

# The Sovereign Grace Messenger

*A Publication of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship*

**“THE LORD HATH PREPARED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS;  
AND HIS KINGDOM RULETH OVER ALL.”**

Psalm 103:19

Issue 24

Summer 2009

## THE GREAT GOSPEL INVITATION

Holmes Moore

*“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” John 7:37-39*

Here we have one of the great gospel discourses given by Jesus during His earthly ministry. It is probably that these are only short excerpts of what Jesus enlarged upon, but they have in them the substance of the whole gospel. Especially do we have here what may be called **“THE GREAT GOSPEL INVITATION!”**

We are told *when* Jesus gave this great invitation. It was *“in the last day, that great day of the feast, ...”* The feast referred to was the Feast of Tabernacles, held during the seventh month. This would put it in our month of October. No doubt there was beginning to be a bite in the air as the seasons passed from fall to early winter. Further, we are told that it was *“the last day,”* which would have been the eighth day of the feast. As it was with so many “high days” of the feasts, this would have been a first day of the week. Throughout the ceremonial Law there were so many indications that God was preparing for the moving of the weekly Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week. The Day of Pentecost, referenced here by the giving of the Spirit, fell on a first day of the week, being fifty days from the Day of the Passover. After this *“last day of the feast,”* the people broke up to go home from all over Israel and the Roman World. Many of these would never hear Christ preach again.

Doctor Lightfoot, and others, tell us that on this *“last day”* the Jews observed the ordinance of *“Libatio Aqua,”* or *“the sacred pouring out of water!”* The priests would take a golden vessel from the Temple and fill it with water at the Pool of Siloam. On the ascent to the altar, the water would be poured out with great ceremony and joy. Many believe it was at this specific time that Jesus gave His great Gospel invitation.

**“Perhaps you have labored  
and are heavy laden, and  
your soul cries out for rest  
and peace within.”**

We are also told *how* He gave this Gospel invitation, *“Jesus stood and cried, saying, ...”* Often Jesus would sit as He gave His discourse and would speak in an ordinary tone of voice. Yet here He *stood and cried!* This showed His earnestness and importunity. It revealed His desire that all should take heed and be saved! This tells us Jesus knew that when once it was dispersed, this multitude would never be gathered as it was then. Before the next feast day, some would be unable to attend and some would even be in their graves.

### The Character of This Promise

**The invitation itself is very general.** *“If any man thirst, ...”* Whoever he might be, - whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, - he is *invited to Christ!* The only true qualification is this, *“If any man thirst.”* *“To thirst”* is to feel our need of water or some other drink. We can get along better and longer without food than we can without drink. Some, such as Moses and Christ Jesus, have survived forty days without food, but neither could have gone that long without water.

**The invitation itself is very gracious.** *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”* If any man desires to be truly and eternally happy, let him apply himself to Me! Let him submit himself to be ruled by Me, to have Me as his Lord! We usually are more keenly aware of our thirst than we are of our hunger.

**Yes, the persons invited are those who thirst.** This may intend a need because of worldly indigence. This moreover intends those who have an inclination towards spiritual happiness. Perhaps you have labored and are heavy laden, and your soul cries out for rest and peace within.

*continued next page*



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**The invitation is to come to Christ Himself, to Christ alone, to Christ only.** *“Let him come unto me, ...”* Negatively, we are *not* invited to the Law, as a Saviour. The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but it never imparted any power to save. We are not invited to heathen philosophy, so popular even among the Jews during the days of Christ. We are not invited to other humanistic religions! We are invited to Christ that we might *drink*.

- **To drink** is to **admit** His doctrine!
- **To drink** is to **submit** to His discipline!
- **To drink** is to implicitly **believe** in Him!
- **To drink** is to **come** to Him as to the fountain of living waters, to the Giver of all comfort!

This, more or less, has always been the great controversy in evangelism, to whom, or to what should the sinner turn when he is seeking salvation? This question was brought into sharp focus during what is known as the Second Great Awakening. He who was to become a well-known evangelist, theologian, and educator, by the name of Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875, was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry in 1824. He experienced phenomenal success in the eastern states, with many being converted and a number of these becoming noted Abolitionists. In 1834 the Broadway Tabernacle was organized for his ministry. Subsequently, under Mr. Finney’s leadership, the church withdrew from the Presbytery and

organized as a Congregational church. In 1837 he removed to Oberlin College where he became Professor of Theology and later became president of the College from 1851 to 1865. He pastored the Oberlin Congregational Church and continued his evangelistic efforts until his death in 1875.

As converts grew fewer and excitement waned, Mr. Finney began the practice of “New Measures,” which included “inviting sinners” to “the Mourner’s Bench.” As one came to pray at the Mourner’s Bench, it was assumed that he had come to Christ! These practices became popular with some and helped set the tone of “Oberlin Theology” which was one of the forms of New School Calvinism.

As sinners moved from point “A” to point “B,” that is to the Mourner’s Bench, they were counted as “converts.” At first there may have been some discretion in the consideration of those who came to the Mourner’s Bench, but as time passed, the one who came was taken undoubtedly for a truly seeking and saved soul. Mr. Finney’s “New Measure” had won the day in evangelistic efforts, and still has to this day.

### **A Gracious Promise Extended to this Gracious Call**

*“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* (Vs. 38)

See here what it means to come to Christ: it is *“to believe on Him as the Scripture hath said, ...”* To believe on Christ does not involve a necessary movement of the body, but is the motion of the soul as it reaches out with the hand of faith and lays hold on Christ as He is presented in the Gospel.

Thus, we see how thirsty souls that come to Christ are made to drink. The Israelites, who believed Moses, drank of the *“Rock that followed them.”* Thus their physical lives were extended by believing the message and drinking from the Rock that was external to them.

But believers today drink of a Rock that is in them, - Christ in them! He is to them a well of living, running water. (Chapter 4:14) *“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him*

*shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* He has *“rivers of living water,”* which denote both plenty and constancy. These flow *“out of his belly,”* that is, out of his heart or soul, which is the subject of the Spirit’s working and the seat of His government.

### **The Evangelist’s Exposition of this Promise**

*“(But this spake he of the Spirit, ...)”* (Vs. 39)

It is promised to all who believe on Christ that they should receive the Holy Spirit. *“Which they that believe on Him should receive: ...”*

The Holy Spirit was *“not yet given,”* in the New Covenant sense. It was not that the Holy Spirit was not present in the world, for we read of Him in the very beginning of Creation. *“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”* (Gen. 1:2b) The Spirit of God moved upon and often spake through God’s prophets, priests, judges, and kings in what we call the Old Testament era. We read that even then God’s Messiah was upheld by the Spirit. (Isa. 42:1) He was *“satisfied”* by the knowledge of the Spirit. (Isa. 53:11) God’s Messiah was to be *“justified in the Spirit.”* (I Tim. 3:16)

The reason that the Holy Spirit *“was not yet given”* in the New Covenant sense is that then *“Jesus was not yet glorified.”* *“For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”* Jesus had not yet died! (John 13:31)

The giving of the Holy Spirit was to be both an answer to Christ’s intercession and an act of His dominion. And, therefore, till He was glorified and entered upon both of these offices, the Holy Spirit is *“not yet given.”*

The conversion of the Gentiles is spoken of as Jesus’ glorification! (John 12:23) *“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”*

Though the Spirit was *“not yet given,”* **He was promised** (Acts 1:4) *“And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me.”*

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It is our desire to publish *The Sovereign Grace Messenger* three times yearly. This depends upon sufficient funds being received by contribution to the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship (SGBF) general fund and those specially designated for the *Messenger*.

We thank those churches and individuals who give to the support of this endeavor. Our God has enabled this work to proceed by providing the laborers, writers, and contributors who support it.

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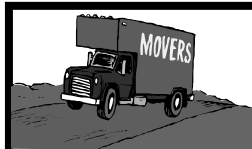
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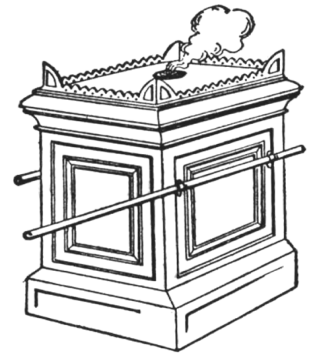


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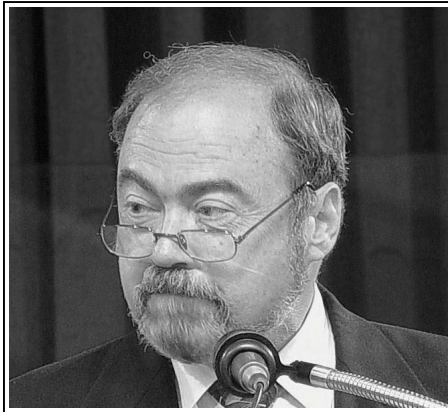
We have to pay full cost for returned mail. So please do remember to give us your change of address.

# The Christian's Only Altar

Mark Webb



*“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” (Hebrews 13:10-14)*



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Most Christians today are woefully ignorant of the Old Testament outside of the stories they learned in Sunday School or VBS. This is especially true of books like Leviticus and Numbers where we come face to face with the minutiae of the Mosaic Law. But without this backdrop of information, we find ourselves severely handicapped in understanding some very important New Testament passages—including the one before us now.

Remember that priests under the Mosaic Law—in certain cases—had the right and duty to eat of the sacrifices they offered. Of particular interest to us is that class of sacrifices known as the *sin offering*. We find the directions for this offering in Lev. 4 concerning ‘a ruler’ in verse 22 and ‘the common people’ in verse 27. Notice that what exactly a priest was to do varied according to whom it was that had sinned.

In the case of a ruler (Vs. 22) or one of the common people (Vs. 27), a specified animal was to be offered as a sacrifice. The animal was to be slain out in the

courtyard. This courtyard was a large ‘fenced’ area that surrounded a large tent—known as the Tabernacle—erected in the heart of the camp of Israel. Also located in that courtyard was a large, brass altar—much like a very large grill—on which sacrifices were burned as they were offered to God. In this case, the priest was to take of the blood of the animal slain and apply it to the ‘horns’ (i.e. knobs on the corners) of this altar. The remaining blood was to be poured out at the base of the altar. Next, the priest was to take the fat around the inner organs and burn it upon the altar. Lastly, as is made clear by Lev. 6:25-26, the priest that offered the sacrifice, as well as the other priests (Lev. 6:29), were to eat the remainder of the animal:

*“Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD: it is most holy. The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation... All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy.” (Leviticus 6:25-26,29)*

However, if it was a priest (Lev. 4:3) or the entire congregation (Lev. 4:13) who had sinned, things were done differently. In this case, the blood of the sacrifice was first brought within the Tabernacle itself and sprinkled on that veil dividing the tent into its two compartments—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Next, as above, the blood was then to be applied to the horns of the altar, the remainder poured out at its base, and the fat of the inner organs burned on the altar. But this time the entire carcass of the animal is to be taken outside the camp of Israel and completely burned. None of it was to be eaten by the priests.

Here’s the general rule that was to be followed: should the blood be taken within the Tabernacle, the carcass was to be burned outside the camp; but if the blood wasn’t taken within, the sacrifice was to be eaten by the priests (See Lev. 6:29-30). In fact, see a case of Moses being extremely upset when this was not done correctly in Lev. 10:16-20:

*“And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive, saying, Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD? Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy place: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded. And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD? And when Moses heard that, he was content.” (Leviticus 10:16-20)*

Now what in the world does all of this mean?

