

# The Sovereign Grace Messenger

*A Publication Of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship*

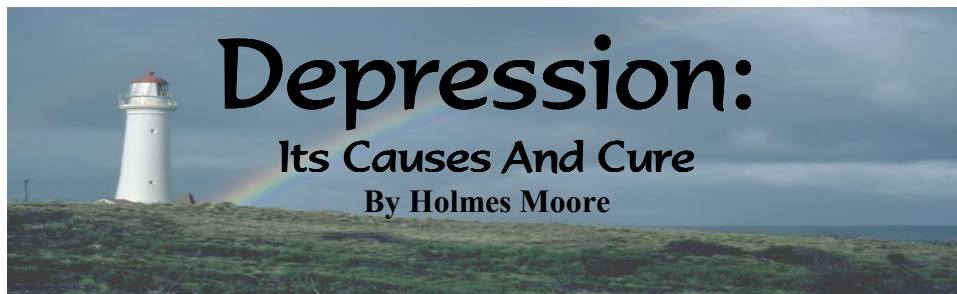
**“THE LORD HATH PREPARED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS;  
AND HIS KINGDOM RULETH OVER ALL.”**

Psalm 103:19

Issue 18

Summer 2007

**Editor’s Note:** Due to Pastor Holmes Moore’s continuing physical afflictions, it was with some reluctance that he was asked to write the following article. But He who gives the assurance, “*My grace is sufficient for thee.*” faithfully enabled him. Pastor Moore’s words of personal experience are included herein by request. Here is a message anticipated by many and needed by all.



## Depression:

**Its Causes And Cure**

By Holmes Moore

*“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” I Samuel 30:6*

With all the trials, struggles, disappointments, and reverses that are an inevitable part of life, we should not be surprised that even the best of men have their periods of discouragement. The Bible warns us not to boast of tomorrow since we do not know what a day, a night, or even a part of a day may bring forth (**Prov. 27:1**). When David and his men had left their temporary home, Ziklag, so shortly before, all was well. Upon their return a few days later, they found utter desolation! The Amalekites, taking advantage of their absence, had swept in from the south and sacked the village. At this moment, for all that David and his men knew, their loved ones were all dead. At such times it is possible, even for a gracious soul, to slip from discouragement into the ‘pit’ of deep despair! The old divines called this state “melancholy;” modern psychologists refer to it as “depression.” Whatever its name, this state of mind is one with which the Christian will have to contend, some more than others. Our text marks the low point of David’s early life, and by it we can trace deep depression – its causes and its cure.

**“Whatever its name, this state of mind is one with which the Christian will have to contend, some more than others.”**

### **Deep Depression May Be Traced To Many And Various Causes**

Using David’s life and experiences as our case study, we see that **depression may result from the deferment of our hopes and ambitions.** Twelve years or more before, Samuel had anointed David as king. Being led of God, the old prophet passed by all the older sons of Jesse and finally came to pour the holy anointing oil upon the head of a young, ruddy-faced

shepherd boy. Following this momentous event, Providence seemed, at first, to be paving David’s way to the throne. Shortly afterwards, David was called to the court of the king and there became Saul’s harpist and armour-bearer. It was during this same period that David distinguished himself for his faith, courage, and prowess as a warrior by slaying the mighty Goliath, the champion of the Philistines. On the basis of this great deed, David was made captain of the host, and experienced many other military victories for which he was celebrated in the hearts and songs of the people. It seemed that the stage was all set for the prophecy of David’s becoming king to be fulfilled. How thrilled and expectant the heart of young David must have been! Then suddenly, after all these promising events, everything seemed to become a series of strange reverses! If David had entertained hopes of a speedy ascent to the throne, those hopes had to be deferred, making his heart sad.

**Depression may arise from prolonged mental and physical strain.** Because of

the insane jealousy of King Saul, David was forced to be parted from his family, friends, and very home. He was made to live as a fugitive in the wilderness, hiding in caves from the wrath of the monarch he had so faithfully served. Under an unjust sentence of death, he was pursued and hunted like a wild animal. We can only imagine what terrible physical strain all this put on David! While we are in a mortal state, the condition of the body strangely affects the circumstances of our soul, the two being inextricably tied together. This should alert anyone reading this who is experiencing a prolonged illness. Sickness, in and of itself, does not help the spiritual state. Unless the grace of God over-rides the circumstances, sickness makes every spiritual exercise more difficult. When we are ill, we desperately need to be kept from depression!



Holmes Moore

Holmes Moore is the pastor of Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri. It is largely through his vision and instrumentality that the Lord brought The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship into existence.

**Depression often accompanies bereavement and loss.** The raid that the Amalekites made on Ziklag was noted before. David and his men, at this point, did not know the fate of their loved ones. For all they knew, their families might now be dead at the hands of their enemies, or at best, be reduced to a state of slavery. They did know, as they stared upon the smoldering ruins of what had been hearth and home, they had lost their houses and possessions. Their bitter grief is described in our text. When we have experienced a serious loss, such as the death of a loved one, the forfeiture of property, or the loss of a job, we are likely subjects for deep depression.

**Depression may occur when all ordinary means seem to have failed.** When our spirits begin to sag, often we are kept back from depression through the resource of inner faith and courage. By using the “*shield of faith*,” we are able to quench the “*fiery darts of the wicked*.” How often does God send a friend our way to give us some much-needed word of encouragement! Sometimes, just when we think that all is hopeless, our circumstances suddenly change for the better, and we are delivered from deep depression.

How sad when, as in David’s situation here, God, for His own reasons, denies us these ordinary means of grace! David’s inner courage was lacking, for he was “*greatly distressed*.” On other occasions, David had been heartened by the friendship of Jonathan and cheered by his support. Now, however, no friend offered encouragement; rather, we read that “*the people spake of stoning him*.” Caught up with their own sense of tragedy, those who had formerly been so loyal turned on him and found it natural to blame him for all their troubles. As David looked about him, it seemed that circumstances could not have been worse! Have you ever been there?

### Depression Is Allowed To Dominate When Faith Temporarily Collapses

The same David who, as a youth, had found faith to face the lion and the bear, and had fearlessly fought the Philistine giant, now had his faith abandon him. It should be stated firmly that saving faith is “*the gift of God*” bestowed upon those who are “*heirs of the promise*.” As such, the God Who fueled our hearts with it will not allow it to permanently and completely die out. Rather, every saint is “*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*.” Nonetheless, our faith does not always burn brightly at all times, and is not equally strong at all seasons, though it should be and could be if we were always on our highest alert. The most imminent Christians have times of declension when it seems a very hard thing to act in faith!

Although David’s failure of faith reaches its climax in our text, its declension did not begin there. No one’s faith fails abruptly, although it may seem so. We are able to trace David’s temporary collapse of faith by means of the divine record. **I Samuel 27:1-3** gives us the proper perspective

from which to view this present scene. On that occasion David, who had withstood so many of Saul’s attempts on his life, despaired of God’s deliverance. Thus, it was more than a passing thought, but rather the judgment of David’s heart that led him to say, “*I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines*.” With that mindset, David and his men turned their journey toward the land of Israel’s most persistent enemies, the Philistines. David allied them to Achish, the son of the king of Gath, and began a life of duplicity, pretending to be Israel’s enemy. Only the surpassing goodness of God kept David and his men from actually fighting against Israel, which would have effectively blocked David from ever assuming Israel’s throne. However, God did allow David, in disobedience, to come to the sad state in which we now see him. Certainly, all these factors contributed to **his** depression, and point to the causes of **our own**!

I can so clearly remember the events of Saturday night, March 11, 2000, and all that led up to that night. It had not been long since I had experienced a lengthy illness and hospitalization that necessitated a serious and experimental stomach surgery. Although I had not yet returned to the pulpit, I had retired to bed early that night, as was my custom when I did preach on Sundays. My gastro-paresis, or paralysis of the stomach and bowel, had caused me to pass through a very trying six-month period when I was unable to hold any food down at all. During this time, I lost sixty-five pounds and was very weakened in body and spirit. My doctors told me that unless my condition could somehow be reversed, it would consummate in my death. I visited surgeon after surgeon only to hear each one solemnly tell me that he was unable to help in my case. This being the context of my condition, I was willing to have surgery, even an experimental one that the doctor had never performed before, when at last one surgeon said that he “thought” he could “help me!” Indeed, by the goodness of God, he did help me, and the surgery has primarily been successful for almost seven years now. But on the night of March 11, 2000, it had not been long since that major surgery.

I had not been asleep very long when a knock came to our bedroom door. It was our son, our oldest child, and his wife at the door, for they were staying with us temporarily while their own home was

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All articles reflect the opinions of the author, submitter or editor. The views of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship are not being officially represented herein.

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being built. His voice trembled and his whole body shook with dismay as he woke me, saying, "Dad, Dad, wake up! Becky is dead!"

Becky was our youngest child and had been away from home working as a Practical Visiting Nurse in a small Oklahoma town. It was the next day that we discovered, through talks with the authorities and friends of hers, that she had been murdered!! To lose our youngest child brought soul-pain hard to express, but to have her die at the hands of a murderer brought grief unspeakable! Worse still, it was the next day, Monday, that we learned the police in Oklahoma had released the suspect they had in jail and then reversed themselves and ruled Becky's death a suicide! There were almost a dozen stab wounds in her chest, two penetrating the heart, and yet this was called a suicide! An agent of the FBI informed me later that week that in his thirty some years' experience investigating homicides, he had never known of a person to commit suicide by stabbing himself in such a manner! He thought it not only unlikely to be a suicide, but impossible!!

In spite of all, there was nothing to do but make arrangements for our daughter's funeral. Though I dreaded having to do this, Becky's funeral turned out to be a blessing sent from God. Our Assistant Pastor, Tom Henry, brought an excellent and encouraging message, in

which he divulged that he had been dealing with Becky concerning her spiritual condition by correspondence and telephone calls. He expressed his firm conviction that Becky had come to faith in Christ and the hope of salvation shortly before her death! This, and much time spent in Bible reading and prayer with my wife, Lynda, and our surviving children, Christie and Robert, was used of God to lift and keep our spirits fixed on God and His goodness in all things. **Romans 8:28** was pressed to our hearts in a new and living way—"For we know that **all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.**" (Emphasis mine)

*"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (I Samuel 30:6).*

In **Proverbs 27:1**, we are warned – "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." When David and his men had left home, all was well. Upon their return but a few days later, all was desolation. During their brief absence, the Amalekites had swooped down upon their village and plundered it, leaving behind only the smoldering ruins of what had been hearth and home. God's providences are often surprising but are never arbitrary, and we can trace the purpose of God in allowing this calamity to at least two causes. In the first place, it revealed the cruelty of Saul's pity in sparing the Amalekites (**I Samuel 15**). Had he been thoroughly obedient to the commandment of the Lord, there would have been no Amalekites left to wreak this havoc. Secondly, it was corrective chastisement upon David for fleeing to the Philistines in unbelief (**I Sam. 27:1-3**). God loves His children much too much to leave them always quiet and undisturbed in their sins! We can also admire God's mercy in restraining the Amalekites so that they did not kill their families but only took them captive, although that was not known for sure by David and his men at this juncture. How grateful we should be that in judgment God remembers mercy!

