

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 31

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The Myth of Free Will

Walter J. Chantry

MOST PEOPLE say that they believe in “free will.” Do you have any idea what that means? I believe that you will find a great deal of superstition on this subject. The will is saluted as the grand power of the human soul which is completely free to direct our lives. But from what is it free? And what is its power?

THE MYTH OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL FREEDOM

No one denies that man has a will — that is, a faculty of choosing what he wishes to say, do, and think. But have you ever reflected on the pitiful weakness of your will? Though you have the ability to make a decision, you do not have the power to carry out your purpose. Will may devise a course of action, but will has no power to execute its intention.

Joseph's brothers hated him. They sold him to be a slave. But God used their actions to make him a ruler over themselves. They chose their course of action to harm Joseph. But God in His power directed events for Joseph's good. He said, *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good”* (Gen 50:20).

And how many of your decisions are miserably thwarted? You may choose to be a millionaire, but God's providence is likely to prevent it. You may decide to be a scholar, but bad health, an unstable home, or lack of finances may frustrate your will.

You choose to go on a vacation, but an automobile accident may send you to the hospital instead.

By saying that your will is free, we certainly do not mean that it determines the course of your life. You did not choose the sickness, sorrow, war, and poverty that have spoiled your happiness. You did not choose to have enemies. If man's will is so potent, why not choose to live on and on? But you must die. The major factors which shape your life cannot thank your will. You did not select your social status, color, intelligence, etc.

**“You always choose on the
basis of your disposition,
according to the condition of
your heart.”**

Any sober reflection on your experience will produce the conclusion, *“A man's heart deviseth his way: but THE LORD DIRECTETH his steps”* (Prov 16:9). Rather than extolling the human will, we ought to humbly praise the Lord whose purposes shape our lives. As Jeremiah confessed, *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jer 10:23).

Yes, you may choose what you want, and you may plan what you will do; but your will is not free to accomplish anything contrary to the purposes of God. Neither have you any power to reach your goals but that which God allows you. The next time you are so enamored with your own will, remember Jesus' parable about the

rich man. The wealthy man said, *“This I WILL do: I WILL pull down all my barns, and build greater; and there I WILL bestow all my fruits and my goods...But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee”* (Luke 12:18-21). He was free to plan but not free to accomplish; so it is with you.

THE MYTH OF ETHICAL FREEDOM

But freedom of the will is cited as an important factor in making MORAL decisions. Man's will is said to be free to choose between good and evil. But again we must ask, from what is it free? And what is man's will free to choose?

The will of man is his power to choose between alternatives. Your will does decide your actions from a number of options. You have the faculty to direct your own thoughts, words, and deeds. Your decisions are not formed by an outside force, but from within yourself. No man is compelled to act contrary to his will, nor forced to say what he does not wish. Your will guides your actions.

Yet this does not mean that the power to decide is free from all influence. You make choices based on your understanding, your feelings, your likes and dislikes, and your appetites. In other words, your will is not free from yourself! Your choices are determined by your own basic character.

The will is not independent of your nature, but the slave of it. Your choices do not shape your character, but your character guides your choices. The will is quite

continued next page



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partial to what you know, feel, love, and desire. You always choose on the basis of your disposition, according to the condition of your heart.

It is just for this reason that your will is NOT free to do good. Your will is the servant of your heart, and your heart is evil. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY imagination of the thoughts of his heart was ONLY evil CONTINUALLY”* (Gen 6:5). *“There is NONE that doeth good, no, not one”* (Rom 3:12). No power forces man to sin contrary to his will, but the descendants of Adam are so evil that they always choose the evil.

Your decisions are molded by your understanding, and the Bible says of all men, *“And their foolish heart was darkened”* (Rom 1:21). Man can only be righteous when he desires to have fellowship with God, but, *“There is NONE that seeketh after God”* (Rom 3:11). Your appetites crave sin, and thus you cannot choose God. To choose good is contrary to human nature. If you chose to obey God, it would be the result of external compulsion. But you are free to choose, and hence your choice is enslaved to your own evil nature.

If fresh meat and tossed salad were placed before a hungry lion, he would choose the flesh. This is because his nature dictates the selection. It is just so with man. The will of man is free from outside force, but not from the bias of human nature. That bias is against God. Man's powers of decision are free to choose whatever the human heart dictates; therefore there is no possibility of a man choosing to please God without a prior work of divine grace.

What most people mean by free will is the idea that man is by nature neutral and therefore able to choose either good or

evil. This simply is not true. The human will and the whole of human nature is bent to ONLY evil CONTINUALLY. Jeremiah asked, *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil”* (Jer 13:23). It is impossible. It is contrary to nature. Thus do men desperately need the supernatural transformation of their natures, else their wills are enslaved to choosing evil.

In spite of the great praise that is given to “free will,” we have seen that man's will is not free to choose a course contrary to God's purposes nor free to act contrary to his own moral nature. Your will does not determine the events of your life nor the circumstances of it. Ethical choices are not formed by a neutral mind but always dictated by your personality makeup.

THE MYTH OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Nevertheless many assert that the human will makes the ultimate choice of spiritual life or spiritual death. They say that here the will is altogether free to choose eternal life offered in Jesus Christ or to reject it. It is said that God will give a new heart to all who choose by the power of their own free will to receive Jesus Christ.

There can be no question that receiving Jesus Christ is an act of the human will. It is often called “faith.” But how do men come to willingly receive the Lord? It is usually answered, “Out of the power of their own free will.” But how can that be? Jesus is a PROPHET. To receive Him means to believe all that He says. In John 8:41-45 Jesus made it clear that you were born of Satan. This evil father hates the truth and imparted the same bias into your heart by nature. Hence said Jesus, *“Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”* How does the human will jump out of man to choose to believe what the human mind hates and denies?

Further, to receive Jesus means to embrace Him as a PRIEST — that is, to employ and depend on Him to sue out peace with God by sacrifice and intercession. Paul tells us that the mind with which we were born is hostile to God (Rom 8:7). How can the will escape the influence of human nature which was born with a violent enmity to God? It would be insane for the will to choose peace when every bone and drop of blood cries out for rebellion.