## Hints

I’ve long contended that those ceremonies prescribed by the Law of Moses testify, in a general way, of the way that atonement for sin is to be made. For instance, see Heb. 9:22 where a conclusion is drawn from these ceremonies that blood shedding is required for the forgiveness of sins: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* However, at the

same time, we find little hints sprinkled here and there throughout the law that this Mosaic system of things cannot actually do the very thing it is illustrating.

One such hint is found in Heb. 10. The endless repetition of sacrifices prescribed by the Law of Moses indicates its inability to actually put away sin. In addition, the fact that on the Day of Atonement the High Priest was required to “remember” the sins of Israel—sins for which sacrifices had already been offered through the year—showed that they were not forgotten!

Our text is yet another such hint. When the blood of an animal sacrifice was actually brought inside the Tabernacle and sprinkled before God, the body of the sacrifice could not be eaten by the priest! That’s the point our writer is making in Heb. 13:11! They have no ‘right’ to eat it, proclaims our text. They can only eat of those ‘external’ sacrifices—those offered out in the courtyard. But when the blood of sacrifice is actually brought into God’s presence, they are forbidden to eat it.

### Ramifications for Us

The conclusion our writer draws from this is found in Heb. 13:10. “We”, i.e. Christians, and we alone, have the right to feed ourselves upon that one sacrifice which actually appears before God and truly takes away sin—namely, the sacrifice of Christ, our Savior. This sheds great light upon that strange teaching of our Lord in John 6:55—that His flesh is truly food, and his blood truly drink, and that those who feed on Him are those who dwell in Him and live by Him. In other words, it’s absolutely essential for us to ‘partake’ of Him, as one would of a meal, by placing our faith in His sacrifice.

However, our text is taking Christ’s teaching in John 6 to its logical conclusion. There are two altars, not one, on which man may feed. One is that brass altar on which earthly priests eat of animal sacrifices and are sustained and nourished purely in an earthly, physical sense. The other altar is that place called Calvary where the True Lamb of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Those who feed at that altar do so spiritually, by faith, not by a physical eating. All who do so receive nourishment that doesn’t merely sustain them temporarily and physically, but conveys eternal life.

Notice the clear insinuation: you can’t be a partaker of both altars! To attend one disqualifies you from the other. This has special significance to those to whom this epistle was first penned. They are evidently Jews who have, at least in some sense, embraced the Gospel, yet who are wavering and being tempted to turn back to the Mosaic system as their hope before God. They want to embrace Christ, but retain their Mosaic hope too! But this can never be.

Why? Because of where Christ suffered! He suffered ‘outside the gate’, ‘without the camp’. His sacrifice, you see, is based on a higher system of things—a heavenly system, with reference to a heavenly Temple, and a heavenly Jerusalem. It’s a system based, not on ‘do this and live’, but upon one’s faith and reliance in the finished work of a Divine Substitute. It’s a system, based not on human merit and the production of flesh, but upon Divine grace and the bestowal of a free gift. To come to Christ means to come out to where He suffered—outside the camp of Judaism—and leave behind all hope in anything else in order to lay hold of and to partake of Him and Him alone!

Perhaps it would be helpful to reference the words of Peter at the Council in Jerusalem. In opposition to those who demanded Gentile converts enter into the system of Moses (Acts 15:5), he replies, “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Not that Gentiles enter into our system, but that we Jews must leave it behind, taking our place as Gentiles outside that system, hoping to be saved, not by the works of the law, but purely by grace! To this may be added the words of Paul in Gal. 5:2, where he declares, “Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised (i.e. with reference to seeking God’s favor by such), Christ shall profit you nothing.” The two systems cannot be mixed or mingled; it’s either one or the other.

Dear reader, what is your hope before God? You may not have ever been under that Mosaic system *per se*. However, if you are not a Christian, I dare say that your thinking is precisely represented by its central and fundamental principle! You think in terms of salvation as based upon the performance of some good thing you’ve done, some meritorious act, some production of your flesh. And whatever such might be, it constitutes your hope and confidence before God, and your ground of boasting before man. I implore you by the authority of God’s Word, come out! Come out of such vain hopes, no matter how highly respectable they might be in the eyes of man. Come out to that place where Christ suffered for sinners. Take your place out there where those who gather have no hope in anything other than a Savior’s work in their place and stead. Come out and partake by faith of the wonderful provision of God in His Son!

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“The sad failure of the great mass of the Jews, under the Gospel-preaching of the apostles, to turn their affections unto things above, where Christ has passed within the veil, and their stubbornness in clinging to the tangible system at Jerusalem, was something more than a peculiarity of that nation—it exemplified the universal fondness of man for that which is *material* in religion, and his disrelish of that which is strictly *spiritual*. In Judaism there was much that was addressed to the sense, herein too lies the power and secret of Rome’s success: the strength of its appeal to the natural man lies in its sensuous show. Though Christians have no visible manifestation of the Divine glory on earth to which they may draw near when they worship, they do have access to the Throne of Grace in Heaven; but it is only the truly regenerate who prefer the substance to the shadow.”

From “Exposition of Hebrews” by Arthur W. Pink

# Annual Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

**Place: New Hope Baptist Church, Mechanicsville, Virginia, a suburb of Richmond.  
(website: [www.sovereigngraceinmechanicsville.org](http://www.sovereigngraceinmechanicsville.org))**

**Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2009**

In an early issue of the *Sovereign Grace Messenger* Holmes Moore, pastor of Bible Baptist Church of St. Louis, Missouri and first Chairman of the SGBF, wrote an article concerning the inaugural meeting of the Fellowship in regard to its beginning on the same day of the tragedy of September 11 (9/11), 2001. The following is an excerpt from that article.

*“September 11, 2001 will long be remembered by all Americans and the entire world as the day that a desperate enemy struck our nation by terrorist attacks against New York City and Washington, D.C., killing multiplied thousands of innocent men, women, and children, destroying the World Trade Center buildings and seriously damaging the Pentagon. These stunningly desperate and evil acts perpetrated against a free and peaceful society caused our nation and the entire world to wonder and deeply grieve.*

*Yet in the midst of this great tragedy, many pastors and other Christians gathered in St. Louis for the purpose of inaugurating the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship. This date had been chosen long before. Throughout the day we received updates of the momentous events taking place in our land and prayer was fervently made throughout the day for our nation and its leaders. However, the purpose set for these meetings was carried out in the conviction that the cause of the everlasting Gospel of the Grace of God was of greater moment even than these pressing national concerns. Certainly a great solemnity permeated all that was said and done. God was pleased greatly to bless the day.”*

As Brother Moore wrote, *“the cause of the everlasting Gospel of the Grace of God was of greater moment even than these pressing national concerns,”* so should it be our constant pressing concern. We all

**“The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship was not formed to advance our own interests but as a means of strengthening one another, challenging one another, and in the bonds of our Lord Jesus Christ, cooperating with one another in the advancement of the saving Gospel of our sovereign God.”**

know about the kind of pressures that demand our attention, our minds, and our time. Those of us who are pastors are often made to wonder, with our varied responsibilities, how we will get it all done and what must take precedence if we must, at least for a time, leave some things undone. Our beloved Apostle Paul, who was sometimes *“pressed out of measure,”* asked the question often in some form on our own minds as well, *“Who is sufficient for these things?”* And we know that the answer to that felt inability, as regards our own strength and resources, is *“No one.”* We know we must have a strength and an ability that transcends our human limitations, and that we can only continue in our appointed course by understanding and realizing the same self-denied and God-ward knowledge as was in Paul: *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our*

*sufficiency is of God.”* And all of this God-given sufficiency is in regard to our *“cause,”* which is also our Lord’s cause, the Gospel of our crucified, risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. There should be no cause greater for us than the glory of God in the Gospel and no pressure stronger from without than that which is within, to use all legitimate means to the advancement of this saving Gospel.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship was not formed to advance our own interests but as a means of strengthening one another, challenging one another, and in the bonds of our Lord Jesus Christ, cooperating with one another in the advancement of the saving Gospel of our sovereign God. We have many brethren, scattered all over the world, most of whom have never heard of this Fellowship. The churches that are part of this Fellowship support missionaries who faithfully take the Gospel to foreign lands, who are not members of this Fellowship. There are a vast number of churches, faithful to the Gospel of the grace of God, for whom we pray but have never seen nor they us. But we are convinced that God moved, in His sovereign providence, to open this particular door and that our joint desire to support and cooperate with one another, if indeed for the glory of God and the cause of His Gospel, is for us a seeking first of His kingdom and righteousness.

There are some of you who probably feel somewhat isolated in your particular field of service and, yes, warfare. Many of us who now have the blessing of being connected together in the great *“cause”* of our Lord and His Gospel were once in the same position.

Consider coming to Mechanicsville, Virginia, a suburb of Richmond, and finding out what this Fellowship is all about. We are still small, still struggling,

still seeking our Lord for His direction and provision for this endeavor. But we are doing so together. And it is no small encouragement to know, as Peter wrote, that in your labor and warfare, *“the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”* We welcome your interest and desire your presence.

For some of you, the trip to Virginia will be a long one. But the last time the annual meeting was held here, in 2003, we were greatly encouraged by the attendance. Some came from as far away as Oklahoma. And if you come from the west, you will be driving through some incredibly beautiful country. Maybe on your way back you could take a little time on Skyline Drive in Virginia, to admire the handiwork of God in the majestic mountains and beauty of the Shenandoah Valley.

If you could take a little break while here, after the meeting, there are all kinds of sights with some of the richest history in our nation. So what I wrote for the

*Messenger* for the last meeting at New Hope Baptist Church of Mechanicsville, Virginia holds the same now. “If you can do so, you may want to take a few days in this area. If you are a history buff you’ll find one of the richest areas in America to learn of the seeds of the founding of this great nation. The church building where Patrick Henry made his famous ‘Give me liberty, or give me death’ speech still stands in Richmond and is open to the public. Later, when Richmond became the Confederate Capitol, Jefferson Davis lived in what is now called ‘The White House of the Confederacy.’ It still stands in downtown Richmond, with a Confederate museum behind it, and is open to the public. The battlefields around Richmond are open and some of the most significant are near our church building. Our building is in Mechanicsville, which is a suburb of Richmond, right in the place where some of the most significant fighting took place, “The Seven Days Battle.” Washington, D.C., the nation’s Capitol, is only about 90 miles to our north. Charlottesville and the home of Thomas Jefferson (near the

Walton’s home too!), ‘Monticello,’ is about 60 miles to our west. Colonial Williamsburg is just to our east. Norfolk, home of the largest naval base in the world, and also Hampton Roads, which is the largest natural harbor in the world, is only about 70 miles to our east.” Other interests could easily be added, like Yorktown, Jamestown, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, etc.

But the most important place to be will be New Hope Baptist Church on Tuesday, September 8, 2009. We are looking forward to your visit for fellowship in the Gospel, the ministry of the Word by some of God’s choice servants, and the important business of this year’s meeting. The church is greatly anticipating being your host once again.

**Ron Staley, 2009 host pastor**



**Information concerning the Annual Meeting and Sovereign Grace Bible Conference in conjunction with it, on page 24**

## **Purpose of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship**

From the “CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS”

“To establish and maintain a Fellowship of Baptist pastors and churches which believe that salvation rests ultimately in the sovereign grace of God; to provide a medium for fellowship and mutual encouragement so that such pastors and churches may be edified in love and grace; to cooperate together in the carrying out of the Great Commission in those areas that cannot well be accomplished alone, namely world missions, church planting, and the education of aspiring, God-called ministers; and to assist one another in the maintenance and promotion of sound biblical doctrine and practice in ways deemed necessary and right in the honest light of Holy Scripture.”