**Tuesday, September 11, 2007 marks the 6th annual meeting of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship. We hope to see you at this year's gathering! See page 23 for information.**

Deep depression may indeed be traced to many and various causes, all of which may be demonstrated from David's experiences. Our text marks the low point of David's early life, but also signals the turning point from which we may trace the cure for deep depression.



### Deep Depression Requires A Spiritual Cure

This is not to suggest that we are to ignore or neglect any contributing factors to depression. Certainly downcast souls must be restored to hope (Psa. 42:5, 11). Surely strained bodies and minds must have rest and nourishment. (Consider the example of the prophet Elijah, I Kings 19:4-8) Bereaved hearts do require time and activity to recover from their sense of loss (Gen. 24:63-67). Consolation and encouragement ought to be offered to those who are greatly distressed (Deut. 1:38; 31:23). Nonetheless, depression is ultimately a spiritual struggle, for we read, "and David was greatly distressed..." (Vs. 6a). With all his loved ones and temporal possessions gone, and his own trusted followers planning to stone him, David was faced with only two alternatives. Either he must give up faith in God altogether, or he must give up himself to God entirely!

Which route would he take? Would he now tell his men that any idea of his being the anointed of the Lord was all a mistake, that faith in Israel's unseen God was nothing but an illusion, and that only a fool cared for anything beyond his own per-

sonal self-interest? As a mighty warrior he might have fought it out with his men and then struck out on his own path alone. Or would he find it in himself to face up to this most difficult situation, to make humble confession to God of his own sin, and to cast himself upon God in absolute reliance as never before? It's a most miserable place to be, but some of us know what it is for God to drive us into such an extreme corner where we must "either fish or cut bait!" Spiritual dealing with our depression is supernatural but a most practical work. Happily we read, "but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (Vs. 6b). Gracious is the soul not crushed by depression, but brought by it to humble submission to its God!

### When Cured, Deep Depression May Mark A Great Turning Point For Good

There will be a renewed sense of dependence upon God's leadership (Vss. 7, 8). Nothing was said of David's seeking divine counsel when he journeyed to Achish (Chapter 27:2). With his heart filled with troubling doubts, all that seemed to concern David then was escaping the hand of Saul. Abruptly he turned to the land of the enemy with never so much as a prayer for guidance or preservation. Often, what we do in haste we repent of at leisure! However, now that David is restored to fellowship, he will not think of taking a single step without first asking God's leadership. This over-riding concern is made so much more obvious when we consider that the strong natural desire at this point would have been merely to dash off after the Amalekites. Why pray over the obvious? The heathen hordes have their families and possessions so there is nothing to do but pursue them. Yet David will not move to do the obvious without first seeking God's will!

There will be a new commitment to obedience unto God's revealed will (Vs. 7). Long before, God had put it in the written Word that the leader of Israel was to seek His counsel through His priest (Num. 27:21). The leader was neither to follow his own intuition nor to allow the will of the majority to dictate policy: God's priest

would show him what the will of the Lord was in any given matter. David now obeys this precept in calling for Abiathar to bring the sacred ephod by which God's face was to be sought. This act of obedience did not restore his soul, but was compelling evidence that his soul had been restored. Obedience is still the surest sign of a restored spiritual state!

There will be a new desire for prayer, "And David enquired at the Lord..." (Vs. 8a). Just before this, under the darkest of circumstances, there had been no prayer, only bitter mourning. (Vs. 4) The people murmured and plotted, and David feared and despaired. Now all is different.

**"Spiritual dealing with our depression is supernatural but a most practical work. Happily we read, 'but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.'"**

Happy are the circumstances, however bitter in and of themselves, which drive us to our knees! David's prayer is now spontaneous, free, and urgent, and the people evidently approve the effort and cease from their mutiny. When prayer is weak and little used by us, we should not be surprised to find our souls weak and our situation bleak. However, it need not come to this extremity. Mercy, grace and power lie with God alone, but prayer is an ordained means by which we access this help (Hebrews 4:16).

We then can expect that there will come from God a new promise to faith (Vs. 8). When David prayed, God answered! He not only answered, but He gave promise beyond all that a sinful soul had any right to ask or think. God's purpose in allowing a deluge of troubles is not to crush us under bitter despair, but rather it is to bring us to the place of humble submission under the Hand of our afflicting God so that, in grace, He might make known the richness of His promise to the repentant and believing soul (I Pet. 5:6, 7)! Grace wounds in order to heal.

This will result in **a new motivation to right action (Vss. 9ff)**. When we have cast ourselves on God for spiritual renewal, when we have sought His guidance in prayer, then there comes a time for decisive action. We see that the confidence of David's men in him was also restored since they were willing to follow him in this God-directed pursuit. However, we are taught that, even when we act in faith, there will be further tests and trials to undergo (**Vss. 9b, 10b**). Although it seemed that David would need all his men, some had to be left behind while the rest forged on. Nevertheless, we also learn that, when we act in faith, God will give us some token of His help when it is most needed (**Vss. 11-15**). The means by which God is able to succor and encourage His people when they are in the way of obedience and faith are limitless.

When my wife and I lost our youngest daughter, Becky, in March of 2000, we might have thought that our greatest trial was past. But such was not the case! We should have thought that as we grow in spiritual maturity and grace, our trials would increase in number and severity! After all, why should God lay heavy burdens on weak shoulders? Should He not rather reserve the heavier loads for the stronger backs? Perhaps we should expect that our last trials would be our greatest trials! Was it not so with Abraham, the father of us all (**Gen. 22:1-3, ff**)? Asked of God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, Abraham did not balk, but acted in unwavering faith! *“And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, ... Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me, ... And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; ... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:11-18, emphasis mine).*

More remarkably still, was it not so with Jesus, our blessed Lord and Saviour? He could have called legions of angels to smite His enemies and set Him free! Yet He did nothing of this kind to gain His liberty, but quietly and submissively, Jesus *“made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was*

*made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:7-11)*. So, Jesus' last earthly trial was His worst, for He died on the Cross, in all its shame, ignominy, and untold sufferings, both physical and spiritual!

Becky's death had left us with only two children: Christie, our middle child, and Robert, our oldest child. Robert was now in his forty-sixth year. By hard work and persistence, under the blessings of God, he had become a very successful businessman. His latest company, Lipo-Dissolve, or “FIG,” employed some 200 people full-time. Robert had become a multimillionaire, but I can honestly say, although he “had money, money never had him!” He was generous, almost to a fault, with his family, with his friends, and with the work of God! If our church needed anything, all I had to do was to let it be known to Robert and the need would be met!

As far as we knew in the fall of 2006, Robert was in excellent health. However, during a routine physical, the reports first revealed cancer in the colon! The very next day, it was reported to Robert that the cancer had spread to the liver, and the liver had in it at least a dozen tumors! The next day his physician told him that he had only six months to live - and that was if he started treatment immediately!

Needless to say, our entire family was shaken with such news, along with Robert, his wife and son!!! I can never forget what Robert said to me in the midst of such natural calamity. He said, “Dad, it looks like our years together on earth will be cut short! This would be almost impossible for me to bear if I didn't know Christ as my Saviour and Lord! Since we both know Him, all these years cut short now will be more than made up in eternity! There we will be together with Christ and one another forever! Knowing this, I can die in peace, if that be God's will!”

At just about the nine-month mark, Robert went to sleep, not to wake again in this

life! There were multiplied hundreds at Robert's funeral. His wife, Donna, asked me to preach the funeral message, both in the chapel and at the graveside. So many came for the services that all could not be accommodated in one place only. God undertook for me as I preached my own son's funeral! So many came to me afterwards with tears, expressing what the messages meant to them! I truly hope to meet some of these people in Glory one day, who were brought to Christ, having heard the Gospel savingly on this occasion! How amazing is the good and blessedness that God can bring to His children through trial and natural sorrow by His infinite grace!

Lastly, we are shown that there will be **a new success achieved (Vss. 17-20)**. In retrospect, depression is worth the agony when, spiritually cured, we reach new heights by God's power and goodness!

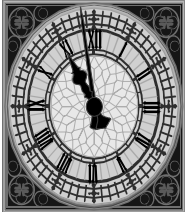


### Hope drawn from Scripture

What says David? *“I hope in Thy word.” “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.”* What says St. Paul? *“ whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Psalm 119:81,49; Romans 14:4).*

**If our hope is sound, we ought to be able to turn to some text or fact or doctrine of God's Word as the source of it. Our confidence must arise from something which God has caused to be written in the Bible, for our learning and which our heart has received and believed.**

- J. C. Ryle



# THE NEED OF THE HOUR

## (A Call To Strengthen Each Other In Our Calling)



Larry Dean

It is one of those oft unspoken and sometimes hidden realities that preachers and churches struggle as they seek to serve the Lord. The more diligent and serious the pursuit of truth and integrity, the more profound those struggles become. There are some serious reasons why this is true. First of all, we are taught in Scripture that the devil resists the work of the true church and the work of true ministers (**1 Pet. 5:8**). There is a resistance in the hearts of men to the truths of God's Word (**Acts 7:51**). Additionally, as we approach the end of this age and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Scriptures teach that there will be an increasing measure of opposition to "sound doctrine" (**2 Timothy 4:3**). As in the ministry of Paul, there is resistance from without and, sometimes, from false brethren within.



Larry Dean

Larry W. Dean serves as pastor of Bridgetown Baptist Church of Nesbit, Mississippi and is the current Chairman of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.

In our culture, the churches that proclaim the truth have become relatively few in number and small in size. They are often isolated and separated from one another by some good distance. Many pastors who preach the grace of God are forced to work outside the church in order to provide for themselves and their families. The struggles associated with these realities range from moderate to severe, depending upon the particular place and situation.

Although some may not share my opinion, I truly believe there is a dark cloud of oppression and persecution looming on the horizon. If so, it will most likely target those who uphold the truths of God's Word. We live in a culture that is growing steadily more hostile to those who believe the Word of God literally, and proclaim the truths found in it as eternal and unchangeable realities. The days and years that lie ahead of us may well become steadily more difficult as our government seeks to advance agendas hostile to the Scriptures and grant special status to immoral lifestyles.

There are some of us around the country that have committed ourselves to attempting to assist one another with mutual encouragement and support as we labor to serve God. Our purposes and desires are, we believe, rooted in biblical principles and teachings.

- **In Scripture, the ministers of the Gospel worked together and encouraged one another.** James, Peter and John (**Gal. 2:9**) encouraged and supported Paul in his ministry, even though he had not begun with them or through the Jerusalem church. Onesimus, Aristarchus, Marcus, Justus, and Epaphras were of comfort to Paul (**Col. 4:11**). Onesiphorus was often a comfort to Paul (**2 Tim. 1:17-18**).