Then too, receiving Jesus means to welcome Him as a KING. It means choosing to obey His every command, to confess His right of rule, and to worship before His throne. But the human mind, emotions, and desires all cry out, *“We will not have this man to reign over us”* (Luke 19:14). If my whole being hates His truth, hates His rule, and hates peace with God, how can my will be responsible for receiving Jesus? How can such a sinner have faith?

It is not man's will but God's GRACE that must be thanked for giving a sinner a new heart. Unless God changes the heart, creates a new spirit of peace, truthfulness, and submission, man will not choose to receive Jesus Christ and eternal life in Him. A new heart must be given before a man can believe, or else the human will is hopelessly enslaved to evil human nature — even in the matter of conversion. Jesus said, *“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye MUST be born again”* (John 3:7). Unless you are, you will never see His kingdom.

Read John 1:12 & 13. It says that those who believe on Jesus have been *“born, not of the will of man, but of God.”* As your will is not responsible for your coming into this world, it is not responsible for the new birth. It is your Creator who must be thanked for your life, and if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation (II Cor 5:17). Who ever chose to be created? When Lazarus rose from the dead, he then could choose to answer the call of Christ, but he could not choose to come to life. So Paul said in Ephesians 2:5, *“Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).”* Faith is the first act of a will made new by the holy Spirit. Receiving Christ is an act of man just as breathing is, but God must first give life.

No wonder Martin Luther wrote a book entitled *The Bondage of the Will* which he considered one of his most important treatises. The will is in the chains of an evil human nature. You who extol the free will as a great force are clinging to a root of pride. Man, as fallen in sin, is utterly helpless and hopeless. The will of man offers no hope. It was the will choosing the forbidden fruit that brought us into misery. The powerful grace of God alone offers deliverance. Cast yourself upon God's mercy for salvation. Ask for the Spirit of Grace that He may create a new spirit within you. ♦ ♦ ♦

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Inside This Issue:

The Myth of Free Will Walter J. Chantry	1
Interview on the Bondage of the Will Dean Olive and Kyle White	4
Editorial: Whosoever Will? Ron Staley	8
What is the Cross? Horatius Bonar	9
A Solid Port and Steady Winds to Speed Seaworthy Vessels to the World Trevor Johnson and Paul Snider	10
Missions Reports and Updates	14
The Gospel and Generation Z Dustin Segers	19
We Can Pray Greta Dean	22
Report from the New Chairman of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship Jon Cardwell	23

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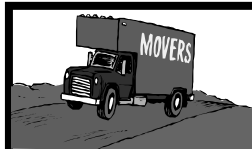
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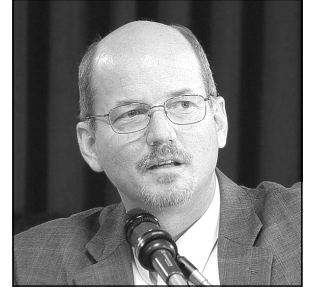
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The Bondage of the Human Will in Sin Does Not Excuse the Sinner

but rather shows the depth of depravity to which sin has brought the human race. On the other hand, that God would draw to Christ such a multitude out of all nations and show the salvation that comes through Christ, crucified; drawing those who would never be saved otherwise, is a marvelous display of the grand truth of the sovereign love and mercy of God. The only reason assigned for such grace is “*the good pleasure of His will.*” And when in truth this is realized, it can only end in “*the praise of the glory of His grace.*” Pastors Dean Olive and Kyle White were given four identical questions; questions that have exercised the saints for ages. We appreciate their work, their honesty, their struggles with these things, and only ask that you prayerfully read the following pages. - **Editor**



Dean Olive is pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Madison, Alabama. He is also a conference speaker and was instrumental in the formation of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.



Kyle White is pastor of Community Baptist Church of Elmendorf, Texas. He is also a conference speaker as well as host pastor of a Bible conference held each March.

Q. Why preach the gospel to the lost if people are unable to savingly believe on Christ of their own accord?

A. (Dean Olive) I see three primary reasons why we should preach the gospel to all men, even though they do not have the power of their own accord, to believe and be saved.

The first reason is the most obvious. We preach the gospel to all people because we are commanded to by our Lord. Jesus commissioned His church to preach the gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15). Nothing should hinder our obedience to His clear command. That God said for us to do something is always the highest motive for doing it.

Another reason why we should preach the gospel to all men is because Scripture teaches that God takes no delight in the destruction of the sinner (Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9); thus salvation is freely offered to all, although His decretive will is to save the elect only. There is a distinct, redeeming love God has for those whom He has chosen in Christ, but there is also a general, benevolent love for mankind in general (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16; Mt. 23:37). When the sweet invitations of the gospel are declined, the thorough depravity of the soul is revealed. This rejection of Christ, the only Savior of sinners, shows the depths of sin and necessitates the inflexible justice of Divine wrath (John 3:36).

The third reason is that preaching is the means God has ordained to save those whom he has chosen in Christ. “*How shall they hear without a preacher?... Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:14, 17). The predestinating purposes of God warrant the preaching of the gospel to all people. Since we do not know who the elect are, we must preach the gospel to all and plead with them to turn from sin and believe in Christ. Paul certainly did this. He wrote to the Corinthians about preaching the cross to hardened Jews and Gentiles, who found it either a stumbling block or foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18-25). But this same gospel is the power of God unto those who are saved (1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16).

God does not save sinners in a vacuum. He saves them by the proclamation of and belief in the truth. God has chosen from the beginning of time whom He would save but he also chose to save them “*through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” (2 Thess. 2:13).

No doctrine should ever inhibit preaching the gospel freely to all men. If we hold to a doctrine that hinders us from preaching the gospel freely to all men, we can be assured that we have misunderstood it is false.

A. (Kyle White) This question only comes to the mind when one sees the teaching in Scripture that man is *dead in trespasses and sins* (Eph. 2:1) and cannot come to Christ unless the Father *draws him* (John 8:44). When one understands that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, (1 Cor. 2:14), he may be led to ask the question under consideration. If man is without ability to “*savingly believe on Christ,*” then isn’t preaching the gospel, that includes a call to repent and believe, a waste of time and energy?