## **Information Available Concerning the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship**

You may obtain a brochure containing the “Articles of Faith” and “Constitution and By-Laws” of the SGBF by writing to the editor of the SGM at the address below or contacting any of the officers of the Fellowship listed on page 3.

**The Sovereign Grace Messenger**  
c/o Ron Staley, editor  
New Hope Baptist Church  
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Mechanicsville, VA 23111

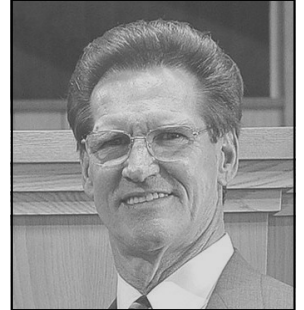
# Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God

are inseparable when it is understood that God chose the method of preaching “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” the grace that is God’s sovereign prerogative to bestow, as the means by which He would save those chosen to salvation in Christ. Lloyd Sprinkle and Tom Henry were given seven identical questions on this subject. We trust that the answers will be instructive and challenging to those who have hearts to obey, by faith, the command to preach the gospel in the knowledge of absolute divine sovereignty. **Editor**

**Lloyd Sprinkle** is pastor of Providence Baptist Church of Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is, as well, a much used speaker and offers reprinted theological books from Sprinkle Publications.



**Tom Henry** is the very active assistant pastor of Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri. He is an apt and careful expositor of the Word of God and, as such, is used extensively in Bible Conference ministry.



## Q. How important is a right understanding of the sovereignty of God to the revelation of the gospel of grace?

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** “*Salvation is of the Lord.*” (Jonah 2:9) If God is to be distinguished from the gods of the heathen nations, He must be absolutely sovereign in creation, providence, and redemptive grace. The sinner is spiritually dead and needs a spiritual resurrection, and only a sovereign God can give that life to the soul by the grace of his Spirit. “*And you hath he quickened (spiritually made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” (Eph.2:1) “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved.)*” (Eph. 2:4-5)

**A. (Tom Henry)** Let me say first, I do not believe that one must rightly understand the sovereignty of God in order to savingly believe the gospel as it is revealed to us in Scripture. Most believers, it is likely, gave little thought to the matter prior to their conversion. However, that said, we must understand that basic to the gospel and its revelation is the absolute sovereignty of God. What, after all, is the gospel revelation? Is it not the publication of those gracious provisions proffered to us according to God’s own plan of redemption, known as the eternal covenant of grace? That blessed covenant of which God the Father is the Author, God the Son is the Surety, and God the Holy Spirit is the Executor, is from all eternity “*ordered in all things and sure.*” Since “*the secret things belong unto the Lord, and (only) those things that are revealed belong to us,*” we are not able to peer into the secret counsel of eternity past so as to understand all that transpired between the Persons of the Godhead respecting this Divine plan. Nevertheless, out of those secret chambers came the blessed covenant of grace which is indeed “*revealed*” to us in the gospel. It is not a secret, but a plainly revealed fact, that God from before all worlds, chose for Himself a people out of a race not yet created. It is no secret that, according to the terms of this covenant, God would provide for their redemption through the sacrifice of His Son, who would take their nature, and become their Surety. (Rev. 13:8) Neither is it a secret, but a truth plainly set forth in the gospel, that the Holy Spirit shall, through the ministry of the Word, effectually bring every one of God’s covenant people to salvation.

All of this is a matter of gospel revelation without which there would have been no “*good news*” to reveal.

Now, regarding the importance of understanding God’s sovereignty in relationship to the revelation of the gospel, we will simply let that revelation speak for itself.

The greatest gospel treatise ever written is the book of Romans. The Roman Epistle is introduced by its author as a revelation of “*the gospel of God...concerning His Son.*” (Ch. 1: 1, 3) Once having established that man lacks essential righteousness, and that lacking is universal (Ch. 1-3), the Apostle goes on to show that it is only through gospel faith that men shall ever attain unto righteousness (Ch. 4); be justified (Ch. 5); have sanctification (Ch. 6); be delivered from bondage (Ch. 7); be free from condemnation (Ch. 8). Please pardon this very abbreviated synopsis. My purpose is to bring us to Paul’s powerful proclamation of the believer’s gospel hope, which he sets forth in the latter part of the eighth chapter. (Verses 16-39) If you will turn to Romans chapter 8, and examine this passage, you will notice that the Apostle fixes this sure hope firmly in God’s eternal and sovereign purpose of grace.

Who are these for whom there is **now no condemnation**? How did they come to obtain such a blessed standing and glorious hope? Paul explains that they were foreknown of God, predestinated, called, justified, and in the purpose of God, glorified. Thus, Paul in his great gospel treatise would make known that the gospel revelation had its foundation in the eternal covenant of grace. He therefore reasoned, as did Christ Himself, that all gospel success is owing to the same covenant of grace. (See John 6: 35-45) Were it not for the fact that God teaches and draws those whom He, in covenant, gave to the Son, and for whom, according to that covenant, Christ died, none would come at all. But of those given to the Son to redeem, none shall be lost (Vs. 39), “*for they shall ALL (without exception) be taught of God.*” (Vs. 45; emphasis mine)

The smaller treatise, the book of Ephesians unlike the Roman Epistle, **begins** with the call to eulogize God for all of the great covenant blessings which those who were chosen in Christ receive in Him. Regarding the author’s object, Charles Hodge in his



commentary on Ephesians writes, “His object was to bring to a just appreciation of the plan of redemption as a scheme devised from eternity by God, for the manifestation of the glory of His grace.” In order for this objective to be accomplished, it is necessary for us to rightly understand that the sovereignty of God is the very foundation of the plan of redemption.

One needs only to read the opening verses of the Ephesian letter to realize that the great gospel blessings which we receive in Christ are all covenant blessings, belonging to and bestowed upon those who were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1: 3-11) Repeatedly, in these verses, the Apostle reminds us that we only have these marvelous blessings according to God’s sovereign will and pleasure. (Vs. 5, 9, 11)

It must therefore be of great importance for us to acknowledge and appreciate the sovereignty of God with respect to the revelation of the gospel of grace. Failure in this regard would inevitably result in robbing God of the glory due Him as the “*author and finisher of our faith.*”

**Q. Does a right belief in the absolute sovereignty of God hinder or encourage evangelism and witness?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** The sovereignty of God is an encouragement to Biblical evangelism. The true believer and or faithful minister can rest in the promise of John 6:37: “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in now wise cast out.*”

**A. (Tom Henry)** Believing, as I do, in the absolute sovereignty of God, and holding, as I do, to the doctrines of God’s sovereign grace has occasioned many unsolicited expressions of concern from well-meaning people about perceived dangers connected to such belief. I expect that some of you reading this have had similar experiences. One alleged danger of which we are often warned is that, as they put it, “Calvinism kills evangelism.” How many times this alarm was sounded during our days at Bible College, and countless times since? By this, our concerned critics mean that if God has an elect people whom He gave to the Son in covenant to redeem, and that they alone have been predestinated to salvation, then it inevitably follows that there would cease to be any compelling incentive to take the gospel to a lost and dying world, since the outcome had already been unalterably determined.

All of these siren voices notwithstanding, the whole of church history from apostolic times until now speaks something quite the opposite. Those who have ever been most zealous for souls and passionate for world evangelism have also been firm believers in God’s absolute sovereignty. If our missionary zeal is lacking let us bear the blame and the shame, but let none charge our sin to the blessed truths of God’s sovereign grace.

Who was more abundant in labors than Paul? (I Cor. 15:10) Yet, was he not also foremost in declaring God’s absolute sovereignty? And who gave stronger emphasis to God’s sovereignty with respect to the success of the gospel than he? Yet believing, as he surely did, that God had elected a people for salvation, and that they were **sure** to be saved, he also believed that they **must** be saved, and that, only by the Gospel. According to his own statement, it was “*for the elects sake*” that he labored and suffered and endured all kinds of hardships. It was “*that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.*” (II Tim. 2:10) That text strikes a double

blow. It puts the lie to the allegation that belief in unconditional election kills the evangelistic spirit. It also shoots down the theory that election and salvation are essentially the same thing. The elect are sure to be saved, but they must be saved, and it is only by the gospel that they shall be saved.

The story of the church is replete with the names of those who were sound in theology, yet were of like passion and zeal with Paul. It was John Knox who said, “Give me Scotland or I die.” William Carey was named for good reason “The father of modern missions.” Time and space would not allow us to mention every Whitfield, Edwards, Spurgeon;...the list goes on and on.

With the historic record speaking as it does in clear contradiction of the false charges, a pertinent question is thus raised. What these objectors are unwittingly saying is that if they believed as we do, it would take away their incentives to evangelize. A legitimate question then would be, What **does** motivate them to evangelize? Clearly, Paul and the other examples we have mentioned were compelled by a desire for God’s glory in the establishing of Christ’s Kingdom. Nothing so glorifies God as that which is “*to the praise of the glory of His grace.*”

Subjectively, nothing should be a greater encouragement to evangelize than to believe in God’s unfailing purpose of grace. To borrow an example from Mr. Spurgeon, which of these two scenarios would give more incentive for one to dig in the earth? Would you be more inclined to dig if you just hoped you might per chance find a diamond down there? Or, would you be more likely to dig if you knew with absolute certainty that there were diamonds beneath your feet. The answer should be obvious. What motivated Paul to continue an additional 18 months at Corinth? Was it not that the Lord assured him that He had many elect souls in that city whom he must reach with the gospel? (Acts 18:9-11)

If we truly believe the spiritual condition of sinners is what the Bible says it is, we must conclude that the only hope we have that any shall be saved lies in the absolute sovereignty of God. “*Son of man, can these bones live?... O Lord God thou knowest.*” (See Ezek. 37:1-10)

**Q. If results belong to God, how far should we go in the endeavor to bring people to faith, repentance and confession of Christ?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** God uses means to accomplish His redemptive purposes. Every lawful means such as preaching, praying, witnessing is allowable, but we should never use pragmatic methods to get decisions. The sovereign work of the Holy Spirit must not be hindered by fleshly means. “*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things spoken by Paul.*” (Acts 16:14)

**A. (Tom Henry)** It is needful to give a two part answer to this question. The first part pertains to the lengths to which we might go in our efforts to win the lost.

The second part pertains to the appeal that is made and how it must be governed by the gospel.

How far might seekers of souls go to reach them for Christ?