It is the purpose of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship (SGBF) to be the same sort of comfort to one another. If I may make a personal comment, the encouragement, support, prayers and communicated love of my brothers in the Fellowship have been a great help to me. Unlike ministers I have encountered in other groups, these men have shown themselves to be humble, patient, tolerant and unselfish. There is no competition for status and position among them. There is no arrogant assumption that one knows more than the others or that anyone has 'cornered' the truth in all things. There is neither the attempt nor desire to make everyone fit the same 'mold.' In those areas of doctrine that are

essential and critical, there is no compromise or hesitation. But in those areas where legitimate differences exist among faithful men, there is an unusual willingness to be open and tolerant. I know of no other organization that is faithful to our Baptist distinctives and, at the same time, so open and willing to fellowship with those who are not in total agreement on minor points of theology.

- **The churches of the New Testament also worked together to send forth the Gospel (1 Thess. 1:8).** The church at Jerusalem financed the spread of the Gospel around the world in many places, sending out many to preach the Gospel. When the church at Jerusalem fell on hard times, Paul organized a relief effort for them, gathering money from the Gentile churches (**Rom. 15:25-27**).

For all of our confidence in and commitment to the doctrines of grace, we are an evangelistic endeavor. Although we do not and cannot support those who do not share our identity and convictions as Baptists, a great part of our mutual commitment is to help one another send out missionaries. We already share in the support of one full time missionary family, Brother Trevor Johnson and his wife, Teresa. They were sent forth from one of our member churches and are now laboring on the field in Indonesia. Another of our brothers, John Hunter of Anniston, Al, is preparing to relocate to Guyana, S.A.

We fervently hope that God will provide us further opportunities to help one another. I look forward to the day when we will be able to provide assistance to small and struggling churches around our own country.

- **The saints worked together in unofficial ways even when not officially sent or instructed to do so by their home churches.** In Scripture, we read that Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos into their home without instruction or command and helped him to under-

stand the Gospel more perfectly. And we learn of Dorcas, who made clothes for the poor, seemingly without commission or sanction from anyone.

- **Yet, there was no hierarchy, no pope, and no denominational structure to which the New Testament churches answered.**

In like manner, I have seen the Fellowship band together to help a brother in need, and have personally been the blessed recipient of such generosity. It is our hope that the fellowship engendered by our little group will encourage and give opportunity for the saints to be able to help one another in practical ways as well as giving spiritual encouragement.

- **The interaction between the New Testament saints, ministers and churches was an encouragement to them all (Acts 15:30-31).**

Likewise, it is our intent, purpose and goal to help and encourage one another. The church I pastor has been blessed by getting to know some of the men in the SGBF. We have the opportunity to know what is going on in their lives and in their churches and pray for the struggles they face. Thus, through the Fellowship, we are able to share in the ministries, the struggles, and the blessings of our sister churches.

It has never been the purpose of the SGBF to manufacture an organization that usurps the Scriptural authority of the local church. We have never attempted to tell any church what to do or how to conduct its business. And we never will. Those of us who have been a part of the Fellowship from the beginning would immediately dissolve it rather than allow that to happen. Our only desire is to glorify God, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and be a help to one another in this endeavor.

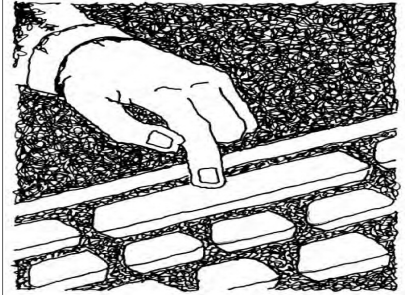
To all who share our commitments, we extend a cordial invitation to join with us. I believe you will find, as I have, a great source of encouragement, help, joy and love among the ranks of the churches that are part of the SGBF.



## **SGBF Annual Meeting Information, page 23**

Check out the informative website for The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.

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### **FUNDING OF THE SOVEREIGN GRACE MESSENGER**

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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 this work.

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# An Open Letter To A Hurting Pastor

(In Lieu Of An Editorial)



**Editor's Note:** This is an actual letter written in response to a gifted young pastor who, being divinely called to the ministry and having finished his theological education, is now learning what only the Lord can teach him by experience.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The ministry of the Word is so solemn that the Scripture warns, as you know, *“be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”* We deal with true life and death issues. And if we, as must be if we feel the weightiness of things eternal and our heavy responsibility to souls bound for eternity, tremble at our responsibility, we must also press upon our hearers the responsibility they have to give all seriousness to the hearing and doing of the Word of God. James, who wrote the above caution, also gave the general exhortation to the hearers to *“lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”* How little, it seems, those who sit under the preaching and teaching of the Word are aware that the servant of Christ is a gift sent from Him! They are not simply dealing with a man but with a man sent from God to them, even though the man in himself must struggle with his own faults and frailties.

I have read your letter and listened to some of the messages on the CD. I speak honestly when I say that I was impressed, considering your youth, with the quality of the content of your labors in the Word. That you strive to learn and teach the truth of Scripture is very evident. Then, as you wrote, with what appears to be a true measure of humility, *“Though I do need improvement, and my style may make it difficult for some, yet, generally speaking, I believe my preaching is right, according to God’s Word and appropriate to the salvation of our souls”*, I wholeheartedly agree with your self-assessment. Your conclusion that the style of teaching was made an excuse while the substance was the real thing they did not like is also apparently right on the mark. Consider the complaint the Corinthians lodged even against Paul: *“For his letters (the very Word of God), say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech*

*contemptible.”* It is a great day when some, spiritually speaking, get their eyes off the vessel to see something of the greatness of the contents of the vessel. But it is a common thing for the ministers of Christ to have to suffer the reproaches of men when they have not eyes to see nor ears to hear, and can only judge *“according to the appearance”*.

By all means, strive to improve your delivery. You are young and it takes a great deal of labor, intense and often exhausting thought and effort, to assess ways of improving delivery; of connecting more with people where they are; of attempting to adapt to educational abilities; of learning of people and their capacities. That takes time. If the people know that you care for them, that your heart’s desire is for their salvation and spiritual growth, if there be any truth in them, they will bear with you out of love. But if they have no heart for the truth it doesn’t matter what you do, for they will not *“endure sound doctrine”*. But again, as concerns the painstaking effort to improve the manner of delivery, speaking from personal experience, what Gospel preacher has not spent many hours rehearsing what he has preached and taught and constantly pondered ways of improving it?

When you began your public ministry, ———, you entered a phase of spiritual warfare that is more intense than you ever experienced before. You are invading the territories of the enemy of the human race. And though you must lay to heart the great truth that *“the battle is the LORD’S”*, Who is always victorious and always gives the victory, you are called upon to *“endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”*. From the tenor of your letter, I find more self-judgment than bitterness. Such a spirit should be valued greatly by those to whom you minister. Many begin well in the ministry but end up in bitterness when they begin to learn, as they will, that it is in this realm that the best and the worst in men will be revealed—and often in opposition to the one who is laboring

self-sacrificially for the good of their souls. But was not that true in the highest sense concerning our Lord Himself? You must preach things that are often against the true desires and self-interests of men, and it will either come back to you in hate or in love—dependent upon the condition of the hearer. And often, it seems, that attitude comes out when men forsake you. Remember, *“charity (love) suffereth long and is kind”*. When men forsake you in the preaching of the truth of God’s Word, whatever excuse they may even self-deceptively make, it is because the love of God is not in them. It is they who then are to be pitied. But what a great thing when our Lord and Sovereign so moves in us to keep our eyes upon Him, even in the greatest of oppositions, so as to able to *“endure hardness”* without becoming hardened. No matter what men may do to or toward us, we must continue to endeavor to do good to them. And if our Lord has called you to feed His sheep, there will be sheep to feed—no matter how few there seem to be at times. When it comes down to it, would we rather have a congregation of sheep or goats?

There is, in your letter, an admirable thing. You have maintained your conviction of the truth of Scripture with the determination to preach according to Scripture, in the midst of great suffering in so doing. I have no doubt that the Lord will, in His time, honor you in honoring Him. The battles may at times rage, and you may have to fight against great discouragement, but you must keep your eyes upon the One who put you into the ministry. You enter, in measure, something of what has been experienced by the servants of God from ancient times to now. You must learn, and often re-learn, what they heard and experienced. We may always fully expect the grace and help of God present with us, when we do what He has called us to do. When God called Joshua to lead the armies of Israel against a far greater power than they were in themselves, He charged him *“be not dismayed.”* That charge itself indicated



there would be great oppositions to face. But the whole of Joshua's encouragement, as should be ours as well, was in the promise of Jehovah that "*the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*" (**Joshua 1:7-9**) When Jeremiah was sent to a rebellious and apostate people, where all outwardly spelled danger for him, he was given the only way he would be able to find his encouragement: "*Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*" (Jeremiah 1:8). As Paul faced his last days on earth and remembered all that had transpired since that day on the way to Damascus, he reflected upon a ministry characterized by the greatest difficulty as well as the highest joy. How was the aged apostle able to endure such suffering, and be faithful even unto death? He gave the reason in the words, "*Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.*" (**2 Timothy 4:17**)

Many of us who have now been long years in the ministry, including me, began by learning in experience what you are going through. And we must still learn. We must learn that our Lord requires our faithfulness, and that we only remain faithful by faith. It is a very difficult thing, but necessary and glorious in the end, to be stripped of all other places of trust, so that

we might learn to trust and look only to our Lord. We know this doctrinally, but we must learn it experientially. This kind of lesson is only learned by having to go through the deep waters. Then, in the process, we find our load feels lightened when we realize and learn that it is not the purpose of our Lord to drown us but only for us to learn that He alone keeps us, with "*Fear not....When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.*" When Ziklag appears to be razed to the ground, and all we thought ours stripped away, it is then that we, like David, learn to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.

I don't know what the outcome of the meeting will be there on the ————. I do know that if the Lord has opened the door for you there, and it is His purpose to keep you there, that "*no man can shut it*". If your being there was only to try and purge you, and teach you things about people that can only be learned by experience, and it be His will to put you somewhere else, then the door may be shut there and opened elsewhere. I was only in my first pastorate for about a year and a half, going through much of what you are now going through. I have been in my present pastorate for over thirty years. The present work has also been accompanied by much warfare from time to time. But I believe that I

learned something in measure, from being forced to learn it, that the Lord's work is under the Lord's control. I laid hold of a verse of Scripture then that I must still depend upon now. In **Revelation 3:8**, the Lord said, "*Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name*". Keep His Word, not only to learn it but to do it, and continue confessing His name in the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and endeavoring to teach "*the whole counsel of God*", and He will supply everything you need to continue doing so.

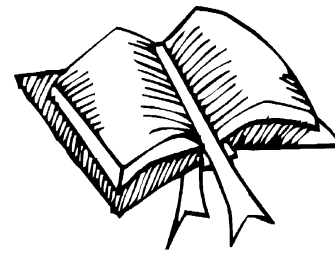
I do hope that the Lord would take something of the feeble attempt to be a help to you and use it to His glory and your good. My simple advice, which I must often use in self-exhortation as well, is to keep doing what He has called you to do and put yourself and the outcome completely in the hands of your Lord. No matter what response may come from men, He will never leave nor forsake you.