As we read the Scripture we quickly see that the gospel was not only preached by many, including Jesus Christ, it is commanded to be preached to all (Mark 16:15). Not only do we have the command to preach the gospel, we are assured that everyone who believes that gospel will be saved (Mark 16:16). Repeatedly in Scripture we are given this assurance: *whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16). There can be no legitimate case made from Scripture that the gospel should not be preached. The case must be made that this is the means by which God is pleased to save those that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

But if there is no natural ability to respond in saving faith to the preaching of the gospel, why preach?

a. We are commanded to do so. As obedient servants of Christ we do as our Master has ordained. He said preach the gospel to *every creature*, and therefore we do so.

b. We preach the gospel in hopes that sinners will hear and believe. This is the only means God has revealed to us that men will be saved. This is most clearly and beautifully established in Romans 10:14,15, *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

c. We preach the gospel with confidence that God is able to give lost people, who are naturally unable to "savingly believe," the faith to respond to the message. In John 6:64, 65, Jesus speaks of coming to Him as synonymous with believing. He said in vs. 44, *no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* We are certain that as we preach the gospel those that the Father has given to the Son will be enabled and will come to Him (John 6:37).

God is to be thanked for every lost person who believes the gospel that is preached. The gospel is His. The power that brings life to the dead sinner is His. The power that works through the Word in the sinner who believes is His. *Salvation is of the Lord.*

Q. Where is human responsibility if people are unable to come to true repentance from sin and faith in Christ by their natural will?

A. (Kyle White) Well, sadly, this is one of the questions that burdens many minds and may be instrumental in confusing many to the point of calling the gospel of sovereign grace into question. It is very important that we draw our theological conclusions from Scripture and not the wisdom of men. It is possible to take a point of truth and be led to a place God never intended. We must speak as the Scripture speaks. We must bridle our own thoughts by the Word of God.

Human responsibility means simply that a human being is responsible for the choices that he makes. Man is not a robot. Man is not preprogrammed in such a way that his choices are not really his choices. If this were so we must conclude that we are not truly human. Man is a reasoning, thinking, feeling, willing, and responsible being. He answers to his fellow humans in society for his actions and will ultimately answer to His Creator. Revelation 20:13, *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.* This verse addresses the unbeliever. It is clear that their inability to respond by nature to the call of the gospel does not prevent their being held accountable. Only if they are responsible can they justly be held accountable.

While this subject can get difficult and deep, it is sufficient to know that God declares that He will hold every person responsible for his actions. If a sinner who hears the gospel does not believe, he will be condemned. Why? *Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* (John 3:18). This much we know, *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) So we preach to sinners and press them with the revelation God has given.

God said through his prophet Ezekiel to the sinful nation of individuals who were threatened with death due to their unrepentant hearts: *why will ye die, O house of Israel?* (Ez. 18:31)

He did not address the ability/inability of their will to respond. He preached to them as responsible humans who must respond or die. We err when we teach the doctrine of total depravity in such a way that we leave sinners sensing they are not accountable for their response to the gospel. *Repent or perish* was the message of Jesus to unbelieving Jews. He knew who would believe and who would not. He knew they could not believe except it was given to them of His Father to believe. Yet, He dealt with them as those who were able to respond

A personal note: when my own mind gets bogged down with confusion over these theological concerns, I go to Scripture and take God's Word at face value. I am not always emotionally satisfied with the answers that I read or the ones that I give as I try to reconcile Biblical teaching. But I am satisfied that God has revealed what we need to know in the way that it should be known. It is my responsibility to take His Word in the balance that He gives it.

A. (Dean Olive) This question introduces us to a great problem. It rightly presumes that men are fallen and rendered impotent in will and heart to believe the gospel (Eph. 2:1). It also rightly presumes that depraved sinners are fully responsible to repent and believe the gospel (Acts 17:30), which happens to be something they are unable to do because of their fallen state (John 6:44). Many would call this an insurmountable philosophical problem. How can a sinner be responsible to believe if he cannot believe?

My first answer to this question is to affirm both the sinner's inability and the sinner's responsibility. Both are true though I may not be able to satisfactorily explain how they are compatible. There is no contradiction. This doctrine is in the realm of mystery, like the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or in the realm of paradox or antinomy. Moral responsibility to believe is not negated even though the Fall has rendered us helpless.

What should be recognized here is the great damage sin has done to man. We cannot believe because our will has been affected by sin. And this isn't just a matter of "cannot" but of "will not." Sinners don't want to believe because their sinful nature never chooses to do what it does not desire to do. A fallen sinner doesn't possess the ability to make good decisions. His desires or faculties for making decisions are controlled by his fallen will. He is fully capable of choosing what he wants, but what he wants isn't righteousness.

We lack the moral ability to come to Christ because of our sinful nature but that does not lessen our moral responsibility to believe the gospel one bit. The culprit is sin, not God. Great was our fall! Great is our moral bondage! Yet we are still free moral agents and are therefore responsible to God. God has the right to command us even though we lack the power to obey.

Q. How is the new birth brought about and what relationship does it have to true conversion?

A. (Dean Olive) The new birth is an act of God that leads to conversion. The only way out of the dilemma that we are in is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of the new birth (John 1:13; 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:14). Our eyes are opened to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ by the work of the Spirit in our hearts. Our spirit is quickened by the Holy Spirit and we are enabled to believe the gospel.

continued next page

We call this work of the Spirit regeneration. By the work of regeneration we are enabled to believe. Regeneration is prior to faith and is the cause of faith. The apostle John affirms that regeneration precedes faith in 1 John 5:1. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God" (ESV). The verb is perfect tense which indicates that faith is the direct consequence of our "having been born of God." Faith is the evidence of the new birth, not the cause. The eminent Southern Baptist Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, in commenting on this verse said, "The Divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing."

If faith comes first, then a dead sinner has the power to save himself. But faith does not come first. God must effectually call and quicken a dead sinner if he is to believe. We are born into God's family, "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:13). The new birth is the act of God's power and grace. We do not believe in order to be born again, but are born again in order that we might believe.

This order is very important and if it is not maintained, the whole teaching of salvation is turned on its head. And of course, that is exactly what has happened in evangelicalism today. Salvation is not viewed as a work of God but as a freewill decision of man. And the consequence of that error has been disastrous. Churches have been filled with professors who have made decisions but who have not been humbled, convicted, quickened, and effectually brought to repentance and faith in Christ.