- a. Drastic measures are sometimes necessary. Jesus admired and honored the faith of four individuals who carried their helpless friend (We know not how far) on a stretcher. Because of the crowd they were forced to break up the roof of their neighbor's house in order to bring him to where Jesus was. (Mark 2: 3-5)
- b. Great humility and self denial are needful. Paul could say, *"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* (I Cor. 9:22) Granted, some would wrest this text in order to justify their unbiblical means and methods, but clearly, Paul is simply explaining his earlier statement: *"I made myself servant to all that I might gain the more."* (Vs. 19)
- c. Many have endured untold suffering and loss for the sake of lost souls. The chief sufferer is of course Christ Himself, whose example is alone sufficient (I John 3:16; Heb. 13: 12, 13) However, countless others, because of their great love for souls, have willingly followed in His footsteps. How many might, with the apostle say, *"I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus."* (II Tim. 2:10)
- d. Some have risked life and limb in order to witness Christ even to those who sought their life. We see the great Apostle at Jerusalem under the protection of a Roman guard, pleading with a violent Jewish mob, not for his life, but for sake of their souls. (Acts 21, 22)
- e. The soul winner must on occasion be bold to press the sinner respecting his sin and its consequences. Felix the governor was noticeably shaken as Paul *"reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come."* (Acts 24: 24, 25) Felix trembled, but as far as we know, Paul's witness was not effectual.
- f. Mighty persuasion is appropriate when trying to convince the lost to believe the gospel. King Agrippa may have spoken in sarcasm when he said, *"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."* Whether he spoke sincerely or in mockery, one thing is certain, Paul's purpose and aim was to persuade him and all in attendance to believe on Christ. (Acts 26: 27-29) See him there before this great man, opening the Scriptures, and making it personal—*"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."* (Verse 27)
- g. Let us labor long and hard when necessary in order to convince our hearers. When Paul was brought to Rome as a prisoner, many Jewish leaders came to hear, as *"he expounded and testified the Kingdom, persuading concerning Jesus... from morning till night."* (Acts 28:23) We are told that *"some believed...and some believed not."* (Verse 24) Results belong to God, it is true, but Paul did all in his power to **persuade them all** concerning Jesus, that He was indeed Messiah.

#### How far does the gospel allow us to go in appealing to lost sinners?

With respect to our efforts in seeking the lost, we are virtually unrestricted. Let us therefore be willing to do whatever is necessary. However, inherent in the gospel itself are certain governing principles which would disallow much of what is being done today in the name of soul winning. In every example mentioned above, there was no method of persuasion used apart from the Scriptures themselves. *"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."* (Luke 16:31) *"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?"* (Acts 26:27) Neither was there any press for a decision. Even trembling Felix, though under great conviction,

was not asked to say a prayer, nor was he manipulated in any way. Results belong to God.

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles (Matt. 10), He instructed them how to discern who was *worthy* and who was *not worthy*. The point is clear. If the gospel is rejected on gospel terms, we have no other resource but to withdraw. We are not at liberty to change the terms upon which sinners are accepted. The question is not whether or not the sinner will "accept Jesus," but **will God accept him**. God alone determines upon what grounds He will do so.

When Abraham's servant Eleazar was sent to find a bride for Isaac, he went with full authority to negotiate for his master. He was not, however, at liberty to offer any sort of compromise. (Gen. 24: 7-9) If the woman would not leave her home and homeland, her family and her all, in order to come to Isaac in Canaan, Eleazar was clear of the oath that he swore. But, under no circumstances were the terms of the deal to be altered.

So it is with us. We, too, are sent on a mission to seek a bride for our sovereign Master's Son. We too go with all authority to speak for our Lord as His ambassadors.

(II Cor. 5:20) We **beseech** men to come, but we must demand of them what the gospel requires—that they leave all in order to follow Christ. (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 14: 26, 27; John 12:25, 26) When we are asked by a seeker *"What must I do to be saved?"* We have a ready answer (Acts 2: 37, 38; 16:30, 31).

We must always remember that it is ours to be faithful to the gospel and leave the results with God. If we are faithful witnesses, whether men receive us or reject us, in either case, we are pleasing to God. Whether our witness is a *savor of death unto death* or of *life unto life*, **"We are unto God a sweet savour."** (See II Cor. 2: 14-17)

#### **Q. How essential is our walk with Christ and the example of our life to our verbal witness?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** Words easily roll off our lips, but usually it is the example of our daily living that gives our words real meaning and power: *"Only let your conversation (behavior consistent with heavenly citizenship) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."* (Phil. 1:27) Like Peter and John, others must take knowledge that we have been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

**A. (Tom Henry)** One's personal sanctification is of the utmost importance with respect to his verbal witness. This I believe to be so for three reasons.

The first reason has to do with **spiritual fitness**. God has put His *treasure* in *earthen vessels*, but it is not reasonable to believe that He would use unholy instruments to witness a holy-making Gospel. He requires that they be *"vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."* (II Tim. 2:21)

The second reason has to do with **proper motivation**. Who not submitted to Christ, and not walking in fellowship with Him, and not seeking first and foremost His Kingdom and righteousness,

could possibly have right motivation for doing Kingdom work? In doing God's work, the **WHY** is always as important as the **WHAT**. God's aim in the Gospel is not primarily to keep sinners out of hell, or to get them to heaven, but rather to **make them holy**. If we truly represent Him, our aim must be the same.

The third reason has to do with **true witness**. Someone has said in order to **give** a testimony one must first **have** a testimony to give. Sadly, many seemingly want to witness for Christ who have no witness of Christ in their lives. They are trying to bear witness to something of which they are not themselves witnesses in any true and experimental sense. The expression, "Actions speak louder than words" is never more true than when it comes to personal evangelism. The sad reality, in this respect, is that *kind produces in kind*, and the results we are seeing speak for themselves.

An unholy person in his verbal witness will do one of two things, neither of which is good or acceptable. Either he will present a false gospel which agrees with his own experience, or he may give a true Gospel witness, and expose himself for the hypocrite that he is. Either way, **HE** is a false witness.

If one would be a faithful witness of the Gospel, he must first *practice what he preaches*; then he will be able to *preach what he practices*.

#### **Q. How do we discern the leading of the Holy Spirit and His power in evangelism and gospel witness?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who inspired the Word of Truth, the Bible. He wields the sword of the Word. (Eph. 6:17) The Scriptures being the infallible Word of God, therefore the revealed will of God for life and ministry, must be obeyed in all its requirements to discern His mind and will: "*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*" (John 7:17)

**A. (Tom Henry)** I may not be the best person to try and answer this question. Some folks, unlike myself, seem never to be at a loss in this area. Whatever they either have done or intend to do, they are quick to attribute to the Lord's leading. I think the Holy Spirit often gets blamed for things with which He had nothing to do.

However, respecting evangelism, since we are in the world to bear witness for Christ, we should see every opportunity to do so as the Holy Spirit's providential working. If I am *randomly* seated next to a stranger on an airplane, I must assume that in God's purpose it was not random at all, but rather by divine arrangement. If a family moves into your neighborhood, should you not think it your duty to witness the gospel to them? If you do not, who will?

Beyond the fact that the field is the world, and every creature a prospect (Mark 16:15), and every opportunity is by design, there are also those times when it is clear that "*a door and effectual is opened to is.*" At other times the *door* seems to have been *closed*. We, like Paul, at such times must discern the Spirit's leading as He *suffers us not* or as He *suffers us*. In any case, essential always in knowing the mind of the Lord are the Word of God and prayer. These keep our spiritual senses keen and sharp to discern spiritual impressions, and to sense when the *Divine Wind is blowing*, so to speak, or to *hear the going in the tops of the mulberry trees*.

As to sensing the power of God upon our witness, I suppose it is

often *better felt than told*. We can sense when His favorable presence is with us. We can also observe the effect of our witness upon those to whom we witness. Do they hear with interest? Do they receive the Word? (Acts 2:41) Are they antagonistic? Do we sense that we are *casting our pearls before swine*? Should we *shake the dust from off our feet*? (Matt. 10:14) These are questions the answers to which indicate how the Holy Spirit is working, and we must then act accordingly.

#### **Q. What are the dangers of substituting humanly devised methods for Biblical methods in evangelism?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** The danger is, that we fill our churches with those who have head knowledge of Christ and the gospel but there is no saving union with our Lord's Christ and thus they apostatize from the faith never to be renewed again to repentance. "*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*" (Heb. 6:1-6)

**A. (Tom Henry)** This has been a matter of great and growing concern among Sovereign Grace people for many years. Over thirty-five years ago Evangelist R.E. (Dusty) Rhoades addressed this issue in a small booklet entitled **Methodology and Revival**. This was back when, with respect to humanistic methods in evangelism, **we hadn't seen nothin' yet**. Nevertheless he wrote: "Because of the complete breakdown in the Theology in the pulpit of America, it naturally follows there will be a collapse of the methods used...if men can be reached for Christ by some means other than the Holy Spirit, than all means used today must be right. If on the other hand, men are not reached except the Holy Spirit draw them, then we must conclude the methods today are wrong...it boils down to either **METHODS** or **THE HOLY SPIRIT**." He goes on to identify the basic problem as the belief that man's will is free to act as an agent in the greatest of all transactions...that of *passing from death unto life*. Therefore, it matters not what method, gimmick or sales pitch is used to activate *man's free will*. Of course the absurdity should be immediately obvious.

To those who engage in humanistic methodology, "the end justifies the means" is more than just a by-word. But, just what is the "end"...they would justify? Herein lies the problem. Professions of faith obtained by methods other than the Holy Spirit's mighty quickening work will inevitably come to nothing. Whatever is produced, be sure it is **not regeneration**, which is the work of God's Spirit alone. (John 6: 44, 45: I Peter 1: 22, 23)

The use of unbiblical methods in evangelism is fraught with dangers, not the least of which is that of giving people false hope. Regardless of how many aisles are walked, prayers repeated or decisions made, Jesus said emphatically, "*Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God;*" and again, "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.*" (John 3:3, 5b) The dangers do not, however, *end* with the individual. Churches are being filled with unregenerate people. This situation creates a whole set of problems of its own. For instance, how do you keep folks who have no true heart interest in God's Word and things holy? The answer...look around ... observe with utter amazement what evangelistic churches

*continued next page*

are willing to do in order to keep what they have, and to reach more like them. Each seems to be trying to outdo the other in order to have the greatest, the largest, the most exciting church around.

Worse than any of these dangers is that these methods and their results are dishonoring to Christ and the Gospel. It uses **deceptive means** to spread a **perverted message** to produce **spurious results**. Thus, it presents to the world a cheap counterfeit Christian religion...a nominal Christianity, the kind of which Jesus said, *"Thou has a name that thou livest, and art dead."*

#### **Q. Could you give Scriptural examples of Spirit-led evangelism and witness with practical application?**

**A. (Lloyd Sprinkle)** The inspired historian reports of Peter and John: *"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."* (Acts 3:1-8) This miracle opened the door of opportunity to preach the gospel to a great number of people.

Paul at Philippi (Acts 16:12-15) shows us that following the leading of the Spirit may bring us suffering as well as fruit: *"And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."* This led to a conflict with powers of darkness, then being jailed for preaching salvation in Christ alone, which, in turn, led to another soul, the very jailer, being snatched from the powers of darkness (Acts 16:25-34).

Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch: (read Acts 8:26-39). Philip was enjoying a very successful ministry before he was sent into the desert to preach Jesus unto the eunuch. One soul is as important to God as the masses. This should keep the servant of God humbly seeking to be used wherever God pleases to use him.

**A. (Tom Henry)** Many examples of Holy Spirit led evangelism are seen in the Book of Acts. I have chosen two of these which seem to stand out as being of particular significance.

One obvious example is found in chapter 16. It was clearly by the Holy Spirit's intervention and deliberate direction that Paul and company were brought to Philippi. (Acts 16: 6-12) Having thus brought them there, the Holy Spirit, now in a manner not so dramatic and demonstrative, but indeed more ordinary, moved

them to seek out a place of worship on the Sabbath day. It was according to His leading that they came upon a group of devout women who had met for worship. As they were given opportunity to speak the Gospel, the Holy Spirit used it to open the heart of Lydia, making her the first European convert, and a very useful servant of Christ and His Church at Philippi. When the Holy Spirit so leads and opens doors of witness to us, we must seize upon such opportunities to present the Gospel.