Yours by grace,

Ron Staley



## *Sovereign Grace Bible Conferences*



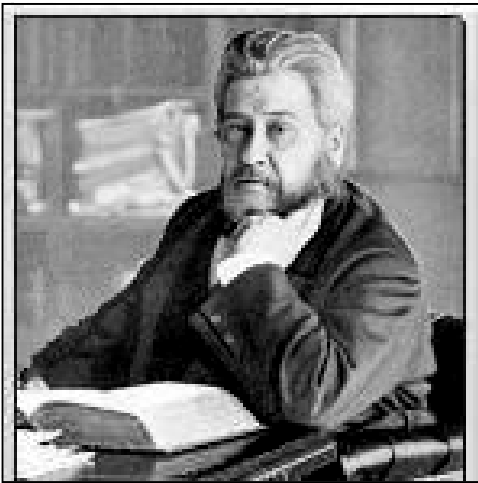
**September 11, 2007: Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri. Held in conjunction with the annual meeting of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship. Afternoon meal provided. Fuller information on page 23. Church Office: (314) 645-4248**

**October 22-26, 2007: Grace Baptist Church, West Milton, Pennsylvania. Morning and evening services. Afternoon meals provided. Contact Pastor David King for more information at: (570) 742-8915**

# Suffering And Consolation

C.H. Spurgeon  
(1834-1892)

As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so the consolations of Christ abound. Here is a blessed proportion. God always keeps a pair of scales—in this side He puts His people's trials and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition; and when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy; for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, even so shall consolation abound by Christ. This is a matter of pure experience. Oh, it is mysterious that, when the black clouds gather most, the light within us is always the brightest! When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the heavenly Captain is always closest to the crew. It is a blessed thing, when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of Christ.



C.H. Spurgeon

Trials make more room for consolation. There is nothing that makes a man have a big heart like a great trial. I always find that little, miserable people, whose hearts are about the size of a grain of mustard-seed, never have had much to try them. I have found that those people who have no sympathy for their fellows—who never weep for the sorrows of others—very seldom have any woes of their own. Great hearts can only be made great by troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our

comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies, the more comfort he will always have.

I recollect walking with a ploughman, one day, a man who was deeply taught, although he was a ploughman—and really ploughmen would make a great deal better preachers than many college gentlemen—and he said to me, “Depend upon it, if you or I ever get one inch above the ground we shall get just that inch too high.” I believe it is true; for the lower we lie, the nearer the ground we are—the more our troubles humble us—the more fit we are to receive comfort; and God always gives us comfort when we are most fit. That is one reason why consolations increase in the same ratio as our trials.

Then trouble exercises our graces, and the very exercise of our graces tends to make us more comfortable and happy. Where showers fall most, there the grass is greenest. I suppose the fogs and mist of Ireland make it “the Emerald Isle”; and wherever you find great fogs of trouble, and mists of sorrow, you always find emerald green hearts; full of the beautiful verdure of the comfort and love of God. O Christian, do not thou be saying, “Where are the swallows gone? They are gone they are dead.” They are not dead; they have skimmed the purple sea, and gone to a far-off land; but they will be back again by and by. Child of God, say not the flowers are dead; say not the winter has killed them, they are gone. Ah! no; though winter hath coated them with the ermine of its snow; they will put up their heads again, and will be alive very soon. Say not, child of God, that the sun is quenched, because the cloud hath hidden it. Ah! no; He is behind there, brewing summer for thee; for when He cometh out again, He will have made the clouds fit to drop in April showers, all of them mothers of the sweet May flowers. And oh! Above all, when thy God hides His face, say not that He has forgotten thee. He is but tarrying a little while to make thee love Him better; and when He cometh, thou shalt have joy in the Lord, and shalt rejoice with joy unspeakable. Waiting exercises our grace; waiting tries our faith; therefore, wait on in hope: for

though the promise tarry, it can never come too late.

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles is this—then we have the closest dealings with God. I speak from heart knowledge and real experience. We never have such close dealings with God, as when we are in tribulation. When the barn is full, man can live without God; when the purse is bursting with gold, we somehow can do without much prayer. But once take your *gourds* away, you want your *God*; once cleanse away the idols out of the house, then you must go and honour Jehovah.

Some of you do not pray half as much as you ought. If you are the children of God, you will have the whip; and when you have that whip, you will run to your Father. It is a fine day, and the child walks before its father; but there is a lion in the road, now he comes and takes his father's hand. He could run half-a-mile before when all was fine and fair; but once bring the lion, and it is “Father! Father!” as close as he can be. It is even so with the Christian. Let all be well, and he forgets God. Jeshurun waxes fat, and he begins to kick against God; but take away his hopes, blast his joys, let the infant lie in the coffin, let the crops be blasted, let the herd be cut off from the stall, let the husband's broad shoulder lie in the grave, let the children be fatherless—then it is that God is God indeed. Oh, strip me naked; take from me all I have, make me poor, a beggar, penniless, helpless; dash that cistern in pieces; crush that hope; quench the stars; put out the sun; shroud the moon in darkness, and place me all alone in space, without a friend, without a helper; still, “*Out of the depths will I cry unto thee, O God.*” There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains; no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier; for that is the way to be happy—to live near God. So that while troubles abound, they drive us to God, and the consolations abound.

Some people call troubles weights. Verily they are so. A ship that has large sails and

a fair wind, needs ballast. Troubles are the ballast of a believer. The eyes are the pumps which fetch out the bilge-water of his soul, and keep him from sinking. But if trials be weights, I will tell you a happy secret. There is such a thing as making a weight lift you. If I have a weight chained to me, it keeps me down; but give me pulleys and certain appliances, and I can make it lift me up. Yes, there is such a thing as making troubles raise me toward heaven. A gentlemen once asked a friend, concerning a beautiful horse of his, feeding about the pasture with a clog on its foot, "Why do you clog such a noble animal?" "Sir," said he, "I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him: he is given to leap hedges." That is why God clogs His people. He would rather clog them than lose them; for if He did not clog them, they would leap the hedges and be gone. They want a tether to prevent their straying, and their God binds them with afflictions, to keep them near Him, to preserve them, and have them in His presence. Blessed fact—as our troubles abound, our consolations also abound.



(Copies of the above message are available free in tract form from "Chapel Library, 2603 W. Wright St., Pensacola, FL., 32505")

### **THE PINE TREE**

**The pine stood tall along the road,  
After many years of strife.  
But becoming that tall and strong,  
Took a long and uneasy life.**

**It beautified the countryside.  
It provided a landmark, tall and straight.  
It provided shade for the weary,  
While under its branches they wait.**

**I want to be that tall and strong,  
Yet gentle as the pine is too!  
For its great and mighty limbs bend,  
As the wind blows through.**



Gene Breed, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia

From a collection of his poems

## **THE BELIEVER'S SUFFICIENCY OF GOD**

**Octavius Winslow  
(1808-1878)**

*"Then I said, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak--for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child--for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of their faces--for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."--Jer. 1:6-8*

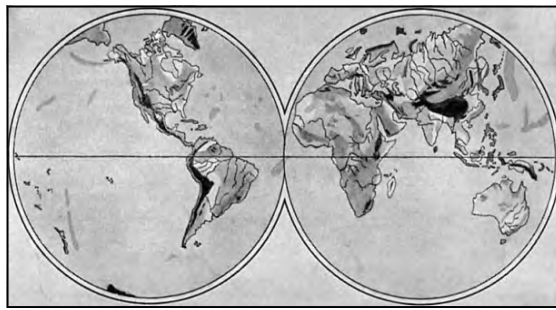
Such was the spirit, and such the prayer, of the weeping prophet Jeremiah, in view of the great mission to which God now called him. How instructive the words! Learn, my soul, this, among other lessons taught by His servant, that before the Lord exalts, He lays us low; before He places a believer in some position of distinction in the Church, or calls him to any great and holy service in the world, He first empties him of all vain and foolish conceit of his own wisdom, power, and holiness; imbuing him with a lowly, obedient, and docile spirit; acknowledging, *"Lord, I am but a child; I know not how to go out or how to come in."* Is the Lord thus dealing with you, my soul? Is He mowing down by His Spirit your fancied strength, worthiness, and importance? Is He causing you to pass through some fiery trial, and the flame scorching and consuming? Accept this discipline of God as but intended to prepare you for a higher office, a holier mission, greater usefulness in the Church and the world, for which, in the purpose of His grace, He has ordained you. By this training of sorrow and suffering and emptying, you shall become a *"vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*

*"You shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid, for I am with you, to deliver you, says the Lord.."* This *"thus says the Lord"* is enough to quell every fear, to meet every objection, and to inspire the timid servant of the Lord with a giant's strength, and a martyr's fortitude in the *"kingdom and patience of Christ."* *"I am with you, says the Lord."* You may shrink at the call of God from a sense of personal unfitness; you may plead your educational deficiency--your lack of wisdom--of years--or of eloquence--exclaiming, *"Lord, I know not how to speak, or how to act, for I am but a child in knowledge, in experience, in strength;"*--but, listen to the word of the Lord, *"Fear not, I am with you."* Enough! O my Lord, put forth Your hand and touch my mouth as You did Your servant Jeremiah, clothing and sanctifying my tongue with heavenly wisdom and grace, that, with a power and a wisdom higher and holier than my own, I may speak a word for You, for Christ, for truth.

Learn, my soul, that in all holy service for God and for man, your true sufficiency is of God. Ever be anxious only to obey His call, to go where He shall send you, to speak what He shall command you, not afraid of the stern look, and frowning brow, and angry countenance of man; for your God is with you to defend you, and to give you a mouth and wisdom, such as all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. In all your needs, trials, and service, do not forget, O my soul, that it has pleased the Father that all fullness of grace, and wisdom, and strength, and sympathy, should dwell in Jesus. To Him repair with every need, spiritual and temporal. Draw frequently and largely from this inexhaustible Treasury, living by faith as a personal pensioner upon His personal bounty. He can make you strong to bear, eloquent to speak, patient to endure, meek to suffer, wise as the serpent, harmless as the dove, a lamb in your gentleness, a giant in your might, a martyr in your fortitude. *"With Christ strengthening me, I can do all things."* *"My grace is sufficient for you."* Forward, then, in duty, forward in service, forward in suffering, mortifying the flesh, crucifying the world, resisting the devil, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and realizing moment by moment that, *"as your day is so shall your strength be."* **"OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD."**

**"One trial more must yet be past,  
One pang--the keenest and the last;  
And when, with brow convulsed and pale,  
My feeble, quivering heart-strings fail,  
Redeemer! grant my soul to see  
That, 'as her days, her strength shall be.'"**

Other Octavius Winslow messages may be found at: [www.gracegems.org](http://www.gracegems.org)



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## THE MISSIONARY CALL

### What is it and to whom does it belong?

Writer's name removed

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#### A confession

I confess, this is a partial retraction. A clarification. I have not so much been wrong, but I have been incomplete – and incompleteness regarding Scripture is often error. To give half the story is not to give the story at all.