Again, this truth is a lesson on how corrupt we are by nature. We are so corrupt that without the supernatural and sovereign work of the Spirit in our hearts, we would never believe in Christ.

A. (Kyle White) The new birth expresses the life that God imparts to one who is born dead in sin. John chapter three describes two births. Jesus made a statement to a religious Jewish leader named Nicodemus that was incomprehensible to the natural mind. He said, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (John 3:3). Nicodemus, understanding there to be only one birth, asked a most natural question: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born* (vs. 4)? Jesus' answer helps us to understand the nature of the new birth and how it is brought about. He confirms that if a man is only born of water he *cannot enter the kingdom of God* (vs. 5). That which is produced by natural birth, represented by the expression *born of water*, is only natural. Jesus identifies this as *the flesh* in vs. 6. Flesh can only produce that which is in agreement with flesh.

Scripture teaches us that *flesh* identifies that part of man that is contrary to God. *Flesh*, in the sense that it is used by Jesus, is incapable of pleasing God (Romans 8:8). Paul makes it clear that there is *no good thing* that dwells in the flesh. *Flesh* is essentially life apart from God in a moral and spiritual sense.

The *natural man* is another Biblical expression that seems to be synonymous with *flesh*. Paul describes this concept in 1 Corinthians 2:14. The mind of man, controlled by the principle of sin that dominates the natural man before conversion (Rom. 6:14, 20), is incapable of knowing God in an intimate and submissive manner. The most a man can know is that which fits his fleshly mind. To know God as He is to be known requires the presence and operation of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). Apart from the Spirit of God, that which is flesh remains flesh. *The flesh* will

forever characterize one who is only born of natural parents. In the beginning, Adam was made *in the likeness of God* and knew perfect communion with God. After his rebellion he began to produce children *in his own likeness, after his image* (Genesis 5:1-3). Each generation of humans have only been able to produce after their kind.

Being born *of water* is not sufficient to see and enter the kingdom of God. *Ye must be born again*.

But how can one be born again? From John 3 we understand the necessity of the Spirit. God must visit the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin. Only the Spirit can breathe life into one who does not possess the life of God in his soul. Apart from the Spirit of God every sinner remains dead, *alienated from the life of God* (Eph. 4:18), and incapable of giving life to himself.

But how does He do it? Scripture teaches that this work of the Spirit is His work alone done in relation with the Word of God. The Word of God is compared in Scripture to seed. A seed is incapable of producing life of its own. It must be planted and then the farmer must wait. Something happens, unseen to the natural eye, that triggers life in that seed and a plant springs forth and brings forth produce. So it is with the Word of God. It is like seed planted in the soil of the human heart. The Word of God is preached and somehow, by the powerful and mysterious working of the Spirit, life springs forth in the heart of the sinner who hears (Mark 4:26-29; 1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18).

This new birth is accompanied by repentance and faith (John 1:13; 1 John 5:1). This is that *new creature* that Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 5:17. This is the *new heart* and *new spirit* promised by the OT prophets (Jer. 36:27). This is the circumcised heart that embraces Jesus Christ and begins to *walk in newness of life* (Rom. 6:4) as one who *is risen with Christ* (Colossians 3:1; 2:6).

True conversion is always preceded and accompanied by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. This is the new birth. This is the beginning of eternal life in the soul of man. The sinner, once lost and unable to see his own need and God's salvation, is granted light and strength in the inner man to see the glory of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 3:16,17). This work continues into eternal glory in the born again one.

Q. Please explain what sin has done to spiritual ability, especially in regard to the human will.

A. (Kyle White) Sin is described in many ways in Scripture. It is obvious that God wants us to understand that sin has so impacted our wills that we cannot think straight, evaluate clearly, and make decisions that lead to everlasting life. If left to ourselves, we will always choose what seems right in our own eyes. In our best state we are *altogether vanity* (Ps. 39:5).

Sin, which entered the human race by way of Adam (Gen. 3 and Romans 5:12), has so corrupted each of our wills that apart from intervention by the Holy Spirit we will pursue our own way, to our own destruction. We will not agree with God. We will reject His estimation of our need and His provision for our salvation. *Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth*, will fall upon deaf ears and we will not respond in simple faith to this gospel call.

Man's will is controlled by his nature. As one reads in Genesis, it

becomes clear that man's natural tendency is to move away from God. The very reason for the world-wide flood is stated by God to be the degeneration within man, the corruption of his will. It is stated this way in Genesis 6:5, *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Grace, not human will, made the difference in Noah's life (Gen. 6:8).

The history of the nation of Israel is also clear evidence of the expression of the human will. Here was a nation clearly exposed to the true and living God. They had the direct guidance of God through the law and through many providential expressions of power. They had abundant evidences of God's holiness, expressed in hot anger against sin and tender compassion toward undeserving sinners. What else could have been provided to attract their wills to fully worship God? Yet their wills, for the most part, remained devoted to every kind of God-forbidden wickedness. They forsook God! This was the greatest charge leveled against the nation by the prophets. They forsook the living God and pursued "other gods" and worshipped the works of their own hands (Jeremiah 1:16).

In Scripture, *heart* is used in reference to that part of man that includes the will. Jeremiah describes the human heart as *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* (17:9) The human heart cannot be trusted. Deception is such an integral part of our natural makeup that we cannot trust our own thoughts. We need truth and stability that comes from outside of ourselves. We need the Spirit of truth working within us so that we might be able to understand and clearly see our need. This is that operation of the Spirit that Jesus speaks of in John 3, and of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 2. It is the Spirit of God that enables our sin-impacted will to break free and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for deliverance.

Scripture never directs our attention to sin as something that is so distinct from ourselves that we are somehow not accountable for the exercise of our wills. We do choose. We choose right or wrong. The awakened soul sees his great need to be loosed from the bondage of sin. He cannot be loosed by the sheer exercise of his will. He must cry out to the only Savior of sinners to break this bondage and enable him to willingly follow Christ.

For any who may be confused regarding the doctrines being discussed in these answers, please do not allow confusion to keep you from responding to the clear commands of Scripture. If you find that you cannot obey the gospel because the world is too attractive to you and your will is still leading you toward the fulfillment of the lusts of your flesh, cry out to God for deliverance. If you cannot cry out to God in sincerity, ask those who can to pray for you (Acts 8:24). Do what you can do! Do not be indifferent because of inability. Call upon Him Who is able!

