch confessions should be amended to conform to their views. Here are the five planks of their theological platform:

**Article I:** That God, by an eternal unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end. . . .

**Article II:** That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer. . . .



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## *The Five Points of Arminianism* *Continued from Page 3*

**Article III:** That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good. . . .

**Article IV:** That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and co-operative grace can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible. . . .

**Article V:** That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations. . . . But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds.

These articles may be summarized as follows: “I. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief. II. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved. III. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed. IV. This grace may be resisted. V. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.”

What these statements hold in common is an uncertainty about, and in some places a resistance to, God’s absolute sovereignty in grace. At the heart of the Arminian position lies the insistence that divine sovereignty must somehow be accommodated to human capability. Election and reprobation are not divine decrees; they are based on human choices. The efficacy of the atonement does not rest on Christ’s saving work alone but also on the sinner’s faith and repentance. Although God’s grace is attractive and persuasive, it is not powerful enough to triumph over those who stubbornly resist his love. And whether or not a Christian will persevere to the very end is open to question, because perseverance ultimately depends on the Christian rather than on Christ. Although these are distinct doctrinal issues, they are linked by a common concern to downplay predestination so as to allow human beings to determine their own spiritual destiny.

The Arminian Remonstrance produced a storm of theological controversy, culminating in the Synod of Dort, an international conference on Reformed doctrine. As the delegates met over the course of seven months, their debates served to clarify the Arminian position. Despite some reassurances to the contrary, the Reformed delegates eventually concluded that Arminianism could not avoid the following theological implications:





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1. **Human ability.** Human nature has been damaged by the Fall, but not totally disabled. Even if we are not basically good, at least we are not completely bad. The will is not enslaved to sin, but is capable of believing in Christ, even prior to regeneration (although not entirely apart from God's grace). Thus every sinner retains the ability to choose for or against God, either cooperating with God's Spirit unto salvation or resisting God's grace unto damnation.
2. **Conditional election.** God's choice to save certain individuals was based on foreseen faith, on his ability to know in advance that they would freely believe the gospel. Election is conditional in that it is ultimately determined by individual choice: the only people God has chosen are those whom he already knew would believe. Furthermore, the faith that he foresees is not exclusively a divine gift but partly a human decision. Therefore, the ultimate cause of salvation is not God's choice of the sinner but the sinner's choice of God.
3. **Indefinite atonement.** Christ's work on the Cross makes salvation possible for everyone but not actual for anyone in particular. Although the crucifixion enabled God to grant forgiveness, this is given only on the condition of personal faith. Christ died for each and every person; however, only those who believe will be saved. Thus the atonement only becomes effective if and when someone chooses to accept it.
4. **Resistible grace.** Everyone who hears the gospel is called to faith in Christ, not only outwardly but also inwardly. The Spirit speaks to every heart, doing everything he can to persuade the sinner to trust in Christ. However, sinners are able to resist the Holy Spirit, and they will not be regenerated unless and until they repent. To put this another way, the Spirit's application of Christ's saving work is contingent on the sinner's prior acceptance of the gospel. The Holy Spirit cannot impart new spiritual life unless the sinner is willing to receive it.
5. **Defectible grace.** Those who believe in Christ and are truly saved nevertheless can fully and finally lose their salvation by falling away from their faith. Eternal life is not secure when a sinner comes to Christ, but depends on the Christian's faithfulness to Christ until death.

There are different versions of Arminian theology, and not all Arminians would agree with all *five* of the preceding doctrines, at least as they are described here. However, the previous summary expresses what many evangelicals believe today. And what all five of these doctrines share is the insistence that the sovereignty of God's grace must in some way be limited by the freedom of human choice. Regeneration, election, atonement, glorification: the efficacy of these central acts of salvation does not depend on God alone but also on the cooperation of fallen sinners. In their study of *The Five Points of Calvinism*, David Steele and Curtis Thomas conclude that for the Arminian, "Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond)—man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, 'choose' to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.