Our second example is found in Acts the eighth chapter. Philip, being led by the Holy Spirit, left the amazing revival that was taking place in Samaria, of which he had been the main instrument, and went down to the Judean desert. It was there that he would meet up with a certain Ethiopian eunuch who was making his way home from Jerusalem, where he had attended the feast. The story speaks for itself. (Acts 8:26-38) The Holy Spirit had already gone before Philip in this mission, having already stirred the eunuch's heart. Philip found the man sitting in his chariot reading from what in our Bible is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, desiring to know of whom the Prophet was speaking. Philip, from that passage preached unto him Jesus. We see in Romans 10:13-17 where Paul references that same portion of Scripture, what happened here. The Spirit sent Philip to preach the Gospel to this man. He then by that Gospel brought faith to the man's heart.

Philip is not only an example in his discerning and submitting to the voice of the Spirit, but in the thoroughness of his witness. The duty to confess Christ in water baptism was obviously made known to the eunuch. The man asked, *"What doth hinder me to be baptized?"* (Acts 8:36) He may have already been made aware of this ordinance back in Jerusalem, but doubtless from Philip also. Much of today's evangelism ignores the duty of baptism altogether.

Let us be as careful as Philip was about this important matter. First, let us teach the duty of baptism, but second, let us not press one to be baptized until we have assurance that he is indeed a believer. Philip responded to his eager convert, *"If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest."* (Vs. 37) We can be pretty certain that one's faith is real when, like this eunuch, he thinks it a privilege to confess Christ in believer's baptism. *"What doth hinder me..."* Philip did not say *"thou must,"* but *"thou mayest."*



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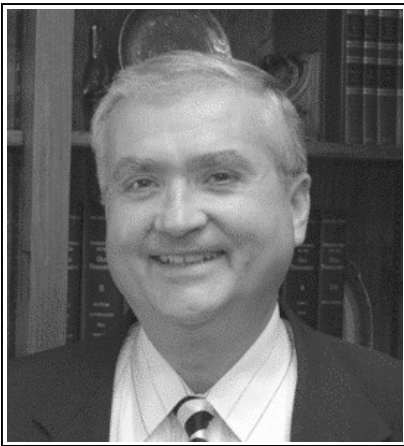
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# It Happened at Church

Greg Barkman



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that offers them the biggest return on their investment, and consumer Christians search for the best bargains. In consumer goods, the best bargain is the one that gives you the most product for your money, and in churches, the best bargain is the one that offers you the best experience at the least cost. Cost in church relationships usually boils down to how much is expected in return for your participation. In the market-driven philosophy, virtually no commitment is required, because expectations of commitment might cause some to stay away. After all, there's always another church that offers a similar product with no demands, so why pay a higher price for the services this church offers?

**“Formerly, churches were intent in teaching people Bible doctrine, the more the better. Churches used to believe that their main responsibility was to produce a congregation of knowledgeable, well-taught believers. Not any more.”**

This consumer attitude is seen in the way many Christians regularly hop from church to church, seldom settling down, and frequently moving to sample what different churches have to offer. Have you noticed that when a new, highly advertised restaurant comes to town, many can't wait to be the first one to try it? Have you noticed how similar that is to a new church, sometimes even franchised from a “successful” ministry elsewhere in the country, and how many Christians rush to try out this new experience? Not many would equate their actions with a consumer mentality, but that's what it is. Sadly, that's exactly what the church-growth, market-driven philosophy has encouraged. When the Bible says we reap what we sow, it isn't kidding!

A serious approach to doctrine is another casualty to modern trends. Formerly, churches were intent in teaching people Bible doctrine, the more the better. Churches used to believe that their main responsibility was to produce a congregation of knowledgeable, well-taught believers. Not any more. Now, people can attend church for years, and still know next to nothing about the Bible. Recent polls have documented the astonishing ignorance of Evangelical Christians regarding the simplest doctrines, including the Gospel itself. The majority of modern Christians cannot even give a coherent answer to the question, “What is the Gospel?” This has also been demonstrated in the way people move from church to church, often running the gamut theologically from one extreme to another, seeming to recognize no difference in teaching. Of course, if the church is doing little teaching, there won't be much difference to recognize, will there? Even where some level of doctrine is taught, many Christians apparently pass it off as of little importance. What's really important, it seems, is not what is taught, but how much do I enjoy the experience? Christianity in many cases, is no longer a system of doctrine to be believed, but an experience to be, well, experienced, and a warm, positive feeling to be shared. Has it come to that? So it would appear.

It's no wonder then, after several decades of churches themselves encouraging people to develop no commitment to Bible doctrine, nor to any particular local congregation, that now, “Christians” have decided that they really don't need church after all. If I can get my “needs” met some other way, why attend church? If learning the Bible, and deepening my understanding of sound doctrine is not important, why attend church? If I can enjoy a satisfactory religious experience watching TV, or plugging into the internet, or in some other way, why not choose that option?

Maybe the old-fashioned, Bible saturated way of “doing church” wasn't such a bad idea after all. I wonder if it's too late?



Reprinted by permission from *The Beacon Beam*, a monthly publication of Beacon Baptist Church.

It's finally happening. Church attendance in America, as a percentage of the population, has declined significantly, according to recent polls. That has been the case in Europe for decades, but America remained resilient to this disturbing trend in Western civilization. The United States, it seemed, was still a religious and mostly “Christian” nation, but now the situation points in a different direction. Liberal, mainline denominations have been in decline for years, but Evangelical churches have enjoyed uninterrupted growth for decades, evoking self-congratulations for being alert to people's “felt needs”, and being successful in molding and shaping “church” to appeal to an ever larger segment of America's population. Now, “success” formulas seem to be less effective, and although there are high profile ministries that are still growing, the general trend manifests decline. All this in spite of the huge emphasis upon “church growth” techniques and new churches, each committed to pursuing a slightly different success formula, springing up on every corner. What's wrong?

The current decline follows several decades of rapid change in the way most Evangelicals “do church.” Apparently, the seeker-friendly, market driven philosophies produced short-term gain, but long-term loss. Treating church like a product to be “sold” to consumers has encouraged a shift in the way people view their relationship with churches. More often than not, there is no more commitment to church than there is to a particular grocery store or fast food restaurant. People “shop” for the church

# The Power of God to Salvation\*

Conrad Murrell

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)*

The meaning of this passage has never been more crucial than it is today. For that matter, it has never been any less vital in any other day. But in these days when all the weight is put on methodology, psychology, and training, sophistry is the watchword. We must be competent, we are told, to reach man in the peculiar environment of a post-modern world. Churches, programs, education, preaching, of past days will not produce results in today’s climate as it did in the past. Nor is there a single “one fits all” approach that will do for all churches, all cultures, all modes and stations of people. The means and message for adults will not do for children. Children must have their own “church” that speaks to them in children’s language. Churches serving areas populated by intellectuals must have a scholar for a pastor. A laboring class of people, on the other hand, will only respond to a gospel couched in the idiom used by one of their own.

All of this is wonderfully debunked by a profound remark made by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones in January 1945 at a Theological Student’s Conference organized by Intervarsity Fellowship, held at Cambridge University, and hosted by Lloyd-Jones. The only other main speaker was former Marxist D. R. Davis, whose book, “On To Orthodoxy”, published six years later had been widely hailed as the prophetic word for the day. Lloyd-Jones, however, had reservations about the thoroughness of Davis’ conversion, and proceeded to question his fellow Welshman following his addresses on ‘The Church and Civilization’. The result was an unscheduled lively debate that lasted an hour and half. The substance of that debate was over

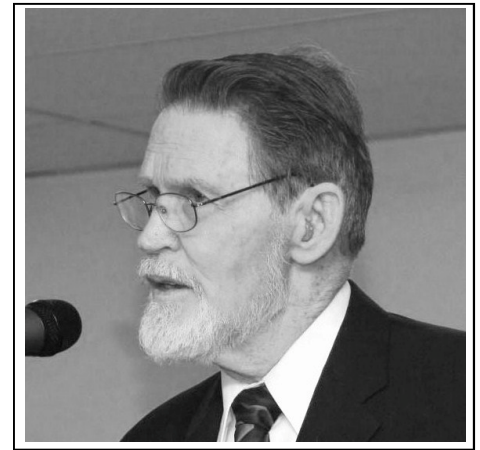
presentation of the Christian message in the modern context. Davis was arguing that if intellectual socialists such as Harold Laski were to be converted they must be met on their own ground by men able to discuss politics and social affairs.

Lloyd-Jones was saying the exact opposite. He pointed out how D. L. Moody had appealed to the aristocracy in Britain more than the common people, and that the scholarly John Wesley was more successful with miners than he was among the students at Oxford. Lloyd-Jones argued that Harold Laski was more likely to be converted by a Salvation Army speaker than by D. R. Davis. Then this:

“Psychologically, people do not like to be proved that they are wrong, and more than that, generally, if people become Christians, they capitulate completely. In their conversion there is an emotional element rather than an intellectual one: in other words, they stop ‘reasoning’, surrender and abandon themselves to Christ”.<sup>1</sup>

Why this remark should be thought profound is a monumental comment on how little we believe the holy Scriptures, for the Bible is filled with this truth. Men are not converted by sophisticated arguments through logical reasonings in minds able to lay hold of the profundities of philosophy, but by the power of God in the Holy Spirit. Matt. 11:25-27; 13: 10-17. John 6:44; 12:32; 16:7-14. Acts 1:8. I Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-5, 4:19-20, I Thess 1:5.

<sup>1</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, “The Fight of Faith,” by Iain Murray, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1990, p. 127.



Conrad Murrell is pastor of Grace Church, Bentley, Louisiana and founder of Grace and Truth Camps held three times a year in Bentley

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Consider the wisdom of God in I Cor. 1:21: *“For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”.*

- It strips the wise, the intelligencia, the superiorly educated and trained, of their perceived advantage and superiority, and brings them down to the same level of all men. They are equally incompetent to either believe or communicate redemptive truth.
- It reveals the fraud perpetuated by this present contemporary religious world in its mad clamor after the writings, teachings and “ministries” of psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and other worldly-trained gurus who arrogate to themselves exclusive claim to the keys of the kingdom. This is not to say that all those engaged in these ministries are intentionally fraudulent, and that they cannot be preachers of the gospel. We only assert that the spiritual advantage of their training in these fields is zero.
- The Th.D., the theologically trained preacher, has zero advantage over the God-called day laborer when it comes to effectiveness in evangelism, the preaching of the gospel and

conversion of sinners. In not a few cases, such poorly educated, but Spirit anointed ministers, have a far richer diet of spiritual truth to feed their flocks than the downtown First Church, Ph. D.

- The pleasant melodious voice, the deep resonant one, booming with intimidating authority, the winsome, disarming personality... any and all such natural gifts... count for nothing when it comes to communicating spiritual truth.
- It wipes out any intellectual obstacle to the sinner's understanding, low I.Q., lack of education, or childhood. God reveals His truth to "babes". This is why there is no such thing as "age of accountability". John the Baptist responded to the gospel in his mother's womb!
- It betrays the invalidity of the practice of fragmenting families and church congregations into various groups, sorted according to age, sex, education, or social status, ostensibly, to provide a teaching and environment more compatible with their capacity to understand and learn. We all learn and receive the things of God by His Spirit or not at all!
- It removes any advantage, disadvantage or barrier inherent in

a tribe's language to receive salvation's message. There is no human language better or poorer suited by which to communicate the word of God and inculcate faith. A people's idiom or culture is not the key to their receiving the word of salvation. It is the power of the Holy Spirit Who helps us pray when we do not have a clue to what we ought to say or pray. How much more will He help us preach and communicate the meaning of what we preach in terms of the Spirit that will resonate in the sinner's heart!