When you stand before God in judgment, you will be held accountable for your sins. You will be held accountable for the exercise of your will. You will be held accountable for not responding to the gospel you have heard proclaimed. You can argue and reason and be lost in the confusion of theological quandaries, but nowhere do we find in Scripture that anyone will be condemned unjustly. If you come under the condemnation of God's judgment it will be because YOU have sinned and come

short of the glory of God. It will be because YOU loved darkness rather than light because your deeds were evil. It will be because YOU chose your own thoughts and the works of your own hands, and would not forsake all to believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. (Dean Olive) Sin left us spiritually dead. Sin even touches the will and renders us hopeless apart from the new birth. The darling doctrine of many today is the free will of man. God's sovereignty is limited with notions that man's will is free. But man's will is not free, at least in the sense that most say that it is. The common definition of free will posits man's will as being without any bias. If this were true it would mean that a sinful man is able to make choices from a position of spiritual neutrality.

But man isn't neutral, he is at enmity with God (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:7). That means he is sinful from head to toe. There isn't one part of our faculty that sin has not infected, including the will. Paul describes men outside of Christ as *"having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"* (Eph. 4:18). That is why we say there is no such thing as neutrality in natural man. There is no choice without desire and our desires are thoroughly tainted by the effects of sin.

Jesus declared that those who were not with Him were against Him (Matt. 12:30). Clearly, there is no neutrality of will. That being the case, it is folly to say that we can choose something that is contrary to our sinful nature. As sinners we are biased. By nature we are opposed and hostile to God. We are still free moral agents but we cannot nor would not choose contrary to our nature.

If we choose to speak of the free will of man, we must say that fallen man does have the ability to choose what he wants, but what he wants is governed by a sinful heart. Nothing has changed since Noah's day. Men are the same. *"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6:5). R. C. Sproul says, "Human will is free to follow personal inclinations, but fallen inclinations are always directed away from God."

We must reject the notion that man's will is free in the sense that he possesses the ability to choose apart from a heart inclined in every way toward sin. Such a view of man is not biblical. Man is depraved, radically and totally depraved (Rom. 3:10-12). He is a corrupt tree and can only produce corrupt fruit (Matt. 7:17-18).

This brings us back to the necessity of divine salvation. God must display his power to save us because we would never choose to believe in Christ, for that would be to choose what we do not desire. Our hope rests in the quickening power of God (Eph. 2:1-10). The Holy Spirit gives new life and enables us to believe in Christ.

So salvation is based on divine initiative. *"Salvation is of the Lord"* (Jonah 2:9). God the Father gave His only Son to die for our sins and He sent the Holy Spirit to effectually call and supernaturally quicken us. Without this work of grace, none would ever believe the gospel.

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**See page 18 for information on the Sovereign Grace Bible Conference to be held at
Community Baptist Church of Elmendorf, Texas, March 21-25, 2012.**

EDITORIAL: WHOSOEVER WILL?

Ron Staley

How much controversy has historically arisen around these words, “*whosoever will*,” it would be impossible to know. It has been a long standing focal point of debate between those who believe the Scriptures teach that salvation comes only and completely by the free grace of God, and those who are convinced it is man’s free will that secures salvation. One believes that the fall of man did not so ruin him as to rob him of the ability to choose and follow good over evil, God over sin, but that somehow his free will was left intact. The other believes that the sinner’s nature was completely ruined; that thus the will is also in bondage and not able in any wise to break free of itself from the shackles binding it to that fallen nature. The controversy is not whether or not one wills to come to Christ but rather why one does so. Does he come of his own free will, or does he do so only because of God’s work within him? If it is of his free will, then he has a right to boast in his choice and pat himself on the back for his own cooperation and contribution in salvation. But if, as the Scriptures clearly say in Romans 9:16, it is “*not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*”; if it is all of God and all of grace, then it can only be “*to the praise of the glory of His grace*.” (Emphasis added)

Yes, “*whosoever will*” may come – is called to come, and is given the greatest of assurance by Divine promise that in coming to Christ, he or she will be received by Him to the eternal blessing of his/her needy soul. Not only may one come; not only is he bidden with the strongest of promise to come; but he is bidden to come “*freely*,” knowing only his need, bringing absolutely nothing except the sin he yearns to be rid of, and taking the free gift of God’s wondrous gift of grace in Christ. It is to “*whosoever believeth*”: “*whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*.” (John 3:16; Revelation 22:17) None who know their need, feel the emptiness in which sin has left them, and yearn to be free of it are to be kept back from “*the water of life*.” To do so would be to deny the very emphatic words of the Lord Jesus himself, who bids the thirsty soul to come to Him. “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*.” (John 7:37b)

In times past, I have actually heard some preach to sinners, saying, “Come to Christ and see if He will save you. I don’t know if He will save you. He may or He may not.” What kind of ‘gospel’ is that? All I could think was, “That absolutely contradicts and counters what the Lord declared emphatically when He said, “*him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*”! (John 6:37b) We who believe that salvation is all of the Lord know full well that the only reason the believing soul comes to Christ is due to what our Lord stated in the first part of that verse: “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me*.” (John 6:37a) Thus, if one has the desire to be free from sin and to be rid of its felt damning guilt and end, we are to bid them with the strongest of assurance that Christ will receive them in believing and trusting their souls to Him alone. But it seems there are some preachers who are far more apt at further distressing the already distressed soul than in pointing him plainly and singly to the only remedy for his desperate need.

We know that the Lord lovingly calls His own elect; that they hear His voice; that it is they and they alone who will come to the Lord

Jesus Christ and find Him their all in all. They come willingly, to be sure, but only because they have been born of God. The new birth is the sovereign work of God; it is “*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*.” (John 1:13). Those who come to Christ only do so because God has worked in them “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*.” (Philippians 2:13) And how blessed they are, when instructed in the fuller revelation of the Scriptures, to learn that behind it all was nothing of their so-called “free will.” All was due alone to the sovereign, redeeming love of God in Christ.