What have I done? Virtually every month I have sent appeals such as this: “Have you ever wondered if you could be a missionary.” I have sent emails entitled, “An appeal for workers.” Very frequently I have urged individuals to look into God’s will for themselves and see if God is calling them into missions. I have been incessant.

#### What’s wrong with that?

Here is what is wrong: world missions is not the private and personal calling of a chosen few; it is a body of Christ decision. Missions is not the work of a separated few, but the work of the whole church.

My former appeals to individuals urging, “Pray about what God would have you to do” were well-motivated. These appeals, however, were incomplete as far as Scripture is concerned.

#### Incomplete? How?

In the New Testament, the calling of missionaries was much more than an individual or a married couple feeling some amorphous “call of God” and then pursuing it – informing their local church later, often as an afterthought. In contrast, the call of God was a “whole body” decision. The church called, the church separated, the church sent!

#### Missionary identification removed for security reasons

Missionary from Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri to Indonesia

Today, here is a normal scenario: A young man desires to serve. He often waits to feel some sort of “call” to proceed. Once he feels this strange call (that presumably is more than just a firm conviction as seconded by Scripture and his home church) he applies to agencies. Sometimes during this process and oftentimes afterwards, he then informs his church – not for permission – but as part of his notification that he is now a missionary appointee. Now, in the loop, the local church begins to help and advise the appointee.

I personally knew one appointee family that were accepted and were a year and a half as appointees before their home church, presumably their sending-church-to-be, voted to support them.

What does it say about mission boards, home churches and the candidates if (1) sometimes mission organizations accept candidates who are largely unknown and untested in their local contexts, (2) potential candidates sometimes get halfway or more through the process even before informing their local church, and (3) local churches often are the last to know that God is calling someone up from among their very midst?

#### How does this contrast with the New Testament practice of sending?

**Acts 13:2** “While they [the assembled church] were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

The assembled saints fasted, a deliberate act of preparation. The assembled saints set apart Paul and Barnabas. Later the assembled saints sent (literally, “released”) them to the Gentiles.

Paul speaks of himself as being set apart for the Gospel. He heard as much from the risen Christ in a trance (**Acts 22:21**) “I will send you far away to the Gentiles...” And yet, this Apostle still waited for his “home church” to send or release him. Immediately upon returning home, he also reported back to his “home church” concerning all he had seen and heard. Paul was no lone ranger. He was a servant of his church, who fulfilled the Great Commission through him.

Western Christianity has not only privatized their religion, but has also privatized the missionary call. Only now, as I have entered into another culture more communal in its worldview than my own, have I come to see this incompleteness. Wanna know about water...don't ask a fish! He's too close.

**“Every Christian is not a missionary, but missions is the focus of every Christian.”**

Missions and, indeed, all of church life is life in community. We are saved personally but are saved into the church. The Trinity, one God in three persons is our model; unity in the midst of diversity. As I labor in missions it is not I who am laboring, but it is the whole church who is laboring through me. Even more so, all this is not even accurately referred to as the mission of the church but is ultimately the mission of God Himself, the *Missio Dei*.

Every Christian is not a missionary, but missions is the focus of every Christian. In World War II, the whole nation worked as part of the war effort. Though the actual members of the Armed Forces were but a minority of the population as a whole, yet America was at war. The whole nation fought, through the efforts of those they sent. The nation called, the nation set apart, and the nation sent.

Many will object to what I am writing, “But Paul speaks of his own personal call; the Prophets did too.” Yes, in regards to salvation we are saved because we are called by God. Yes, in the Old Testament many prophets literally heard the audible voice of God recruiting them into service.

The same textual evidence is absent, however, regarding New Testament cross-cultural evangelism.

When a “sending” occurs in the New Testament the focus is never on the person volunteering to be sent, but on those who send that person. Look at the evidence:

- Upon Judas’ betrayal and death the gathered assembly chose Matthias.

- Philip might have briefly worked alone at first, but *“When the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John...” (Acts 8:14-15).*

- When the conflict with the Judaizers arose, the churches sent an official delegation and these were not only *“brought on their way by the church”* but were also *“received of the church”* when they arrived (Acts 15).

- In Acts 13:1-3, as quoted above, the assembled church chose and set apart those who would serve.

- After the Jerusalem council, Paul chooses Silas and they depart, being commended by the brethren (Act 15:40).

- The very next chapter mentions that Timothy, whom Paul chooses to work with, was also well-spoken of by the brethren.

In the New Testament we do not have a volunteer system based on individual appeals at all; if forced between one extreme or another I would have to call the New Testament method more like a draft!

*“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15b*

## Now What?

Okay, so I have hereby printed a clarification to my incessant appeals for more missionaries to join me. What now? Do I cease my appeals?

### Not on your life!

Instead, now my appeals have more force and Biblical backing. These appeals are not merely given to lone individuals to navel gaze and try to discern some intangible missionary call. Now these appeals can be backed up by the authority of local churches!

In no way have I ceased my recruitment efforts, but I now seek a stronger ally, the key agent in the evangelization of the world – the local church!

Churches, pastors, elders, please consider these steps. They require boldness and much prayer, yet they mirror New Testament practice. In Matthew 28 the Great Commission was given to the representatives of the church. In Acts 1, the command to go to the ends of the earth was given to the assembled representatives of the church. Churches - this command now belongs to you!

### A bold plan: Churches, set apart your people!

I challenge you pastors, elders and churches, set apart those whom God is calling among you! If the early church deliberately fasted and prayed and sought God’s will in reference to this, shouldn’t we? If they were so bold as to seek, identify and set apart gifted individuals, shouldn’t we? If they owned their role in world missions aside from mere financial support, shouldn’t we?

### Send me your own!



### Editor’s Note To Missionaries And Pastors

Any news or updates for sovereign grace missionaries, upcoming conferences, special meetings, etc., should be sent to the editor at least six weeks prior to distribution, if possible. Please include all pertinent information and send in Microsoft Word (preferred) or Microsoft Works format to the below email address. Issues are scheduled for mailing the first weeks of April, August and December.

Email: [ronstaley1@verizon.net](mailto:ronstaley1@verizon.net)

# Mission News From Indonesia

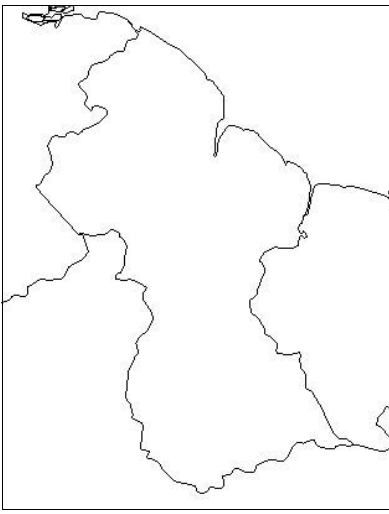
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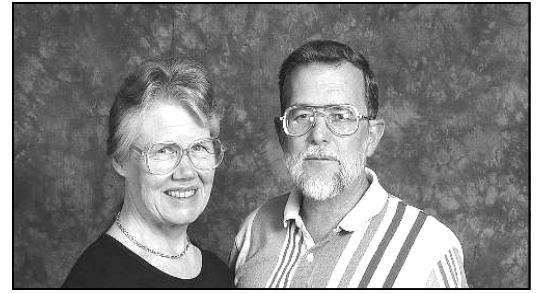
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## **Purpose of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship, as explained in the “Constitution And Bylaws”.**

**“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.”**



# Guyana Mission Update



John & Kathy Hunter

As a result of an earlier visit, John and Kathy Hunter plan to return to Guyana, South America for an extended stay of at least a year. Depending upon the Lord for His help and direction, their projected date of departure is set for sometime in January. During their time in Guyana, they will be assuming some extensive duties, making it possible for Brother Almond Katryan and his wife, Nalin, to return to the United States in order to take care of a number of personal and ministry responsibilities.

At the present time, a pressing need of this mission work is for a church building for one of the preaching points that is outgrowing the house under which they meet. (Most houses in Guyana are built on stilts.) For around \$3,000.00 an adequate, though obviously not elaborate, structure can be built.

Speaking again concerning their proposed mission trip John says, "Our family and church family seem not only resolved to our going to Guyana but supportive although sometimes a bit apprehensive. Please keep praying for us and Sovereign Grace Baptist Church during this time of transition. The Lord will have allowed the church and I to be together for almost 25 years by the time of our planned departure."

While on the field in Guyana, Brother John and Kathy will also be actively involved

The Hunters expect to continue and expand a ministry in which Brother Katryan involved them when they were in Guyana in February. This particular task includes teaching men who sense a call to the ministry and helping them to prepare for the pastorate.



Teaching At Skills Center

In preparation for their intended trip, the Hunters have visited and presented the work to several churches that are interested in the ministry there. As a result, many of the Lord's people have promised to pray for them and help, as they are able. To quote Brother John directly, "Kathy and I have been overwhelmed by the response of the Lord's people. Churches and individuals have sent offerings to us for the work. The Lord is so good to us even though we are undeserving."

with the Skills Training Center, in which children are given a second chance for an education through programs offering remedial education. In addition, John will be helping in the two churches, in the three mission works already functioning, and in trying to establish some new preaching points. His desire is to see the men whom Brother Katryan has been training become pastors of these missions as they become churches.

John and Kathy Hunter's burden for the people of Guyana is apparent to all who know them. These faithful servants of God are willingly investing both themselves and their means in this missionary endeavor, including an inheritance John received from his father's passing from this life last August. Please pray for them as they prepare to depart for the mission field. Although they are ready and willing to go, they will undoubtedly face many challenges and difficulties while there.

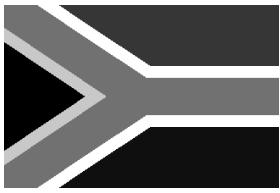
For further information, please contact the Hunters at:

**SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTIST  
CHURCH MISSION  
5440 ALABAMA HIGHWAY 202  
ANNISTON, ALABAMA 36201**

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# South Africa Update

## The Ministry Of Paul Karstens

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Paul Karstens labors as a missionary in the country of South Africa. It is a land devastated by crushing poverty, false religion and HIV/AIDS. He and his wife Marilyn are the parents of three children: Brydon (12), Aydon (10), and baby Tessalyn (19 months).

Since 1997, Brother Paul has been teaching at the Bible Institute of South Africa, a college dedicated to the training of evangelical pastors and missionaries. The school holds firmly to the doctrines of grace and is deeply committed to teaching the Scriptures as the very Word of God to a people who are mostly illiterate. At the time of this writing, the students were preparing for their end of semester exams, after which most of them will participate in mission trips during their June/July break from classes.

One team of 10 students and faculty plans to go to northern Namibia, near the border of Angola, for three weeks. Their ministry will involve mostly evangelism and church planting in the area known as Oshakati. A second team will be heading to Turkey for three weeks. Most students on this team are completing their training in the "Ministry to Islam" course. This trip will be their practical training for ministry to the Muslim world.