- It also shows up the impotence of apologetics in evangelism. Creation Science has slight, if any, validity in persuading men that God is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him. Preachers ought not waste their audience's time trying to disprove the silly claims of evolution. God confessors do not need it and God-deniers will only be angered. Apologetics may have marginal value in helping the more intellectual among genuine believers be more comfortable with their faith, but it has no power to persuade the unregenerate.

I think, however, the most profitably instructive benefit of this truth is the encouragement it ought give us all in the matter of personal witnessing.

John told us that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus affirmed that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon His disciples, and that we would be witnesses unto Him. He did not command us to witness, or to do witnessing, certainly not "learn how". He said we would BE witnesses. Make no mistake about it, Christian friend: if you are Christ's you *are* a witness. Forget about what kind of argument or reasoning or persuasive words you are going to use to "win" that man or woman or child to Christ. He is not going to be converted by your argument. If you tear down his philosophy, show him to be wrong, make him appear to be the fool he is you will have succeeded only in making him angry. Nor should you be intimidated by the fact you are not able to argue him down. It is not the power of your argument that will persuade him, but the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us be of the same mind with the Apostle Paul who requests: "*(Pray)... for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel...that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*" (Eph. 6:19-20)

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*\*Since the readership of the Sovereign Grace Messenger has increased significantly over the past years, and considering the importance of this message, it is here reprinted from an earlier issue of the publication.*

# Sovereign Grace Bible Conference

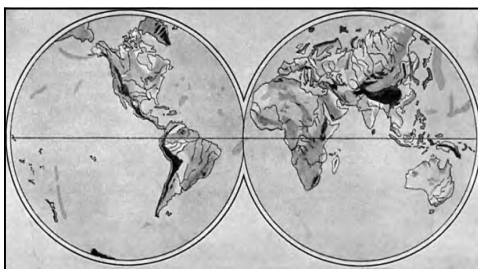
October 26-30, 2009

Grace Baptist Church, West Milton, Pennsylvania

*Grace Baptist Church of West Milton, Pennsylvania, and Pastor David King invite you to attend the annual Fall Conference. The dates are October 26-30, 2009. There will be morning and evening sessions and an afternoon meal at a local restaurant, provided by the Church. Eight different speakers are on the schedule this year.*

For further information, contact Pastor King. Phone: (570) 742-8915, Fax: (570) 742-0770

# World Missions:



# Contact Information

## Sovereign Grace Missionaries on the Subject of Evangelism

Larry Dean, pastor of Bridgetown Baptist Church of Nesbit, Mississippi and Missions Editor for *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, conducted the following interview. Pastor Dean wrote: "I took the opportunity of this issue to question several Sovereign Grace missionaries on the subject of evangelism. I posed to them five questions on the subject and acquired their permission to publish their answers."

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Daniel Parks

### 1. Do you have any general comments concerning governing principles of evangelism?

**Brian Ellis – longtime missionary to the Phillipines** - "Not really. We are trying to get a balance in the church as some have often felt we over-emphasize evangelism. At the same time we believe strongly that we must use all means to bring the gospel to unbelievers. That is much easier to do in the Phillipines I would think than in the USA. We believe that the Lord has commanded us to preach the gospel and to bring the gospel by all means to the people."

**Richard Denham - longtime missionary to Brazil** - "The governing principle which should drive evangelism is the clear command of our Lord to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The good news of salvation through the redemptive work of Christ must be proclaimed loud and clear to all. It is to be proclaimed with the confidence that the Holy Spirit will apply the Word of God to His elect to call them from darkness to light."

**Prem Waghmare - missionary to India** - (from phone interview,

not verbatim - Ed.) "We believe in the Lord's assurance 'I will make you fishers of men.' We seek to walk with the Lord and make ourselves available to Him for the work of the gospel. We take advantage of all the opportunities that God opens to us. For example, just this last week a man came to our home to a Bible Study from among the Charismatics (which are numerous here in India). We taught him concerning the issues of grace in the gospel and he was quite open to the teachings."

**Daniel Parks - recently returned to the West Indies** - "The governing principle for me is the Great Commission given by the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to His chosen ministers (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19f): 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ... make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ....'"

### 2. What 'methods' are you currently employing?

**Richard Denham** - "We are currently sharing the Gospel with our neighbors, our doctor and our dentist through personal testimony



and literature. Our office manager, a trained lawyer, was won to the Lord as a boy. A number of the leaders in our local church were won through personal evangelism. A recent edition of our magazine *Faith for Today*, that is mailed out free to more than 20,000 pastors, contained articles on the vital importance of the new birth. Many of the 150 plus books that we have published over the past fifty years, books that are being distributed in Brazil, Portugal, Angola and Mozambique, have an evangelistic message.”

**Brian Ellis -**

“- Tracting

- Open-air preaching once a month

- Drop-in-centre feeding program for the homeless. We open our meeting place and invite such people who come once a week, Thursday evening. We play games, sometimes show a film, different activities. Then we feed them and then someone will preach for about 20-30 minutes. We usually have about 100 present. This Lord's Day, June 7, Joseph who was such will be baptized, the Lord willing. Jose and Cheche were also contacted in this way and are now members with us. Much disappointment but many come regularly. We believe several others are converted but difficult work due to them having so many problems.

- Evangelistic Bible Studies. We usually have over 10 being held regularly each week with contacts.

- Young Peoples' meetings.

- Camps especially designed as evangelistic. For street people, for those from the slums etc.

- Preaching evangelistically, and constantly addressing unbelievers who are present in our services.”

**Daniel Parks -** “I am endeavoring to follow the methodology of gospel missionaries Barnabas and Paul as recorded in Acts 14:21-23: 1. They ‘preached the gospel’ (14:21); 2 They ‘made many disciples’ (14:21); 3. They were ‘strengthening the souls of the disciples’ (14:22a); 4. They were ‘exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’ (14:22b); 5. They ‘appointed elders in every church’ (14:23a); 6. They ‘commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed’ (14:23b).”

**Prem Waghmare -** “We visit the surrounding villages and hold open air meetings. We minister ‘one on one’ to those who come to us with interest in the gospel. We hold Bible study meetings in our home for adults and children. The children’s meetings are often much like VBS meetings in the states, using visual aids and Bible stories to teach them. God also provides providential circumstances to introduce the gospel. For example, we have recently been falsely accused of being in a traffic accident. As God has directed the attorney that we retained has expressed much interest in the gospel and we are evangelizing him.”

### **3. Are there any particular challenges or unique issues concerning evangelism where you are?**

**Richard Denham -** “The health and prosperity gospel has spread rapidly over the past twenty years in the Portuguese speaking countries of the world causing much misunderstanding in the church as to the nature of regeneration. The pure Gospel, which holds to the imperative of repentance toward God and faith in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, has become increasingly neglected. Even in reformed circles there has too often been an

emphasis on mere head knowledge which does not result in holiness of life without which no man shall see the Lord.”

**Brian Ellis -** “Major problem because this is a Roman Catholic country in that everyone thinks they are a Christian and have no real need because they have been christened etc. All that Rome promises.”

**Daniel Parks -** “I can presently think of none worthy of emphasizing.”

**Prem Waghmare -** “We must be careful as we deal with new converts. Some of them are persecuted by their families, cast out of their homes. The caste system here also presents difficulties. Young women who become converts are a particular problem because they are considered to be ‘property,’ whose marriages are frequently arranged by their parents without their consent. Potential husbands sometimes reject them if they have become Christians. The state in which we reside does not see a lot of active and violent persecution but the nearby state, where we often travel to minister, frequently sees violence against Christian preachers, teachers and converts. While there, we must be very careful because of the danger.”

### **4. Have you had any recent successes or hindrances in evangelization in your area?**

**Richard Denham -** “Today we consider our area of ministry to be the Portuguese-speaking areas of the world. Through our publications, 24 yearly conferences in Brazil, nine yearly conferences in Portugal and ten yearly conferences in Mozambique we have had the joy of seeing healthy growth in the lives of hundreds of pastors. We are reaping the fruit of a project which has placed a book a month in the lives of 545 pastors and helped them to attend our conferences. We have more than 200 pastors that are on the waiting list to be included in the project as soon as God raises up sponsors who will provide the \$30 a month a month to provide this service. It has been our joy to see many of these pastors catch the vision of biblical evangelism in their setting.”

**Brian Ellis -** “We have had several recently been baptized. We do not see large numbers but of our membership which is almost 120, 25 have come to faith we believe through the witness of the church. We long to see more particularly among our children. Just the last two months two of our young people have professed conversion and we hope to see them baptized and in membership shortly.”

**Daniel Parks -** “We were recently blessed by our Lord to commence a weekly radio program, by which means we pray He will enable us to broadcast His gospel to an audience we otherwise might not have. We also were recently blessed to commence printing gospel tracts, which are being distributed to the public. I personally have been blessed to witness the Lord strengthening and encouraging His disciples through the preaching of His gospel, and through their many acts of kindness to me.”

**Prem Waghmare -** “We have seen much internal growth among the believers here, growing in the midst of hardships, struggles and cultural difficulties. The brethren that labor with me continue to faithfully proclaim the Word of God. As referenced already, we have begun new relationships brought to us by the providence of God. The current problem for which we acquired the assistance of the attorney we mentioned is preventing us from a planned return trip to the USA until the matter is resolved. This could be done quickly or may take months. The legal system here is very different from that of the States.”

## 5. How would you have our readers pray for you in regard to your labors?

**Richard Denham** - "Pray that the Holy Spirit may use the literature and the conferences for the edification of the church. Pray that the Lord may see fit to use the vast amount of material that we are placing on the internet. When my son Rick came by and saw that I was writing to you, he sent you an email showing one of the projects that we are developing for our audience.

Let me share with you a quote from a letter received this week from a pastor who is in the Adopt a Pastor Project. 'My wife was greatly blessed with the book *The Excellent Wife*, and just now I am reading *Pilgrims Progress* and preparing a study using John Calvin's *Pastoral Epistles*. The church where I am pastor has benefited also from the ministry of FIEL. Some of the brethren have actively participated in the conferences. And we are anxious to attend the next conference in October, God willing.'

We ask your prayers for His guidance and strength as we labor in our 82nd year with the handicap of Parkinson's Disease. We have had the privilege of serving our Lord for 57 years in this land.

Check out our English web site at <http://www.EditoraFIEL.com>"

**Brian Ellis** - "Continue to pray that we may be faithful in preaching the gospel. Also that many more may be saved particularly our young people. We have contact with probably 40 or 50 teens through CCM (Ed. - Christian Compassion Ministries)."

**Daniel Parks** - "'Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication ... for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel' (Ephesians 6:18f). 'Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving ... for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak' (Colossians 4:2-4). 'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith' (2 Thessalonians 3:1f)."

**Prem Waghmare** - "Pray for us concerning the current legal problem. Pray for spiritual growth among the believers here that they may grow and become firmly rooted in the Word. Pray for the new Christians who are growing and yielding themselves more and more to the Lord."