But we also remind ourselves that our duty in preaching the gospel is to address men as sinners. The gospel does not address men as elect or non-elect, but as sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) George Whitefield, who unfailingly proclaimed what we commonly call “the doctrines of grace,” said: “Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance before he goes to the university of election and predestination.”

Speaking of George Whitefield, here is an excerpt drawn from one of his sermons that shows both firm knowledge of the salvation that is only of God and the appeal to sinners.

“Repentance, my brethren, in the first place, as to its nature, is the carnal and corrupt disposition of men being changed into a renewed and sanctified disposition. A man that has truly repented, is truly regenerated: it is a different word for one and the same thing; the motley mixture of the beast and devil is gone; there is, as it were, a new creation wrought in your hearts. If your repentance is true, you are renewed throughout, both in soul and body; your understandings are enlightened with the knowledge of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ; and your wills, which were stubborn, obstinate, and hated all good, are obedient and conformable to the will of God. Indeed, our deists tell us that man now has a free will to do good, to love God, and to repent when he will; but indeed, there is no free will in any of you, but to sin; nay, your free will leads you so far that you would, if possible, pull God from His throne. This may, perhaps, offend the Pharisees; but (it is the truth in Christ which I speak, I lie not) every man by his own natural will hates God; but when he is turned unto the Lord, by evangelical repentance, then his will is changed; then your consciences, nor hardened and benumbed, shall be quickened and awakened; then your hard hearts shall be melted, and your unruly affections shall be crucified. Thus, by that repentance, the whole soul will be changed, you will have new inclinations, new desires, and new habits¹.”

¹“A Penitent Heart, The Best New Year’s Gift”
George Whitefield

Then, in the same sermon, he soon preaches:

“Do not say, that your sins are too many and too great to expect to find mercy! No, be they ever so many, or ever so great, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sins. God’s grace, my brethren, is free, rich, and sovereign. Manassah was a great sinner, and yet he was pardoned; Zaccheus was gone far from God, and went out to see Christ, with no other view but to satisfy his curiosity; and yet Jesus met him, and brought salvation to his house. Manassah was an idolater and murderer, yet he received mercy; the other was an oppressor and extortioner, who had gotten riches by fraud and deceit, and by grinding the faces of the poor: so did Matthew too, and yet they found mercy².”

We are not to hold back the truth; we are not to keep anything God has revealed from our hearers; we are to proclaim it as firmly and clearly as God has given us the ability to do. But we are always to remember that the charge is to speak the truth in love. We are not to fear the face of man but to proclaim the Word of God faithfully. But we are to always keep in mind where God found us: lost, helpless, in sin and unable of ourselves to do a single thing to change it. It is grace, and grace alone, that saved us. It’s the grace

²Ibid.

that “saved a wretch like me.” God found us when in sin, and we are to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God to sinners, all sinners, and leave the issue to the sovereign good pleasure of God. And when God is pleased to save a sinner, to show him that all is done, that all is finished by “*Jesus Christ crucified*,” and nothing at all of himself, then are we to teach him the revealed reason why. He repented of sin because God gave him to do so; he believes because God gave him the gift of faith; he willed to come because God’s will worked in his. He is saved only because God chose him in Christ before the creation itself was brought into existence.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

We leave here a final word from George Whitefield:

“I hope we shall catch fire from each other, and that there will be a holy emulation amongst us, who shall most debase man and exalt the Lord Jesus. Nothing but the doctrines of the Reformation can do this. All others leave free will in man and make him, in part at least, a Saviour to himself. My soul, come not thou near the secret of those who teach such things... I know Christ is all in all. Man is nothing: he hath a free will to go to hell, but none to go to heaven, till God worketh in him to do of His good pleasure³.”

³George Whitefield, Works, pp. 89-90

WHAT IS THE CROSS?¹

Horatius Bonar

(1808-1889)

It is not the mere wooden pole, or some imitation of it, such as Romanists use. These we may safely leave behind us. We need not pitch our tent upon the literal Golgotha, or in Joseph’s garden. But the great truth which the cross embodies we can no more part with than we can part with life eternal. In this sense, to turn our back upon the cross is to turn our back upon Christ crucified—to give up our connection with the Lamb that was slain. The truth is, that all that Christ did and suffered, from the manger to the tomb, forms one glorious whole, no part of which shall ever become needless or obsolete; no part of which shall ever leave without forsaking the whole. I am always at the manger, and yet I know that mere incarnation cannot save; always at Gethsemane, and yet I believe that its agony was not the finished work; always at the cross, with my face toward it, and my eye on the crucified One, and yet I am persuaded that the sacrifice there was completed once for all; always looking into the grave, though I rejoice that it is empty, and that “*He is not here, but is risen*”; always resting (with the angel) on the stone that was rolled away, and handling the grave-clothes, and realizing a risen Christ, nay, an ascended and interceding Lord; yet on no pretext whatever leaving any part of my Lord’s life or death behind me, but unceasingly keeping up my connection with Him, as born, living, dying, buried, and rising again, and drawing out from each part some new blessing every day and hour.

Man, in his natural spirit of self-justifying legalism, has tried to get away from the cross of Christ and its perfection, or to erect another cross instead, or to set up a screen of ornaments between himself and it, or to alter its true meaning into something congenial to his tastes, or to transfer the virtue of it to some act or performance or feeling of its own. Thus the simplicity of the cross is nullified, and its saving power denied. For the cross saves completely, or not at all. Our faith does not divide the work of salvation between itself and the cross. It is the acknowledgment that the cross alone saves, and that it saves alone. Faith adds nothing to the cross, nor to its healing virtue. It owns the fullness, and sufficiency, and suitableness of the work done there, and bids the toiling spirit cease from its labours and enter into rest. Faith does not come to Calvary to *do* anything. It comes to see the glorious spectacle of all things done, and to accept this completion without a misgiving as to its efficacy. It listens to the “*It is finished!*” of the Sin-bearer, and says, “Amen.” Where faith begins, there labour ends—labour, I mean, “for” life and pardon. Faith is rest, not toil. It is the giving up all the former weary efforts to do or feel something good, in order to induce God to love and pardon; and the calm reception of the truth so long rejected, that God is not waiting for any such inducements, but loves and pardons of His own goodwill, and is showing that goodwill to any sinner who will come to Him on such a footing, casting away his own performances or goodness, and relying implicitly upon the free love of Him who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

¹Excerpt from “Not Faith, But Christ,” Horatius Bonar. Printed by Chapel Library, Pensacola, Florida

A Solid Port and Steady Winds to Speed Seaworthy Vessels to the World



Trevor Johnson

Missionaries Trevor Johnson and Paul Snider, both co-laborers on the field in Indonesia (Papua), coauthored this article. It sets forth the place and importance of the local church in missions and in sending missionaries.



