



# Former preacher sentenced for sex crimes against child

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TATE COUNTY, MS - (WMC-TV) - A former preacher convicted of sex crimes against a child was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Larry Singleton was found guilty on 18 counts of sexual battery against a child and possession of child pornography. He will be required to serve all 30 years because people who commit sex crimes are not eligible for parole in Mississippi. In addition to prison time, Singleton will be forced to pay fines.

The victim, who was 11 when the crimes began, says a weight was lifted. Now, he has a message for others.

"It destroyed me as a person," the victim said. "It took my dignity away, my innocence."

Though his identity is concealed, the victim wants to encourage others.

"You feel like you have shame and guilt, but in all reality, it's nothing you've done wrong," he said.

Larry Singleton was a preacher at a church in Lafayette County. He was well known to the victim's family and the neighborhood.

"He was someone that you would trust, I mean that's how pedophiles operate," said the victim's mother, who has a warning for parents. "When a person becomes too interested in your child, like wanting to give gifts, even giving gifts to the family, you know, too good to be true, more than likely they are."

After Singleton was sentenced, his family maintained his innocence and was upset that the 71-year-old with health problems would likely spend his final days behind bars.

"For his grandsons and his granddaughters, I have to say that this is terrible," said Cheryl Singleton.

But for this victim, justice was served.

"The damage is over with, it's just an opportunity for me to move forward with my life," he said.

Under Mississippi law, criminals convicted of sex crimes are not eligible for parole, which means Singleton will be 101 when his sentences are up in 30 years. He does have the option to appeal.

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