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## Prayer and Contact Information for Other Missionaries

<p>Information on the work in Papua, New Guinea, <b>REMOVED FOR SECURITY REASONS.</b> Information is obtainable by contacting the editor of this publication..</p>	<p><u>Victor and Bethany Maxson in Malawi</u> Faith Baptist Tabernacle, PO Drawer A, Williston, FL 32696 Email: <a href="mailto:victorwmaxson@gmail.com">victorwmaxson@gmail.com</a></p>
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# Changed Positions

Vicki Johnson



Vicki Johnson is a member of Grace Baptist Church of Madison, Alabama and has written numerous articles on the lives of missionaries.

While attending Andover Theological Seminary, Adoniram Judson read the biography of Christian Schwartz, a German missionary who ministered in India for four decades. Inspired by the book, Judson resolved to spend his life spreading the gospel in the East.

At that time, all American missionary efforts were within the continent. No American missionary had yet gone to a foreign field. Judson determined to be the first and, with the assistance of seminary friends, he established The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

On February 19, 1812, only two weeks after their wedding, Adoniram and Ann Judson set sail for India backed by the newly formed board. During the long voyage Adoniram worked on a translation of the New Testament. The meaning of the word baptize troubled him, and he initiated a detailed study of the subject. The more Judson studied, the more doubtful he became of his position favoring Paedobaptism.

Adoniram Judson left Salem, Massachusetts a Congregationalist but arrived in India a Baptist. In a letter to the Third Congregational Church in Plymouth, Massachusetts (pastored by his father), Judson explained the change in his understanding regarding baptism.

The following excerpts are taken directly from this letter as printed in *Christian Baptism* by Adoniram Judson (Laurel, MS: Audubon Press, 2000) pp. 100 – 112.

*“Dearlly Beloved In Our Common Lord...*

*You will readily believe me, when I say, that on leaving my country, I little imagined, that I should ever become a Baptist. I had not indeed candidly examined the subject of baptism; but I had strong prejudices against the sect, that is every where spoken against.*

*It was on board the vessel, in prospect of my future life among the heathen, that I was led to investigate this important subject...I felt that I should have no hesitation concerning my duty to the converts, it being plainly commanded in scripture, that such are to be baptized, and received into church fellowship. But how, thought I, am I to treat the unconverted children and domestics of converts?*

*In a word, I could not find a single intimation, in the New Testament, that the children and domestics of believers were members of the church, or entitled to any church ordinance, in consequence of the profession of the head of their family. Everything discountenanced this idea. When baptism was spoken of, it was always in connection with believing. None but believers were commanded to be baptized; and it did not appear to my mind that others were baptized.*

*Here, then, appeared a striking difference between the Abrahamic, and the Christian systems. The one recognized the membership of the children, domestics and remote descendants of professors, and tended directly to the establishment of a national religion. The other appeared to be a selective system, acknowledging none, as members of the church, but such as gave credible evidence of believing in Christ.*

*This led me to suspect, that these two systems, so evidently different, could not be one and the same. And now the light began to dawn. The more I read, and the more I meditated on the subject, the more clearly it appeared to me, that all my errors and difficulties had originated in confounding these two systems.*

*At length, I adopted the following sentiments, concerning the two churches, and the concern which we have, at present, with the old dispensation. The Abrahamic church was preparatory to, and typical of, the Christian...*

*When the Messiah appeared, this preparatory and typical system, having answered its end, was destined to cease; and the Lord Jesus set up his kingdom on earth, the gospel church, composed of such only as repent and believe, or rather give credible evidence of these gracious exercises.*

*I cannot describe to you, dear brethren, the light and satisfaction, which I obtained, in taking this view of the matter, in considering the two churches distinct, and in classing my ideas of each in their proper place.*

*But while I obtained light and satisfaction on one side, I was plunged in difficulty and distress on the other. If, thought I, this system is the true one, if the Christian church is not a continuation of the Jewish, if the covenant of circumcision is not precisely the covenant in which Christians now stand, the whole foundation of Paedobaptism is gone..."*

Adoniram knew the cost of changing his position on baptism would be high – he would lose all support from the Congregational Church – but he could not ignore what he believed Scripture plainly revealed. Ann Judson wrote in a letter to a friend, “My dear Nancy, we are confirmed Baptists, not because we wished to be, but because truth compelled us to be.”

On September 6, 1812 Adoniram Judson and his wife were baptized, by immersion, in the church presently called Carey Baptist Church in Calcutta, India.



Adoniram Judson  
(1788-1850)

# Evangelizing Our Children

Kyle White

*"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:13-14*



Kyle White is pastor of Community Baptist Church of Elmendorf, Texas.  
website: [www.cbweb.net](http://www.cbweb.net).

All parents who love the Lord have a burden that the children God blesses them with also come to know that same love. We struggle with leading our inquiring children into a profession of faith at a young age, fearing that when they are older they might not continue in that profession. We have seen this work out all too often. It has affected us.

We understand that God is sovereign in the salvation of sinners. He not only is able to overpower the most stubborn, He also is the One who chooses upon whom and when to exercise that power. Our concern is to know when that power is being exercised in the lives of our children. Is it when they first show an interest in Jesus Christ? Is it when they first express great fear of the consequences of sin – hell? Is it when they have demonstrated a desire for the Bible and for hearing the preaching? Just when is it that we can be assured that our children are responding to the genuine work of the Spirit in their lives? When do we really accept their profession of faith as a genuine work of God?

This is a burden shared by all parents who possess an understanding of God's sovereign grace, yet do not embrace the teaching that our children are guaranteed a

place in the Kingdom because they are children of believing parents. Often children of "Calvinistic" parents press their children very little, if at all, with the claims of Christ on their lives out of fear of manufacturing a "false" profession. It is a real concern. It is a legitimate possibility. Yet Jesus did say, "*suffer the little children to come unto me.*" We certainly don't want to say or do anything that would dissuade our children from coming to Jesus Christ. Our desire is that they would come to Him because of what they see in HIM, not because of the advantage they think they might get from Him. This is true for adults as well.

Confusion is probably a good word to describe the thinking of many of our children. Sometimes there is an early profession of faith and baptism that is questioned by parents who see little fruit in their child. The child may struggle with an increasing lack of interest in the things of God, yet remembering an earlier profession and baptism he hangs on to his profession. Since we know that God does save children, there may be a season in which both child and parents wrestle with the reality of an earlier profession.

Of course, it is difficult to know for sure with our children, especially with those children who are very submissive and desiring to be in good favor with Dad and Mom. That is not a bad thing for a child. We long for that. But there is a difference between a conforming child and one that has seen that even his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Jesus Christ is really only a historical figure that is known to them by way of education until they come to see themselves as sinners - not just in the "bad" things they do, but even in their attempts at "good" things. Everything about us is tainted by our sinful nature, so that God looks upon us and sees no good thing.

As our children see this (really see this), they are then affected to seek salvation in Jesus Christ by trusting only in Him - not

their own performance (prayer, church going, obedience to parents, reading the Bible, etc.). It will no longer be, "I must do good so that Daddy and Mommy (and preacher) will believe I am saved..." Their liberated heart will be rejoicing in Christ and there will be clear evidence that the inward working of their thinking and affection has been changed by the invasion of the Spirit, not the manipulation of confusing emotions.

Where the trouble lies for us is that we often communicate to our children and young people that they are "rotten to the core" and that "there is nothing good in you" and that "everything you do and touch is tainted", etc.. All of that is true! Yet we fail to emphasize to them that they are still responsible to obey God and to live a morally correct life. They cannot excuse themselves by saying, "if I'm as rotten as I'm told, I might as well live it out." In fact, we need to emphasize to them that the moral life of an unbeliever is a life that is blessed above the immoral life of an unbeliever. What they need to know is that living a moral life will never gain them entrance into the presence of our thrice-holy God.

So then, with the Apostle Paul, they must come to see that even those righteous and moral things that they have done and will do are of no value in the end apart from Jesus Christ. We must press them to see that apart from Jesus Christ there is no righteousness before God (Philippians 3:1-10; Romans 3:19-31).

The struggle for Christian families is the tension between raising Pharisees and raising "hellions". The former group looks good on the outside, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones. The latter group looks rotten on the outside as their conduct matches what is on the inside. The former is easier to deal with as parents; the latter causes much grief. God nowhere encourages the acting out of the dead men's bones. In fact, Jesus said, "do as they say,

but not as they do." God warns "sons" against bringing grief and shame to parents (Proverbs). This is where much of the tension lies in parenting.

My encouragement is to speak the whole truth to your child. If he is afraid of going to hell - good! He ought to be! I don't know that any godly parent has not heard such fear expressed from their child at some point (usually by 8 or 9 years old in our case). Don't discourage your child from coming to Christ. Yet, do not pronounce him saved.

Along the way as a pastor parents will come to me with their children who have expressed that they believe they are saved. I have told them something like, "follow what Christ is saying to you as you read His word. If you are one of His sheep, you will hear His voice as you read the Scriptures. Let's make sure that your heart is a new heart, like the good soil that Jesus talked about that brings forth fruit." We know that there are 4 soils, only one of which bears fruit. We know that our children **may** fit two of the soils that represent hearers of the word that respond

immediately, but in time fall away. I think we need to let them know about these possibilities so that they might examine their hearts to consider what kind of soil they really are.

In the end, we cannot save our children. I ask my children regularly, "why don't you believe? Why do you turn away from the call of the gospel to repent and believe?" They may be able to give a theological answer, but I want them to consider this command of God to which they are being rebellious. I do not want my children growing up passing their unbelief off upon the sovereignty of God and thereby finding some comfort in their sinful choices. After all is said and done, they are responsible before God to take Him at His word and respond. We must press them with this responsibility.

But we must also back off and wait upon the Spirit of God to do what we know He alone can and must do. Our burdened child will have peace and joy when the Spirit of the living God awakens him to the worth and beauty of Jesus Christ. One of the sure ways to know that our child is saved is by

the peace, joy and righteousness that is produced in his life. This is the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17).

I'm sure this article doesn't answer all the questions in your mind. I'm certain that there will always be tension in us regarding the issue of evangelizing our children. I encourage you to continue to press your child toward a serious consideration of the worthiness of God to be worshipped above everything else and the awfulness of sin that separates us from that worship. Continue to let him know that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the only one who can take away the sin that keeps him from glorifying God and really finding joy in Him.



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Greta Dean, wife of Pastor Larry Dean, has kept us informed, via email, of many needs and prayer requests of pastors and their wives who are going through a special time of trial. We have, thus, followed the Butler's severe trial. After a long physical struggle, the Lord saw fit to take Brother David Butler home on July 7, 2009. We do thank Greta for her concern and diligence in keeping us informed. - **Editor**

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## **Fitting Tribute to a Faithful Servant of Christ: The Memorial Service for Pastor David Butler**

*"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21)

"David made it home!" So began Kathy Butler's e-mail on Tuesday, July 7, 2009. Her dear husband of thirty-two years – Dave Butler, pastor of Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Summit, Arkansas – had gone home to be with the Lord. As Kathy wrote in her article in the last issue of the *Sovereign Grace Messenger*, Dave had suffered from a serious heart condition for many years and deteriorating health as of late. But through it all, Brother Dave was a clear testimony of perseverance and strength in times of weakness.

Pastor David Butler was a loving father and grandfather, a faithful friend and brother in Christ, a diligent teacher and beloved pastor. He truly believed "home" was to be in the presence of the Lord, and he looked towards that Home.