Paul Snider

Introduction:

A missionary can be likened to a sailing vessel, the missionary's journey to a great sea voyage. The sweat of many brows and many calloused hands make the vessel seaworthy. Then, the sails are hoisted, farewells are given, and the vessel debarks, often crossing vast spaces and reaching lands far different from home. Sails which are full and rounded with the wind drive the ship onward towards its destination.

The importance of the local church in missions:

Without a solid launching port, the missionary vessel often founders or is lost at sea. One's local sending church is such a port, a harbor from which to launch the missionary vessel in zealous obedience to the biblical mandate. Much peril was faced by trading companies reaching precious spices in days of old; how much greater is our charter, how much more regal our sending King, and how much more vital the goal of our journey.

While plenty of legitimate helps exist to aid us, the task is still ours!

Local churches may rightly delegate authority, utilize outside agencies, or band together to help her complete her task. However, such delegation is not abdication and local churches, especially sending churches, must stay involved.

While we remain thankful for seminaries, tract and Bible societies, and missionary organizations, these are mere servants who walk beside local churches, not substitutes who take the lead. These helps are complementary in nature and are not competitors, having the common goal of seeing Christ glorified and His Church multiplied.

Kennedy Space Center takes successful space launches seriously. Their Launch Complex 39, just north of Cape Canaveral, is a mammoth construction. To get a rocket into space, the average depth of the concrete on just the pathway heading to the launch pad is seven feet deep. Local churches must be similar to this launching pad if we are to launch the Gospel to the world, with deep foundations grounded firmly in the truth.

Highlights from Acts 13:

The book of Acts illustrates deep local church involvement in evangelizing the world:

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

First, a church's missionary vigor is usually derived from the leadership: Churches that are missionary-minded are usually led by missionary-minded leaders

who set the tone. In Acts 13 we witness five key spiritual leaders seeking the Lord's will in unity. Church leaders are divinely appointed shepherds who must cast the vision, spread the passion, and create a climate for missionary-sending.

Those sent were already recognized leaders in the church, actively exercising their gifts: In the midst of local service these first missionaries were called out for global work. These men were already serving when the Lord called them into greater acts of service. The reward of Christian service is often opportunity for greater acts of service (Luke 19:11-27), thus we pray not for lighter tasks but for the Lord to give us stronger shoulders to carry even more.

Acts 11:25-26. "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people..."

These men were not inert at home while hoping to suddenly become active overseas. Crossing oceans does not make someone more effective in evangelism; it makes them far less effective due to the stresses and barriers involved.

The local church is a hot-house and nursery for the task of planting in the rest of the world: Small tender plants are often raised in a greenhouse, and small trees are often matured first in a nursery. There, tender shoots are strengthened and readied for the world. The church functions in just such a way. Believers are matured and readied for service out in the world. Greenhouse buds are not prepped merely

for more long-term residence living in the greenhouse; likewise, our goal in church attendance is not merely to attend more church, but to become well-nourished and prepared as one of God's roses to make the world more beautiful and sweet. Whether standing tall or crushed underfoot we are to be a sweet savor to the world.

These in Acts 13 were intentionally fasting, praying, and seeking the Lord's will: We need intentionality. We should be begging God (Luke 10:2) to give us missionaries to send, all the while identifying those persons of high potential, praying with them about possibly going, training and nurturing their gifts, and then sending and supporting them!

Regarding new missionaries, perhaps we have not because we ask not. The Lord Himself commands us to pray the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers, and it appears that God will be pleased to answer prayers that are commanded such as this – if His People actually do pray for such things. Our Father does, indeed, seem pleased to answer the prayers of His people (Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19; 21:22; Luke 11:9; John 14:13; 15:7,16; 16:23-24; Philippians 4:6; Philippians 4:19; James 1:5; 4:2; 1 John 3:22; 5:14), how much more ready will He be to answer prayers resulting from an explicit request of His Son.

I am greatly encouraged by Brother Larry Dean's recent calls for intentional prayer for spiritual awakening, and I know that such prayer precedes true awakening. May the Lord be pleased once more to have mercy on our land and so fill our spiritual wells such that we may not only deeply drink but still have enough to carry to other dry lands!

These did not leave the task to others - they were themselves deeply involved: Strive to be as involved as possible in missions!

If you can support missionaries by prayer, don't be content to merely read missionary newsletters. If you can support missionaries financially, don't be content merely to support missionaries by prayer. If you can support missionaries sent out by your own church, don't be content merely to support those sent out by other churches. If you yourself can go out, don't be content merely to support others whom your church sends. Be as involved as possible! As the Church charges the battlements of the enemy, press as far forward into the

front lines as possible!

In Acts 13, there were five prophets and teachers named; two of these five were sent. Also, in Matthew 9, those who were told to pray for laborers were themselves sent out in the very next chapter. Having a heart ready to pray for more laborers often leads to a heart ready to go labor.

Released for service - not bound by the cords of control: In Acts 13 the Holy Spirit set apart these men and the local church recognized this call and released them for service. The Holy Spirit commanded the church to separate (*aphoristate*, to sever, to place apart) Paul and Barnabas to the work that the Spirit had called them (*prosekkemai*, a call to a special task) and the church released these from their present church obligations and sent them off or sent them away. The term used here is *apoluo*, used elsewhere to denote the pardon of prisoners and even divorce, Matthew 27:15; Acts 3:13; Matthew 1:9; Luke 16:18.

Thus, we see that a call to missions is a divine call (*they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed...*), a call which the Church is duty-bound to recognize, and a call which may cause separation and sending away (after all, if we are commanded to reach all nations, we must first go to all nations).

Let us train well, but let us also "release well." One church I know never released a qualified young man who longed to go into missions, because, "We need him here at home still." And I suspect they always will.