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This helps explain why Arminian theologies are so prevalent in contemporary evangelicalism. For Arminianism, human decision making holds a central place in salvation. This results in a theology that is not exclusively God-centered but is distorted in the direction of the self. And of course this is what the spirit of the age demands. In these postmodern and increasingly post-Christian times, people are clamoring for attention. They are looking for spiritual experiences that are secularized, humanized, and relativized. Arminianism supplies exactly what today's evangelicalism demands: a gospel that preserves a determinative role for personal choice. ~ *The Doctrines of Grace - Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel - Dr. James Montgomery Boice*

### *Knowing God and Making Him Known*

Knowing God and making Him known are the heartbeat of what it means to be human. Calvin asks in his catechism, "What is the chief end of human life?" He answers, "To know God." There are several reasons the knowledge of God is central and supreme for all human life.

**First, knowing God is your highest privilege.** We often think that if we achieve "wisdom," "might," or "riches," then our life has meaning and worth. But God declares that these "boasts" and privileges are not worth our esteem: "*But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me*" (Jeremiah 9:23–24). Many wise, mighty, and wealthy people on their deathbeds arrive at the same conclusion as the Preacher, "*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit*" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Elevating other pursuits above God in our lives fills our hearts with worldliness, which diminishes our souls and makes us petty. But by learning, experiencing, and rejoicing in the knowledge of God, we receive the greatest of blessings and God receives the highest glory. We were created for the greatest of gifts: knowing God.

**Second, knowing God is the heart of the covenant and the essence of eternal life.** Our idolatry, sin, and false worship are linked to our ignorance of God: "*They know not me, saith the LORD*"; "*there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*" (Jeremiah 9:3; Hosea 4:1). But in His grace God announces, "*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel*"—which will bring the blessing of the knowledge of God: "*they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them*" (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Such knowledge stems from the gift of a new heart—a "*heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God*" (Jeremiah 24:7). Since knowledge of God is a gift of the "*everlasting covenant*" (Jeremiah 32:40), Jesus can then say, "*and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*" (John 17:3). Your eternal communion with God is based on the true knowledge of God.

**Third, knowing God is the engine of holiness in our lives.** When we forsake the knowledge of God, our hearts become foolish and darkened, since we "*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*" (Romans 1:21–25). Ignorance of God plunges us into idolatry, which fuels injustice and immorality in our lives (1 Thessalonians 4:5; Hosea 4:1–2). Often, the turning point in our times of spiritual decline is a fresh view of God (see Job 42:1–6). The growth that God gives us in "*grace and peace*" and "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" comes "*through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord...of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*" (2 Peter 1:2–3).



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## *Knowing God and Making Him Known*

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False ideas about God lead to shallow spirituality that mimics the world, but true knowledge of God—brought to us by God’s “exceeding great and precious promises”—produces deep, meaningful, and Spirit-empowered godliness (2 Peter 1:4).

Knowing God is therefore the central priority of your life. To Paul, all the honors and privileges of this world are “*but dung*” compared to “*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*” (Philippians 3:8). How, then, do we seek the knowledge of God and “*follow on to know the LORD*” throughout our lives (Hosea 6:3)? The knowledge of God is fundamentally relational; we seek it by seeking Him in at least five ways.

**First**, we must be dependent upon and receptive to God. We do not discover the knowledge of God, but receive it. God must reveal Himself to us, on His own initiative, by His Word (Matthew 11:27). Too often we can be like some theologians who conjure deep thoughts of God that are only a product of our own imaginations. Rather, we must receive what God has revealed about Himself in His Word with childlike faith.

**Second**, we must seek to know the Lord through humble repentance. God is God. To know Him rightly is to fear Him (Proverbs 2:5; 9:10). In the fear of God, we must hate sin, turn away from it (Job 28:28), and turn to Him in love (Deuteronomy 10:12). Without knowing ourselves in our sinfulness and need, we cannot know God in His holiness and grace.

**Third**, we must seek to know the Lord through Christ-centered faith. Jesus declared Himself to be “*the way, the truth, and the life.*” He Himself makes known the unseen God (John 1:18; 14:6–9). Faith is not simply the initial act of taking hold of Christ at the beginning of the Christian life. We must continue in Christ-centered faith throughout the Christian life (Colossians 2:6; Galatians 2:20).

