

11A

RELIGION

Take
time to
studySunday
School LessonDevotional Reading: Jeremiah
30:13-24.Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah
28,29.

In the first chapter of Jeremiah and again in the first chapter of Habakkuk, we see a gloomy forecast of Judah's disastrous defeat by the Chaldeans, or Babylonians (Jeremiah 1:15,16; Habakkuk 1:6-9). That event was in the future when those prophets wrote about it. Now, as we look back on the events, we see that the disaster came in three phases, each one more severe than the one before it. Mercifully, God brought minor disaster first, giving His people time to repent and avoid the greater calamity. But the people did not repent. Stubbornly they continued their evil ways until the destruction was complete.

First phase. About 605 B.C. the Babylonians first subdued Judah. They took a few captives (Daniel 1:1-7). King Jehoiakim was left to rule Judah and pay tribute to Babylon. After three years he rebelled and stopped paying. The Babylonians sent other satellite nations to harass Judah until Nebuchadnezzar was ready to come back (2 Kings 24:1,2).

Second phase. About 597 B.C. the Babylonians returned to Jerusalem. By then Jehoiachin was king. He quickly surrendered, and the Babylonians took him captive along with ten thousand leading citizens and craftsmen. Zedekiah was made king of Judah and forced to pay tribute to Babylon (2 Kings 24:8-17).

Third phase. About nine years later, Zedekiah rebelled. The Babylonians came to subdue Jerusalem for the third time. Entering the city after a siege of eighteen months, they destroyed it and took most of the survivors to Babylon 92 Kings 24:18-25:21). Thus the disaster was complete about 586 B.C.

The people of Jerusalem could have known which prophet was right. They should have recalled the Law that king Josiah had read to them some twenty-five years earlier. According to that Law, sin would lead to disaster. But disaster was always somewhere in the future.

There are many kinds of voices in our world. There is the voice of optimism: "Things are bound to be better." There is the voice of pessimism. "We're on the slippery slope, plunging to our doom." There is the voice of God: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live" (Amos 5:4). Do we want to live?

The people of Jerusalem were without excuse, though several years had passed since the Law had been taken seriously by their leaders. How shall we be excused if we have a Bible in the living room, but choose to give more time TV?

A Christian needs to know the Bible. This takes time. We need to read large portions thoughtfully to see what teaching or example we can find for our lives. We need to study the Bible in groups as well as alone. A Sunday school class is great, if we make it so by doing our homework and being ready to contribute. Also great are half a dozen neighbors with open Bibles in someone's living room. It may be greater still if there is a Bible concordance, a Bible dictionary, a Bible commentary, and someone who knows how to use them.

Judge: Baptists to lose church to AME

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENVILLE, S.C.— A judge says a breakaway congregation must vacate Bakers Chapel, a 98-year-old church building that the African Methodist Episcopal Church wants to close.

One member of the congregation promises not to go quietly.

"We've got 30 days," Hattie Cureton said Thursday. "And between now and those 30 days we've got to raise as much ruckus as we can."

But Circuit Judge Charles B.

Simmons urged the AME Church and the group calling itself Bakers Chapel Baptist Church to "resolve this as Christian brothers and sisters" without further litigation.

Since 1898, the church had been known as Bakers Chapel AME Church. One of its founders was a runaway slave.

But the AME's Piedmont Conference voted last year to abandon the rundown building and study how to use the property that has been surrounded by commercial development.

Two of the church's three members kept meeting there anyway. They declared themselves independent Baptists, recruited about a dozen new members and renovated the building.

They argue that a handwritten 98-year-old deed says the property was sold to the congregation "forever for the sole use and benefit of church and burying purposes."

Simmons ruled Thursday that the AME Church owns the property and the breakaway group must leave within 30 days. But Simmons also noted that the group has

"brought life" into the building.

"It would seem only appropriate that both groups would want this vacant church to be used as a place of worship for God," the judge wrote.

Williams
makes
difference
at homeBy Deb Saine
LOGANSPOUT PHAROS-TRIBUNE

LOGANSPOUT, Ind. — It's difficult to imagine someone like Mary Williams surviving life in a tough neighborhood, let alone getting out of that neighborhood.

She's soft-spoken and easy-going, but she has a faith that moves mountains. And she has a way of seeing things not only as they are but also how they could be.

It's that faith that helped the 43-year-old get out of her tough neighborhood in Hammond years ago, a neighborhood that saw its share of drug use, gang activity and child abuse.

And it's a vision that has enabled her to see a stretch of Spencer Street differently than most. Others saw just a vacant Roman Catholic church between an old schoolhouse and a former rectory. The buildings had stood unused for years and seemed to be nothing but a waste and an eyesore.

Not to Mary. When she looked at the property a little over three years ago, she saw the rectory as a home for girls, the former St. Vincent de Paul Church as a soup kitchen and food pantry and the school as a mission center and a shelter for the homeless.

About a third of her vision for the property has become an answered prayer. The rest may have to be put on hold throughout the winter. Due to an unforeseen shortage in funds, the mission may have to shut down for a few months.

But Mary has lots of grit and too much faith to let that happen without prayer and a fight.