At the end of July, Paul plans to go to Zambia, where He will meet with a few recent graduates who are now pastors and Bible translators. He hopes to set up an extension ministry of the Bible Institute of South Africa, which will be aimed at grass-

roots Church leaders and laymen. The idea is to use graduates to do most of the teaching, with yearly follow-up by the Institute's faculty members.



Paul, Marilyn, Brydon, Aydon & Tessalyn

For some time, the Karstens have desired to come to the USA to visit their supporting churches and present their mission work to others who may be interested. Since they have been denied US visas for the present, they continue their regular ministry in Cape Town. However, they trust that the Lord will open the door to the USA soon. Please pray for them as they make application again this fall.

In addition to Paul's teaching and preaching duties, he has a ministry of collecting and distributing second-hand Bibles in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa to Church leaders and children of farm laborers. The college faculty also helps distribute food and clothing to these impoverished people. On the home front, the Karstens continue

to home school their children. Paul reports that the children are doing well and the two boys are growing fast in their understanding of God's Word. Besides the many duties of caring for her own family, Marilyn assists many young female students who need counseling and encouragement. She also collects and distributes clothes to needy students.

Please pray fervently for this precious missionary family. Although God has been faithful to provide for them, they have endured deprivation while laboring in the Gospel and are in need of additional monthly support.

### Contact Details:

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South Africa  
Tel.: 27 (0) 21 7882779

Email: [pmkarstens@bisa.org.za](mailto:pmkarstens@bisa.org.za)

**To channel gifts from the U.S., send them through:**

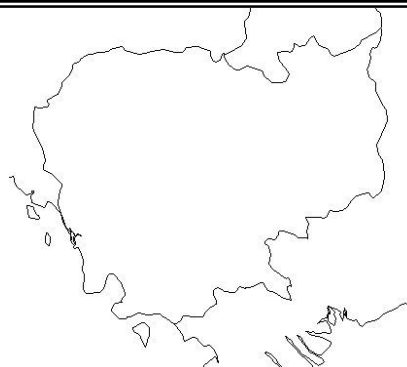
Grace Baptist Church  
510 Susquehanna Ave.  
Milton, PA 17847

David King, pastor (570) 742-8915

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## From Cambodia

**Learn of the ministry of and receive updates from Bill & Jennifer Hale in Cambodia.**



**Information on the Cambodian mission may be obtained by visiting the below listed email and website:**

[thehales@thechurchofmercy.org](mailto:thehales@thechurchofmercy.org)

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



# A Revealing Letter from \*Adoniram Judson To His Wife To Be, Miss Ann Hasseltine

\* Judson married Ann Hasseltine on February 5, 1812. They sailed just two weeks later as missionaries from the Congregational Church to India, and under its mission board. While on board ship Judson undertook to study the mode of baptism as taught in the New Testament, becoming firmly convinced of the Baptist position and convincing his wife of the same. They were both baptized in Calcutta by William Ward, an English Baptist missionary, on September 6, 1812. Resigning the Congregational mission, they offered themselves to represent the Baptists in America who then organized their support, and were instrumental in a great missionary movement. – Editor

*“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?...So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:28,33)*

Note: As Trevor Johnson wrote in his article, found on pages 12 & 13, “Every Christian is not a missionary, but missions is the focus of every Christian.” Our focus may be sharpened in understanding that for which true God-sent missionaries must be prepared. May our hearts, prayers, and whatever support we may be enabled to give them be offered out of hearts at one with them for the spread of the Gospel of the grace of God. And may the Lord grant, by His grace, the understanding that the above words of our Lord were not to missionaries only and give us hearts and wills bowed in subjection to Him.



Adoniram Judson  
(1788-1850)

*“January 1, 1811. Tuesday Morning*

*It is with the utmost sincerity, and with my whole heart, that I wish you, my love, a happy new year. May it be a year in which your walk will be close with God; your frame calm and serene; and the road that leads you to the Lamb marked with purer light. May it be a year in which you will have more largely the spirit of Christ, be raised above sublunary things, and be willing to be disposed of in this world just as God shall please. As every moment of the year will bring you nearer the end of your pilgrimage, may it bring you nearer to God, and find you more prepared to hail the messenger of death as a deliverer and a friend. And now, since I have begun to wish, I will go on. May this be the year in which you will change your name; in which you will take a final leave of your relatives and native land; in which you will cross the wide ocean, and dwell on the other side of the world, among a heathen people. What a great change will this year probably effect in our lives! How very different will be our situation and employment! If our lives are preserved and our attempt prospered, we shall next new year's day be in India, and perhaps wish each other a happy new year in the uncouth dialect of Hindostan or Burmah. We shall no more see our kind friends around us, or enjoy the conveniences of civilized life, or go to the house of God with those that keep holy day; but swarthy countenances will everywhere meet our eye, the jargon of an unknown tongue will assail our ears, and we shall witness the assembling of the heathen to celebrate the worship of idol gods. We shall be weary of the world, and wish for wings like a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest. We shall probably experience seasons when we shall be 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' We shall see many dreary, disconsolate hours, and feel a sinking of spirits, anguish of mind, of which now we can form little conception. O, we shall wish to lie down and die. And that time may soon come. One of us may be unable to sustain the heat of the climate and the change of habits; and the other may say, with literal truth, over the grave--*

*'By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed;  
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed;  
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned;'*

*but whether we shall be honored and mourned by strangers, God only knows. At least, either of us will be certain of one mourner. In view of such scenes shall we not pray with earnestness 'O for an overcoming faith,' etc.?"*

# HOPE IN DESOLATIONS

Conrad Murrell

*“Oh God! Your anger burns hot against us continually. You have forever cast off the sheep of your pasture. Why?”*

**Psalm 74**

The enemy has so defiled your sanctuary that it is perpetually desolate. The sounds that are heard in your congregations are the blasphemies, the debates, railings, revilings, fights and wranglings of your enemies. The signs and symbols of idolatry, witchcraft and demon worship are brought in and set up. Pagan "holy days" are paraded and touted as Christian, supplanting the gospel and worship of the true and living God.

Once a man was considered great who undertook the thick and thorny issues of Christian life and doctrine, shaped and formed them into practical and profitable principles and tools for the saints. He built up Zion. Now the man is admired who attacks with axe and club the most precious and glorious of the church's tradition, practice and doctrine. What they have been unable to break down by direct assault they have craftily kindled little fires here and there, fanned and fed them until they have burned down every meeting place of the saints, every dwelling place of your name in the land. We no longer see any signs of your power, your favor, your blessings, your Presence. The tokens that encouraged us in the faith are no longer to be found. There are no more prophets. The true man of God has ceased to exist. No one sets forth your infallible word any more.



**Conrad Murrell**

The pastor of Grace Church, Bentley, Louisiana and director of Grace And Truth Camps held three times a year at their Bentley facilities.

This paraphrased synopsis of the lamentations in **Psalm 74** seems to be a perfectly ordered reflection of the desolations of today's Christian scene. But this Psalm was written at a time prior even to the establishment of synagogue worship. The only worship place was the temple at Jerusalem. It is therefore a prophetic psalm. That it presents a strikingly accurate picture of what we observe today is not as marvelous as we might think. The fact of the matter is, these sorrows are no more unique to our time than they are to any other. At any time in the history of God's people the comparative state of the church in the world has been just as desolate. The rare exceptions to this rule are the revivals, the spiritual awakenings that have occurred from time to time. These blessed periods of spiritual refreshment when the church, the gospel and righteousness has risen to a dominant role in world affairs have been extremely brief and far between. They have, however, in those brief periods accomplished enormous strides, restored vital life and truth, and lain again rock-solid principles upon which the saints could prosecute the gospel for generations to come.

While we wait and pray for such awakenings and join the psalmists with our own lamentations it might be profitable for us to make a few observations.

First, this state of things is no cause for alarm. It is not abnormal. We should not be shocked or surprised. We, the church, are aliens in a hostile land. We are in a state of conflict, fierce warfare against an enemy hell-bent on destroying us. Our Lord nowhere promised us immunities against ravages from such assaults, only final victory. Every generation of Christians have felt that theirs was the worst that ever existed. But we should bear in mind

that the griefs we bear in our time are like our other trials, none that are not *"common to man."*

**“The evidences of God's powerful workings, of the blessings of His presence, the tokens of His assurances are yet plenteous among us who yet see all things working unto His glory and for our salvation.”**

Second, we should note that some of the things that are said here are not literally true. Either the psalmist, like ourselves often, thinks things to be worse than they are (we have an Elijah/Juniper tree complex and imagine ourselves the only ones left), or he is speaking in hyperbole. We often do that, too. For example, God is not angry with His blood-bought people: They have been eternally and perpetually reconciled through the blood of Christ. He has certainly not cast off the sheep of his pasture even temporarily, let alone eternally. God's sanctuary is not, nor shall every be, entirely desolate. Not all the meeting places of God's people have been consumed in the enemy's fire. There are multitudes of fresh, vital, living gatherings of God's people every day. The evidences of God's powerful workings, of the blessings of His presence, the tokens of His assurances are yet plenteous among us who yet see all things working unto His glory and for our salvation. And God's people have never been, nor shall ever be without His faithful prophets.

Finally, we must dispel from our minds any notion that these lamentations betray a discouraged, pessimistic, despairing heart. The very opposite is true. The psalm is filled with not only hope, but strong confidence and expectation of the imminence of God's arising to rectify all the wrong that is rampant. "How long do You intend to put up with this?" (he knows it is not going on forever). "Why have You withdrawn Your mighty right hand? Get it out of Your bosom." "Our God is the Eternal King Who never has ceased, and will not cease from working salvation in the midst of this earth. He orders the seasons. He doesn't have to wait for the sunshine, clouds or rain, for darkness or daybreak. He is the cause of all circumstances and climate. A company of fools are blaspheming the name of the great God, threatening His beloved purchased people. They are poor and needy, dwelling in an earth filled with cruel enemies. You are the avenger of the poor and needy, and You will surely arise to the vindication of Your own Name, Your own cause, and will with mighty power silence the tumult of all who have risen up against You."

It is part of the great mystery of fervent, earnest and prevailing prayer that we keenly feel the real distress, awful sorrow, terrifying dangers and threats of our present circumstances. We are not always bright-eyed and cheerful. Sometimes our souls are bowed extremely low with the awesome evils closing in upon us, our eyes red with weeping and our voices cracked with crying. Yet in our prayers at such time there is a faith, a confidence, a hope and expectation that we shall be heard, that the vaunting, taunting wickedness oppressing us shall not triumph, that our Great God hears us, and that truth, righteousness and salvation is imminent. This is an unresolvable paradox. Without both, prayer is not real. It cannot be sincere petition without the first, and without the second it is no more than the vain repetitions and babblings of unbelief.

Let us therefore count the awful weight of oppressing evil about us, know the ruin of our religious scene, feel our impotence to rectify it, and then, in confident expectation, lay hold of the promises of our able and faithful God.