David also believed *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"* as was brought out at his packed Memorial Service held in the church he pastored since 1992. Pastor Larry Vincent of Heritage Baptist Church in Mansfield, Texas spoke from Habakkuk on the

role of faith in afflictions. Pastor Tom Henry of Bible Baptist Church in St. Louis, Missouri spoke of the glory of David's home-going. Pastor Gary Long of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Springfield, Missouri spoke from Romans 13:17 and honored David for his faithful life and service. It was an encouraging service with wonderful congregational singing of David's favorite hymns.

The Butler family appreciates the outpouring of prayers and concern for David and the rest of the family during this very difficult time. Please continue to pray for Kathy and the family in their time of loss. Also, pray for the church family and for Ryan Butler in particular, as he now takes up the role of pastor of Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. This church has long been a supporter of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Youth Camp held in Conway, Missouri and is also a member of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.

**From Greta Dean**



# I'm About to Lose It!

(Excerpt from the book, "Reflections on Childhood Diabetes")

Mary Silverberg

Every summer we pack the van, load up the kids, and head north to Wisconsin for a Bible conference held at a wilderness camp on a beautiful, pristine lake. Blessings abound from the evening services, and with friends from far and near, the days are full of fun: morning activities for the kids, swim time, sailing, kayaking, and canoeing. Then there's volleyball, tennis, hiking, and more, and let's not forget chow time and singing at the dining hall. The Saturday night talent show and bonfire are always a highlight of the week. It's a sweet time of fellowship for the children *and* adults; a haven of joy and peace.

Once we pull out of the driveway, I can relax, but *packing* to get this gang on the road is another story! Sleeping bags, flashlights, towels, Frisbees, toiletries, first aid supplies (you can bet we're going to need them), clothes, shoes—all for eight would be enough to make any woman's head swim. Then, throw diabetes into the equation, and I think I'm headed for a nervous breakdown!

That very thing almost happened one year. You might think packing diabetic supplies would be a simple matter of making sure you had enough, and remembering everything. Certainly, that is important. However, my two oldest sons choose to disconnect from their pumps for the week. With all the swimming, they have a tough time keeping their infusion sites stable, and with all the boating they do, the thought of a \$5,000 insulin pump sinking to the bottom of the lake does nothing for my nerves. So, this means returning to injections for the week, which is no big deal as long as we can afford insulin (Humalog) pens. Insurance labels these as a luxury item. Well, when your three boys suffer patiently, day in and day out, with this disease, I figure it's the least we can do for them. Then of course we also need Lantus and syringes, among other things. In other words, I need to make sure I get all the

necessary prescriptions from our doctor and have them filled before we leave.

I thought starting a week before our departure would give me plenty of time. *Not!* It seemed like everything went wrong. The doctor's office accidentally gave me two of the same prescriptions and omitted another. Just counting papers, I didn't catch it until I went to the pharmacy, the second time. The first time they didn't have what I needed in stock, and it took another day for the order to be filled. Then, realizing that I was missing something, the pharmacy called the doctor's office to get the missing script. I said I'd be back the next day. I came and went, and then was good, or so I thought.

What I didn't realize was that the needles came separately from the insulin pens. I didn't have a script for the needles, and it hadn't occurred to the pharmacy to call the doctor or tell me. I had the insulin pens in my possession, but no needles to attach to them. So, no big deal, another day, and I had the needles. *Okay, I've got all my diabetic supplies for the trip, I thought again. Not!*



Camp Nicolet, sponsored each August by Northwoods Baptist Church of Rhinelander, Wisconsin

We were leaving very early Monday morning, and Saturday I realized that I had just enough insulin to make it through the week for my youngest son, *but what if I'm wrong? What if he gets sick, and needs more insulin than usual? What if for some reason we are delayed, and don't make it*

*home as scheduled, or I drop a bottle and it breaks (it's been known to happen)? Easy, I'll just call the pharmacy, they're open Saturdays, and get another bottle. You won't guess this, so I'll tell you. It was too early to refill the prescription, and the insurance company wouldn't authorize it. I couldn't refill it for three more days, and we were leaving in two. Fine, I'll just pay for it, but they won't let me, because I don't have any more refills, and my doctor's office is closed.*

Warning! Danger! Stand back! Woman in emotional crisis! I was on the edge of losing it. All week I had been packing for camp, making sure everyone had enough underwear, trying to remember stuff like suntan lotion, laundry detergent, quarters, extra batteries, finding someone to take care of the dogs and the mail, etc., all in addition to regular events like cooking and cleaning. Now, I had to come up with a creative way to get more insulin. *I just can't handle this. Normal people don't have all this trouble. Why does this have to be so difficult?* It felt like a heavy cloud of oppression had slowly floated in and whelmed me in its darkness. *This is too much. It's too hard. I can't do this.* I could feel the tears welling in my eyes.

Then a still, small, voice brought to remembrance a sermon about a man who struggled through trial after trial, and through it all, he gave thanks and praise to God for his goodness. The Lord provided for all his needs, and in his time eased his burdens.

Mine was not a grateful heart, nor was I rejoicing in God's mercy. I was murmuring and complaining.

A thought from my childhood pierced my conscience. On cold or rainy Saturday afternoons I would watch movies on our black and white television in the basement with my brothers. They liked action movies. I liked Elvis flicks. I usually got out-voted, unless there was nothing else on.



Mary Silverberg is the mother of six children, three of whom have Juvenile Diabetes. Her book chronicles her emotional struggles and triumphs with the disease, and offers practical help in diabetic care.

In the old movies, women didn't do much fighting. It's not like today with *Charlie's Angels* and *Kill Bill*. Back then, women just stood by and watched as the good guys slugged it out with the bad guys. When it appeared that the bad guys were winning, and the good guys were taking an awful beating, I would yell to the women on the TV, "Do something! Break that lamp over his head!" but they just cowered in the corner. It drove me crazy. *I would never do that. I would be right in there with the good guys, fighting to save the day.*

Now, it occurred to me that I was in a spiritual battle. Forces of evil were at hand. The powers of darkness were on the move. Was it possible that an enemy was right behind me, whispering thoughts of discontent in my ear? Could there actually be, right now, a company of demons casting fiery darts of despair into my heart?

Are there present at this very moment angels of mercy battling on my behalf? And if so, what was I doing? I'll tell you: cowering in the corner, wallowing in my tears, just like those fretful females so long ago whom I had despised so much!

*Do something!* I cried to myself. *Don't just stand there! Put on the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation! Take up the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17).

*Oh dear, sweet Jesus,* I prayed. *Thank you for my precious children. Thank you that we live in a time when insulin is available to keep the boys alive. Thank you that I didn't have to watch them, one by one, die a slow and painful death. Thank you for our wonderful doctor, bless him and his family. Thank you for my husband. Thank you that he loves us and takes care of us. Lord bless him, and help him. Oh, most holy and heavenly Father, I thank thee that we can take this vacation. It is such a joy. Bless Northwoods Baptist Church.* (They sponsor the camp.) *Thank you for insurance to pay for all these medical supplies. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name"* (Psalm 103:1).

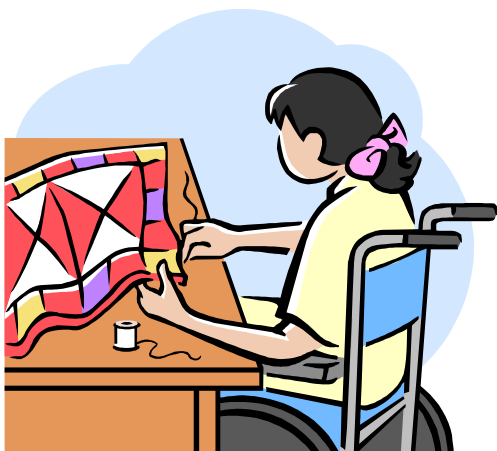
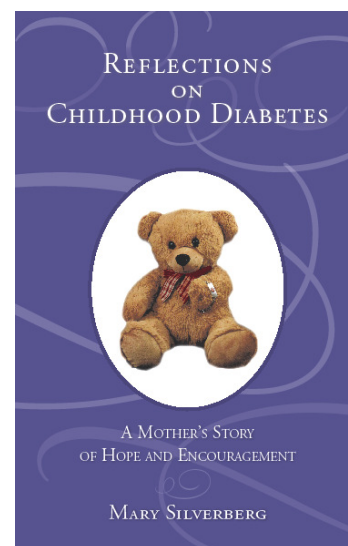
The Bible verse in James 4:7 came to mind: "...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." I tried to recall and recite scripture, and when I ran out, I sang hymns, even if I could only remember the chorus or one or two lines.

Slowly, I was encouraged. Faintly, I began to rejoice. I felt the dark cloud which had settled upon me lift and drift away. Then I saw it shatter in a million pieces and disappear from sight.

I was now on cloud nine, praising the Lord for his many mercies. Like Mary I prayed, "...*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*" (Luke 1:46-47). I was so happy and thankful to God my Redeemer for his kindness and goodness to me and my family. I was euphoric. I'm not sure what it means to be filled with the Spirit, but I think that was it.

In the end, my pharmacist helped me get the insulin, and I didn't even have to pay for it. I managed to finish the packing, and we all had a wonderful time at camp.

Ever since then, I have given myself two weeks to get all of my diabetic supplies in order for vacation, and often when I'm tempted to complain about this disease or I become discouraged, I think back to that day, and start thanking and praising God for his blessings.



## The Quilt Project

The Quilt Project was begun under the leadership of ..... to help Indonesian women who confessed faith in Christ and as a result lost the support of their Muslim families. They make high quality quilts, such as would sell at much higher prices in the U.S. If you are looking for a high quality quilt, this would be a way to help support these converts as well as obtain a fine hand-crafted quilt.

Information on quilt designs, sizes and prices may be obtained by contacting Jeannie Henry in St. Louis, Missouri at (636) 677-6241 or emailing her at [bbcinstl@aol.com](mailto:bbcinstl@aol.com).

# Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship



## Annual Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

**Tuesday, September 8, 2009**

**Host: New Hope Baptist Church, 5452 Spotslee Circle, Mechanicsville, VA**

**Accommodations and Information:** A block of rooms has been reserved for Monday and Tuesday, September 7 & 8 at Sleep Inn, 950 East Parham Road in Richmond, Virginia. To receive a great rate of \$59.00 + tax per night, mention "SGBF" when calling. Reservations must be made before August 10, 2009. Free deluxe continental breakfast and free high speed internet. Motel phone: (804) 515-7800, or toll free (866) 515-7800.

**Meals Provided by the Church:** In the fellowship hall for all who attend, at 12:00 noon and at 5:30 PM.

Further Information Available: (804) 321-2110 or email: [ronstaley1@verizon.net](mailto:ronstaley1@verizon.net) (See Article, page 6)

### Schedule

#### 10:00 AM Morning Worship

**Pastor Gary Long**  
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church  
Springfield, Missouri

**Pastor Larry Dean**  
Bridgetown Baptist Church  
Nesbit, Mississippi



Gary Long



Larry Dean

#### 2:00 PM Business and Reports

(Ladies' fellowship during time of business session)

#### 7:00 PM Evening Worship

**Pastor Lloyd Sprinkle**  
Providence Baptist Church  
Harrisonburg, Virginia



Lloyd Sprinkle

Check out the SGBF website: [www.sovereigngracebaptistfellowship.org](http://www.sovereigngracebaptistfellowship.org)

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c/o Ron Staley, editor  
New Hope Baptist Church  
5452 Spotslee Circle  
Mechanicsville, VA 23111  
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