"We're doing all we can to stay open," she said. "It costs about \$500 a month just to heat this place, and our board doesn't want to get into a lot of debt. Trying to stay afloat, one option is to close over the winter."

Not that they're worried, of course.

"Whenever we need something really badly, we pray hard about it," Mary said, "and it seems that whoever needs to call, calls."

Three years after Emmaus Mission Center, Inc., made a down payment on a \$75,000 contract for the land and the buildings with the Lafayette Diocese, the Morningstar Girls Home opened in March.

Now Mary is spending a lot of her energy applying for grants so renovations to the church and the school can get under way. In the meantime, the three-story schoolhouse has been converted into an office for Mary, a conference room for the Mission's board members and two rooms and a hallway full of used goods on the first floor.

Nobody could call the accommodations plush. Far from it. Office furniture consists of mismatched pieces, and lighting is provided by old lamps with dented, stained shades.

But for those who have little to nothing, the interior of the old brick school is a palace.

The used clothing and shoes that may not be fit to a king are appreciated by those who are used to wearing the same thing — winter and summer. And the toys and decorations being collected on the second floor will go to needy families in an effort to bring them

See Woman page 13A

One of 15 greatest coming to town

Civil rights pioneer and renowned pastor to speak for series



The Rev. Otis Moss, one of Ebony's 15 greatest ministers, will discuss the role of the church in the African American community during Thurman/King series.

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Rev. Otis Moss has delivered many sermons during his more than forty years in the ministry.

Perhaps none as well remembered as one in 1963 in

Cincinnati, when he preached "civil rights" to a throng of more than 30,000 during the "March on Cincinnati." The march was organized by Martin Luther King Jr.

Moss, a former associate of King's father at Atlanta's famed Ebenezer Baptist

Church, will be in Charlotte next week for the Thurman/King lectures. The lectures are sponsored by Faith Liberation Community Christian Center, 2300 McClintock Road.

The lecture series, which borrows its name from noted

African American theologians Dr. Howard Thurman and King, seeks to study the impact of theology through the eyes African America.

"We'll have a high time," said Moss, with a laugh.

He will be the keynote speaker for the lectures, which will be held Oct. 17-18.

"I will be looking at the black church as a unique institution of faith, hope heritage," Moss said. "And, of course, liberation."

Moss knows much about the liberation movement. He is a civil rights pioneer, who worked with King and served with his father, Martin Luther King Sr., as an associate pastor. He currently calls Cleveland home and pastors Olivet Baptist Church there.

The oft-decorated minister was a special guest of President Clinton on a 1994 mission to help bring peace to the Middle East. He was recognized by Ebony magazine twice as one of the 15 greatest ministers in America.

But Moss still is humble. And in spite of all that he has seen, his faith in the black church is unshakable.

The black church, Moss maintains, "is still the foundation home, and custodian of African American culture."

"You cannot accurately say the black church is in decline," said Moss. "That is true of white mainline churches, but it is not true of black ones."

You only have to look to the inner cities, says Moss, to see that.

"Many of the inner city structures that were abandoned by whites when they sold them or fled are being used," Moss said. "They have been taken over by black Baptists or Pentecostals."

"We are not experiencing decline," he added. "That is white writers, writing about white churches. It doesn't apply to us."

What has happened is African Americans have developed a broader "spectrum of expression."

"All of our activities are not

See MOSS on page 13A

EYE ON GOSPEL

Image Is everything: With five Grammys, four Dove and Stellar Awards and a gold album, Marvin Winans is perhaps best known as a member of the world-renowned Winans singing group.

Behind the scenes, he is an accomplished lyricist, composer and preacher. His Detroit-based Perfecting Church boasts a membership of more than 1,500. Now add to that the title of author as just recently, Winans has branched out into writing with the release of his first book titled "Image Is Everything." But don't read it hoping to find any intimate details about the life in one of gospel music's most celebrated families. Nor does he provide much insight about himself. Instead, this book — which examines the process of restoration, the deadly devices of "the image stealer" and tells of the many ways that God would impart his image of those who worship him into everyday life — is clearly intended as an extension of his ministry. And if it serves as a true indication of his preaching abilities, it's easy to see why his church is among Detroit's fastest growing.

A new deal for the Canton Spirituals: The award-winning Canton Spirituals signed an exclusive recording pact with Verity Records last week in New York City. Rumors were that the

Canton Spirituals had been shopping a deal and had been circulating for some time. The Cantons had — for the last few years — been recording under the banner of Blackberry Records, the label owned and operated by Doug and Melvin Williams (aka "The Williams Brothers"). The move to Verity is no doubt a major setback for the Mississippi-based label. With their last two albums, the Canton Spirituals were the best-selling act on the budding Blackberry roster. The Canton Spirituals join John P. Kee, Daryl Coley and Richard Smallwood at Verity Records as it continues to build a powerhouse roster. The deal is expected to bring greater exposure to the group. A new album is due out next year.

Finally, Benson Records kicks off the holiday season with the release of "The Real Meaning of Christmas," featuring Fred Hammond & Radical For Christ, Hezekiah Walker & The Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, Angelo & Veronica, Ben Tankard, and Commissioned.



Winans