For information on the schedule of Grace And Truth Camps, speakers and use of facilities, visit the website listed below.  
[www.graceandtruthenterprises.homestead.com/](http://www.graceandtruthenterprises.homestead.com/)

## The Battle Is The LORD'S

(Title Supplied By Editor)

David The Youth: "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all the assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands." (1st Samuel 17:46-47)

"The dialogue before the battle has many parallels in classical times and among savage peoples. Goliath's bluster is full of contempt of David and truculent (fierce; cruel; savage) self-confidence. Its coarseness is characteristic,—he will make his boyish antagonist food for vultures and jackals. It is exactly what a bully would say. David's answer throbs with buoyant confidence, and stands as a stimulating example of the temper in which God's soldiers should go out to every fight, no matter against what odds. It fully recognizes the formidable armoury of the enemy,—sword for close quarters, spear to thrust with, and javelin to fling at a distance, every weapon that ingenuity could fashion and trained skill could wield. Goliath was a walking arsenal, and little David took count of his weapons as they clanked and flashed. It is no part of faith's triumph to ignore the number and sharpness of the enemy's arms. But faith sees them all, and keeps unterrified and unashamed of the poor leathern sling and smooth stones. The unarmed hand which grasps God's hand should never tremble; and he who can say 'I come...in the name of the Lord of hosts,' has no need to be afraid of an army of Goliaths, though each bristled with swords and spears like a porcupine.

The great name on which David's faith rested, 'the Lord of hosts,' appears to have sprung into use in this epoch, and to have one precious fruit of its frequent wars. Conflict is blessed if it teaches the knowledge of the unseen Commander who marshals not only men, but all the forces of the universe and the armies of heaven, for the defence of His servants and the victory of His own cause. The fullness of the divine name is learned by degrees, as our needs impress the various aspects of His character; and the revelation contained in this appellation is the gift of that fierce and stormy time, a possession forever. He who defies the armies of Israel has to reckon with the Lord of those armies, whose name proclaims at once His eternal, self-originated, and self-sustained being, His covenant, His presence with His earthly host, and the infinite ranks of obedient creatures who are His soldiers and their allies. That is 'the Name' in the strength of which we may 'set up our banners' and be sure of victory. Note how David flings back Goliath's taunts in his teeth. He is sure that God will conquer through him, and, though he has no sword, that he will somehow hack the big head off; and that it is the host of the Philistines on whom the vultures and jackals are to feed to-day.

His faith sees the victory before the battle is begun, and trusts, not in his own weak power, but only 'in the name of the Lord'. Note, too, the result which he expects—no glory for himself, though that came unsought, when the shrill songs from the women of Israel met the victors, but to all the world the proof that Israel had a God, and to Israel ('this assembly') the renewed lesson of their true weapons and of their Almighty Helper. Such utter suppression of self is inseparable from trust in God, and without it no soldier of His has a right to expect victory. To fight 'in the name of the Lord' requires hiding our own name. If we are really going to war for Him, and in His strength, we ought to expect to conquer. Believe that you will be beaten, and you will be. Trust to Him to make you 'more than conquerors,' and the trust will bring about its own fulfillment."

- Alexander Maclaren  
(1826-1910)

Excerpt from a sermon titled: "UNARMED FAITH".  
 From a reprint by Baker Book House.

# Encouragement In The Valley



The Valley of Humiliation is an inescapable reality for the people of God. Sooner or later, our pathway to the heavenly Zion will lead every one of us directly through it. Why must this be? There are lessons to be learned during our earthly sojourn that can only be mastered in that lowly 'place'. And spiritual fruit to be born that can only bloom and develop into maturity there. Moreover, there are rare beauties hidden within the quiet recesses of the valley that are found nowhere else. But what exactly is this valley?

John Bunyan's metaphorical Valley of Humiliation denotes a spiritual proving ground, a time of severe and manifold testing due to circumstances brought about, in God's providence, for the purpose of trying and purging His children. Many latent inclinations lie deep within us, things of which we are largely unaware. But these innate tendencies—pride in particular—will often rise quickly to the surface under the right provocation. The Valley of Humiliation is specifically designed to both uncover these sinful propensities and purge them from us, much as the skillful refiner removes dross from precious metal.

Since our greatest spiritual lessons are sel-

dom learned apart from trials and affliction, we are unlikely to

**“And as He heals our wounded spirits by bringing the Scriptures to remembrance and applying them to our hearts and minds, He uses our ‘valley’ experiences to instruct us more perfectly in the way of life.”**

What a comfort it is to know that even though God may allow us to be wounded in the battle, He will never abandon us to the malice of the enemy! The Lord Jesus Christ, our great Physician, ministers to us and heals any spiritual injury we may incur. He is the “*Tree of Life*” whose “*leaves*” are able to restore the wounded soul to health (**Revelation 22:1-2**). Through the power of His Spirit and by means of His Word, He strengthens, refreshes, rearms and enables us to continue our journey. And as He heals our wounded spirits by bringing the Scriptures to remembrance and applying them to our hearts and minds, He uses our ‘valley’ experiences to instruct us more perfectly in the way of life. A poignant reminder that the Valley of Humiliation is essential to our progress in grace!

Since we are poor judges of our own spiri-

trials and affliction, we are unlikely to make it through this valley without bearing scars of some sort. And if, perhaps like the patriarch Jacob, we are permanently weakened by the ordeal, it is only so that God's strength may be made perfect in our weakness.

tual growth, we are wise not to try to assess our spiritual maturity. Or anyone else's, for that matter! Pride is the chief culprit in every failure here, because it always distorts our judgment. Like an enemy lurking in the shadows, pride lies hidden within, waiting for the right opportunity to assert itself. And it is not a problem that is limited to those who have superior knowledge or exceptional gifts. Pride is common to all! Most of us, if we are honest, will admit that it takes little enough to cause this ‘enemy’ to show its ugly face. But a proud spirit, even when successfully concealed from others, always denotes a weak Christian character.

Unlike Apollyon's covering of pride, God's people are to be clothed with humility (**Matthew 5:3-5 1 Peter 5:5**). Since pride dwells in the heart, that is where God deals with it. He brings things into our lives to chasten our souls—to reduce us in rank—to lower us in our own estimation and, perhaps, in that of others. But He does so in order to purify us and eliminate the things that would hinder us spiritually (**Psalms 66:10 Proverbs 22:4**).

The abasing of pride requires having our distorted self-image shattered. It is mortifying to the flesh to see ourselves as we really are, and not as we like to imagine. Great inner turmoil is involved and often, strife and contention with other people as well. In commenting upon **Matthew 7:2**, Oswald Chambers observed, “The things we criticize in others we are guilty of ourselves” (*My Utmost For His Highest*).

So if the proud spirit of another is offensive to us, perhaps we should take a good look at ourselves! As we contend against pride in another, the Lord will use the circumstances to show us some unseemly things in ourselves. In this regard, the very people we view as adversaries are really 'friends' in disguise, if our conflicts with them bring about the abasement of our pride. Overestimation of self will be gradually corrected, as pride is conquered in proportion. But it dies hard!

Our growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is really the putting on of Him—becoming increasingly more like Him, having His mind developed in us and following in His steps. This slow but sure work of God's Spirit spans our entire lives as believers. And nothing so manifests the character of Christ as a truly humble mind. But godly humility cannot co-exist with a proud spirit.

Since pride was Satan's downfall, he desires that it be ours as well. Therefore, he scores a big victory when we display a proud spirit like unto his. As we seek to walk with the Lord, we must do battle with our own flesh (**Romans 6:11--14 Romans 8:12-14 Galatians 5:16**). When this battle leads us into the Valley of Humiliation, our flesh may contend with the purpose of God for us there. And Satan always takes the side of our flesh by playing to its strength! However, the Spirit of God is called to our side to be our Helper in the conflict. Thus, by His power, our flesh is progressively subdued and overcome.

How good it would be for us if we learned from our past failures and mistakes! But, with the passing of time, we tend to either forget or excuse them. Moreover, because we are such slow learners, we are doomed to repeat the lessons of the valley many times.

The quality of godly humility is an excellent indicator of spiritual health and prosperity of soul, but its prerequisite is that we take up our cross and die to self. Our natural inclination is to try to improve our lot in life, promote our own interests and, in general, exalt ourselves. But we cannot serve two masters! If we would be the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, our personal goals must be subservient to His purpose for us. Our will must surrender to His will, and our human reason must bow before His infinite wisdom. A truly humble mind exalts God to His rightful place in our hearts and minds, and causes us to view

ourselves in a truer light (**Romans 12:3**). Moreover, it is also outworked in a practical sense, in the way in which we relate to others (**Matthew 23:11-12**). As godly humility increases in the soul, so does the virtue of faith. Then, slowly but surely, the character of our Lord will shine forth in us to the glory of God.

Although we desire to cast off every prideful tendency and walk in humility before our Lord and before men, the thing often proves an impossible task. We are not able to abase ourselves sufficiently in our own strength; divine help is needed. And herein lies the chief purpose of the Valley of Humiliation. In the seclusion of that fruitful lowland, our heavenly Father administers the chastening that is so essential to the development of a Christ-like character. And is strong evidence of our sonship (**Hebrews 12:4-11**)! This process is often exquisitely painful, but afterward, there is scope for the virtue of true humility to blossom and grow (**James 4:10 1 Peter 5:5-7**).

For most of us, the acquisition of godly humility is a difficult lesson that requires multiple passages through the Valley of Humiliation. In such times, our first reaction may be to murmur and complain—to question God's providential dealings, as if He owed us an explanation. But by fighting against our situation and failing to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, we in no way alter God's purpose in bringing us to the valley. We only succeed in being the troublers of our own souls.

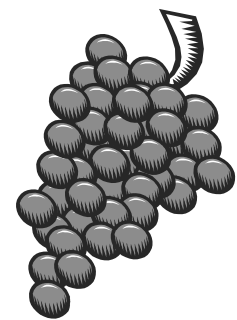
Quiet submission to God's will and purpose in spite of adverse circumstances is a thing much easier said than done. It develops gradually, and only as faith is strengthened in proportion (**Psalms 131**). A faith that sees God's hand in everything and learns, perhaps the hard way, not to second guess His wisdom or blame secondary causes. A faith that can see beyond the difficulty! God brings us low, when needed, so that He may exalt us in due time (**1 Peter 5:6**). When will that be? Not until we are able to bear it with the dignity and grace of a truly humble mind, for only then will it do us no spiritual harm.

Dear afflicted soul, there is great cause for encouragement even when we find ourselves under heavy trial, yet again! Like John Bunyan's character, Christian, we would never make it through such times in our own strength. But remember, dear suffering one, that when we must make

that difficult passage through the valley, we never walk alone (**Isaiah 43:1-2**). The purpose of God may lead us into that lowly place but will not forsake us there. He is only preparing us to be more profitable servants in His Kingdom and bring forth more fruit for His glory. Moreover, when we come face-to-face with the enemy in that solitary place, an unseen Friend stands right by our side. Covered with His all-encompassing armor, we will be able to stand in the "evil day".