**Fourth**, we must seek to know God through righteous action. We are not saved by our works, but by grace alone. However, this grace works to make us a new creation “*in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:8–10). This means we must become hearers and doers of the Word (James 1:22–25). Personal knowledge of God deepens as we walk with Him in love and obedience.

**Fifth**, we must seek to know God through holy desire. We must treat the knowledge of God as much more than useful; we must regard Him as supremely beautiful and desirable (Psalm 27:4). Jonathon Edwards considers “*a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel*” to be of “*the sweetest joys and delights I have experienced.*” Let us pray with Moses, “Please show me your glory” (Exodus 33:18).

**Excerpt from**

**None Else: 31 Meditations on God’s Character and Attributes**

**Dr. Joel R. Beeke and Brian Cosby**





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For a **Modern** Reformation

August, 2023

## South Korea Mission Update



Pastor Park's Family

Greetings from Daejeon!  
We are happy to report that the Lord has been graciously granting us many victories and not taking them for granted, they move our souls to gratefully praise him. Both of our families remain relatively healthy, are finding time to rest here and there, and have been enjoying the summer.

The work of the church ministry, the constitution, and translation projects all continue to move forward with great unity and although we are still small in number, the Lord has been blessing the church through giving. As of July, Pastor Park has been able to begin receiving a salary again!



Post-Sermon Youth Study



Lunch Prep



After Worship

On September 20th, Sam will be traveling to Vermont to conduct his Grandfather and Grandmother's joint funeral service. After Sam is finished in Vermont, in light of the remaining 2023 support needs and upcoming 2024 support needs, he and Taiuk will meet in California to visit supporting churches and raise awareness of the mission among other Reformed Baptist churches.

We continue to thank and praise our God for his provision through all of you! As of August, we still need 45% of our 2023 support. Currently we don't have sufficient funds to cover Taiuk's support for this month (August) and neither of our support starting September so our need remains urgent. Please continue to pray for the Lord to provide, as we continue to trust in his good and wise plans and purposes. Thank you for remembering us, supporting us, and encouraging us!

The Lord reigns,  
Sam and TK



2023 Summer Outing

### Please Pray for Us!

- **Sam's cultural and language acquisition, Korean history and cross-cultural ministry studies**
- **Pastor Park, Sam, Taiuk, and the rest of the saints as they continue to write and teach the constitution**
- **Praise the Lord that as of July, Pastor Park has been able to begin receiving a salary again**
- **Sam and Taiuk's families while they are away, for their upcoming travel, and remaining 2023 support needed**

*Tax-deductible support can be made payable to "Concord Community Church," designated "South Korea Mission Team"*

**Concord Community Church**  
481 Main St.  
Concord, VT 05824

You can also contribute online via the QR code below



[www.forhischurchinkorea.org](http://www.forhischurchinkorea.org)



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# West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church



*Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

If you have a birthday or anniversary in September that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at [gwlcf10415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

## *Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner September 2023*

### Birthdays

*Ben P. (3)  
Zachary A. (9)  
Rhydian H. (12)*

*Jonathan D. (15)  
Ruth T. (23)*

### Anniversaries

*None to Report*

## *Godlessness in the Last Days*

*II Timothy 3*

**3** But understand this, that <sup>y</sup>in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup>For people will be <sup>z</sup>lovers of self, <sup>a</sup>lovers of money, <sup>b</sup>proud, <sup>b</sup>arrogant, abusive, <sup>b</sup>disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup><sup>c</sup>heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, <sup>d</sup>not loving good, <sup>4</sup>treacherous, reckless, <sup>e</sup>swollen with conceit, <sup>f</sup>lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having the appearance of godliness, but <sup>g</sup>denying its power. <sup>h</sup>Avoid such people. <sup>6</sup>For among them are <sup>i</sup>those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to <sup>j</sup>arrive at a knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup>Just as <sup>k</sup>Jannes and Jambres <sup>l</sup>opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, <sup>m</sup>men corrupted in mind and <sup>n</sup>disqualified regarding the faith. <sup>9</sup>But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, <sup>o</sup>as was that of those two men. ~ **ESV**



**West Suffolk Baptist Church  
Leadership**

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

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