Christian was not the same after his sojourn through the Valley of Humiliation and neither will we be. God's work of purging and perfecting His people is a slow but sure one. Have we reached the point in our spiritual journey where we can sincerely thank God for our 'valley' experiences (**James 1:2-4**)? If so, we will be better able to reflect upon their beneficial nature. For it is only as the dross is removed that the beauty of pure gold may shine forth. Likewise, it is only in the 'refinery' called the Valley of Humiliation that pride and other fleshly hindrances are purged away.

So look up, dear brother or sister in Christ! When we are in the valley, there is nowhere else to set our sights. We dare not look to ourselves, for here we are learning to fear doing that! Look upward, but not to the hills that outline the valley high above. We must lift our eyes to the Lord Jesus Christ, for our help comes from Him alone (**Psalms 121:1-2 Jeremiah 3:23**). When we finally come to the end of the valley, not only will we know more about ourselves, we will have more perfect knowledge of the One who walked by our side and guided us safely through, every step of the way.



Excerpts From:  
*Descent Into The Valley Of Humiliation*  
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# What Is Faith?

Michael Pfleegor

*“Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.” John 2:23-24*

Words such as faith, believe, unbelief, etc. are so widely used that I must qualify what I mean. Even among professed Christians, there is confusion and ignorance. I refer to the faith through which one is saved—“saving faith.” There is danger even here of being misunderstood to mean that faith itself saves a man, renders him acceptable to God, and assures him of future glory. Perish the thought at once! Faith saves no one; only Jesus Christ saves. Faith is the hand that lays hold of the Savior, to be saved by Him.

In **John 2**, we see some who believed in Jesus; they had faith. These weren't atheists or agnostics. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, He was sent by God, and did the works of God. You may be like them: “I believe in Jesus; He's the Son of God; He died on the cross to save me; He arose from the dead; and He's coming again.” Can such a faith save you? Modern evangelists would jump for joy at such a tremendous response (“*MANY believed*”), and shout: “You're saved!” But Jesus throws cold water on this “revival” when He does not give himself to them.

Jesus, what are you doing? Here is much fruit ripe for the picking. They believe in you, already. They've made a decision for you; how can you reject them? Though they had a kind of faith, they did not obtain Christ by it; therefore, it was not a true, saving faith. Jesus makes believers into sons of God (**John 1:12**), but these believers Jesus rejects.

Thus, friend, you can believe all the right things, and still not have true, saving faith. You can believe the Bible, believe you're a Christian, believe Jesus died for you, even believe you're on your way to heaven, and still not be saved. Holding to such notions no more saves you, than believing you're a bird enables you to fly. So what is true, saving faith? And how can I know I have it?

First, faith is a divine revelation. Jesus said, “*It is written...They shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*” (**John 6:45**). Not some audible voice or vision, but a knowledge and conviction received from God Himself. Normally this

is received through the preaching or reading of God's Word (**Romans 10:17**). But not all who hear the Gospel receive this faith: that is why a person can be raised in church, believe all the right things, and still end up in hell. Some do hear with the ear of faith, the truth and conviction of it imparted by God. Faith is, therefore, not the product of man's heart. It's not the decision of your will, nor reciting of a prayer. Faith is most unnatural and alien to each of us; though all men may have a kind of faith, they do not have this saving faith (**2Thessalonians 3:2**). In a word: “*is the gift of God*” (**Ephesians 2:8**).

Secondly, faith is seeing the glory of Jesus Christ, and treasuring Him. “*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious*” (**1Peter 2:7**). Nothing better distinguishes true faith from false, than one's view of Christ. When you see Christ in the beauty of His holiness, full of grace and truth, God in flesh, suffering innocently yet loving and praying for His persecutors, worthy of all glory and acceptance before the Father, against the backdrop of your own wretched heart, your bondage in sin, your hatred and wickedness toward God and men, your well-deserved condemnation: that is faith. When Christ is everything you are not, but you desire to have Him for yourself, and to be made like Him; when Christ is the priceless treasure you must have if it means having nothing else: that is faith. Give me Jesus, or I die!

“Oh, that's just a silly sentimentality.” Then you haven't seen Christ in His glory. Paul treasured Christ this way: “*I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” (**Philippians 3:8**). The merchant joyfully sold all he had to gain Christ the treasure (**Matthew 13:44**). That is why men do not come to Christ; they treasure something else more than Him. Some love parents or children more than Christ; some possessions or enjoyment of this life; others love comfort, ease, or the praise of men more than Christ. But to all these Jesus says, “*He that loveth father or mother...son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*” (**Matthew 10:37**).

Lastly, faith is confidence in the person and work of Christ with no confidence in self. “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (**Philippians 3:3**). To truly believe is to lose all confidence in your own goodness, righteousness, understanding, wisdom, will, worthiness, etc. And it is to gain all confidence in Christ, Who becomes your “*wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). Whatever access and acceptance before God, whatever blessings from God, whatever hope you have, you have it in Christ, and you look for no other way: that is faith. Christ's offering for sin is sufficient (**Hebrews 10:14**), His perfect work cannot be improved by your faith or works, God is satisfied with Him, and you are satisfied with Him. In short, Christ is your life!

Friends, this is the faith that lays hold of Christ, and you can know whether you have this faith. If these things are true of you: you KNOW God's Word is true, and not because men taught you; and you SEE Christ as the only treasure worth having; and BELIEVE if only you had Christ you would be safe and satisfied: then, on the authority of God's Word, you have Him, and are saved! “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (**John 3:36**). If you don't have this kind of faith, seek it from God, and don't rest until He gives it to you.



Michael Pfleegor

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## THE SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL MEETING

**PLACE & DATE: Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Mo., Tuesday, September 11, 2007**

**SCHEDULE OF THE DAY: Bible Conference, 10:00 & 11:00 AM & 7:00 PM**

**BUSINESS SESSION FOLLOWING A MEAL PROVIDED AFTER THE MORNING SERVICES**



Pastor Holmes Moore and the members of Bible Baptist Church are delighted to announce that the SGBF will be returning to St. Louis this fall for its 2007 meeting. It was in 2001 that BBC had the honor of hosting the inaugural meeting of the newly formed Fellowship. Since then, we have visited Springfield, Missouri; Richmond, Virginia; Madison, Alabama; Nesbitt, Mississippi; and Delaware, Oklahoma.

This will mark the sixth annual meeting of our young Fellowship of Sovereign Grace Baptist churches, and in the will of God, it shall return to where it all started six years ago.

Ironically, the date will be exactly the same as the first meeting, Tuesday, September 11. Were it not for our firm conviction that our great God is Sovereign over all providence, thus keeping us free from ominous fears, we might wish to reconsider. Forever etched in the memories of all Americans is the date 9/11/01. No, it is not because of any particular notice that the nation had taken of our humble inauguration as a Fellowship. Rather, it was on that day that over 3,000 Americans lost their lives at the hands of Moslem terrorists. None of us shall ever forget the awful horrors of that day, 9/11/01, when our nation sustained its worst attack ever on American soil.

Yet, Divine Providence had so ordered that we should be assembled on that day. All were in a state of stunned disbelief over the images we were seeing, and the reports that were being received, as we proceeded with our meeting.

Much of that day was devoted to prayer for our beloved nation and its leaders, and for the many families that were devastated due to this unprovoked and evil attack upon our nation.

As we come together on 9/11/07, the sixth anniversary of that awful and unforgettable day, we will, this time, conjoin the offering of prayers for our nation at war, and for our brave troops, who because of what is now simply referred to as "*nine-eleven*," have been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of these brave heroes come

from our own church families. Let us pray for them. Let us also pray for the success of our nation's war effort, and that, for sake of the Gospel, the Lord might be pleased to give us victory.

We trust that September 11, 2007 will be a day of great blessings from God, as we come together around His Word, and the things that pertain to His Kingdom. All who read this announcement are cordially invited to come and enjoy the day with us.

If you enjoy good preaching, your soul should thrill with what we have in store for you. In the morning session our first speaker will be Michael Pfleeger, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Blackduck, Minnesota. Michael is one of our very gifted and promising young preachers, now in his second year of the pastorate. Speaking second in the morning service will be Jim Gables, a long time pastor, well known evangelist and conference speaker. Our evening speaker will be Ron Staley, founder and pastor of New Hope Baptist Church of Mechanicsville, Virginia. Pastor Staley is currently serving as editor of the Sovereign Grace Messenger.

There will be a business meeting after lunch to be attended by all of the pastors/messengers of the member churches. All who desire to sit in on the business meeting are welcome. We especially encourage visiting pastors who might be interested in becoming a part of this effort to attend, not only for the good fellowship, but for sake of a more effective Gospel outreach through a united effort.

The ladies of our church will be serving two meals. All are invited to have dinner with us just after the morning service and before the afternoon business meeting. Supper will be served at 5:30 p.m. This will allow some time for fellowship around the table before the 7:00 evening service.

We do ask our out-of-town guests to make their own motel reservations. Some of our families have offered to keep guests in their homes. These accommodations are limited and available on a *first call – first serve* basis.

## We hope you can "*Meet us in St. Louis*" this fall!



## **ATTENTION: IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**Make plans to attend the annual meeting of The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship and Bible Conference on September 11, 2007 at Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, MO. Details on page 23.**

## **Sufficient Grace**

One evening, as (John) Bunyan was in a meeting of Christian people, full of sadness and terror, suddenly there “brake in” upon him with great power, and three times together, the words, “*My grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee.*” And “Oh, methought,” says he, “that every word was a mighty word unto me; as ‘*my*’, and ‘*grace*’, and ‘*sufficient*,’ and ‘*for thee*,’ they were then and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be.” The great practical question for us, in our endeavor to live the godly life, is not—What strength have we for the bearing? God’s help never comes first to a man in his circumstances, but always first in him. The grace given is grace helping him in the circumstances. So the Christian often knows that he is helped when those around him can see no signs of the helping. God’s promise from the olden time is this, “*As thy days so shall thy strength be.*” In all our relations with human trouble, our attention is directed to the removal of the trouble itself or the change of the circumstances which occasioned the trouble. We move the pain-wearied sufferer into a position of greater ease. We soften and smooth the pillow for the aching head. We offer temporary help to the man distressed in business. But God does not promise any man that he will alter his circumstances, or altogether relieve him from his trouble. The economy of life is arranged, in the Divine wisdom, for the greatest good of the greatest number, and consequently some of those circumstances which bring trouble to Christian hearts cannot be altered without involving injury to others. God “strengthens with strength in the soul.” To Him body and circumstances are secondary things; souls are of the first importance, and bodies and circumstances gain their importance by their influence on souls. Inward strength to bear is a far higher provision than any mere mastery of the ills and troubles of this life...The man with “sufficient grace” is efficient to all work, whether it be bearing or doing. He is nowhere alone; grace is with him.

From “THE PULPIT COMMENTARY, EERDMANS”. Author unidentified.

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