We must train our missionaries adequately. We must put pre-field training requirements into place to prevent premature sending. We must maintain close fellowship such that we weep at the thought of losing them. Yet, we must be ready to release.

They were commissioned: Next, we see a commissioning service in Acts 13, a laying on of hands. This wasn't ordination, but a formal recognition and separation for the task.

The Apostle Paul was already a missionary, but now the Antioch church gives him formal recognition and authority unto this new task. Acts 13 wasn't Paul's ordination service, but a formal declaration that he was to be sent forth with a mission.

Such an act confirms the local church's commendation of the missionary. It is their seal of approval, a transfer of authority, granting the missionary the right to act in the name of the church for the sake of the Glory of Jesus. When a church lays on hands this is a testimony that they recognize the fittedness and the preparedness of the missionary to serve in that cross-cultural capacity for which they were commissioned.

It is an affirmation of suitability and, therefore, not a light or casual event. As eager as local churches are to send one of their own to the field, such a serious step should give pause to churches lest they risk turning their ugly ducklings into swans and confirm one who should not be sent. Many commissioning services include a charge both to the missionary and also to the sending church body, reminding them of their mutual obligations.

Such a laying on of hands is an evidence that the missionary is not merely one who runs forward on his own, but is one who is sent. He is not laying hands on himself, but the larger body of Christ is testifying that the missionary is truly, indeed, a "sent-out one."

They were sent out with a purpose: At the end of Acts chapter 14 those sent out returned to Antioch, "for the work that they fulfilled." There was a designated work to be done and they fulfilled it. Mission accomplished. They reunited and celebrated together.

Support personnel are needed: John also went to minister to them, possibly as an assistant, "*and they had also John to their minister.*" Paul, elsewhere, lists many fellow-workers in his epistles, both male and female. We are to conclude that not all of these were elder-qualified preachers, nor did they all exercise ecclesiastical control nor administer the Gospel ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Yet these are said to share the work with Paul, indicating that we may freely send many to the field. A person contemplating missions does not need to be an ordained theologian, but must, indeed, be and think theologically correct. So, if you want to come and push the Gospel plow, there are ample opportunities for a multitude of persons with a variety of gifts to offer.

Afterward:

continued next page

The Pauline missionary band was field-led, they didn't clear every decision through Antioch: In the chapters following Acts 13, we see the manner in which Paul labored once he was on the field. Paul and his band made field-based semi-autonomous decisions. In other words, Paul was not micro-managed by a missionary council sitting 1,000 miles away. Paul even recruited others without first asking Antioch for permission regarding every Timothy and Titus raised up. Paul appears to have made determinations of location, strategy and partners while on the field.

On several occasions I (Trevor) have needed advice regarding issues encountered on the field, and I have called Bible Baptist for help. What impressed me was the manner of Brother Tom Henry, always thoughtful in his responses and yet frequently reminding me, "We sent you out, we trust you. You know the situation on the ground." He was always non-intrusive in his guidance and non-oppressive in his oversight, yet always deeply involved and helpful, elucidating practical biblical principles applicable to every situation. Oversight and accountability are to be maintained, yet many churches with good intentions can become overbearing; but if you don't trust someone enough for them to make field decisions without your constant supervision, don't send them out.

Paul went back to his home church and stayed there for a while: In Acts 14:26-28 we read the following;

...And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Paul returned home to Antioch and resumed a close relationship with his home church, cheering their hearts and encouraging them by reports of the work. His ministry did not cease once he arrived back home. The missionary ought not to seek merely to bless his target people "over there." He should seek to bless the "home folks" as well.

Some literature speaks of Paul returning to Antioch in order to "report back" to his authority, but I think this misses the point. Paul wasn't merely dutifully reporting to his boss; instead, he was celebrating with family! He rejoiced with the church, stayed with them for quite some time, resumed his old teaching and leadership duties, and even engaged in deep theological controversy with the Judaizers in the very next chapter. Paul wanted to celebrate with his Antiochan family because the missionary task is not a "one man show." This was their mutual work.

Likewise, we (Trevor and Paul) are deeply aware that missions is not about the Johnsons and the Sniders, but about all of us. Together, we actively obey the command to "make disciples" by you saying to us, "We want you to go, because we want them to be saved." Missions is a state of total war; not all go far away to fight, but all labor on behalf of the war effort.

Let Paul's attitude in Romans 10:1 be ours, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved." Furthermore, let Paul's reminder several verses later stir us to new action, "*...And how can they preach, except they be sent.*" What a pleasure when beautiful feet, which bring glad tidings of good things, have their origin in your local churches and are shod by the loving care of your own people!

Finally, they recognized that success was due to God's power:

"...They rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

Paul was a very active worker, and yet Acts 14 speaks of all that God was doing. The entire world is the stage, yet God is the main actor in missions; we merely fill bit parts (and we usually stutter our lines). God is the bringer of results. God plants the Church.

William Carey and co-workers recognized this truth in their Serampore Covenant:

"We are firmly persuaded that Paul might plant and Apollós water, in vain, in any part of the world, did not God give the increase. We are sure that only those ordained to eternal life will believe, and that God alone

can add to the church such as shall be saved. Nevertheless we cannot but observe with admiration that Paul, the great champion for the glorious doctrine of free and sovereign grace, was the most conspicuous for his personal zeal in the word of persuading men to be reconciled to God. In this respect he is a noble example for our imitation. Our Lord intimated to those of His apostles who were fishermen, that he would make them fishers of men, intimating that in all weathers, and amidst every disappointment they were to aim at drawing men to the shores of eternal life. Solomon says: "He that winneth souls is wise," implying, no doubt, that the work of gaining over men to the side of God, was to be done by winning methods, and that it required the greatest wisdom to do it with success."

Bible Baptist Church of Maplewood, Missouri and their example:

Bible Baptist Church launched me well and I (Trevor) would like to thank them publicly here.

First, Bible Baptist Church (hereafter called BBC) was instrumental in identifying any missionary potential that I possessed. Brother Moore gifted me with the missionary book, *Through Gates of Splendour* upon college graduation. The spark of missionary desire was there, and he fanned the flame. He did not merely wait for me to take initiative, for I didn't even know where to begin.

Second, BBC groomed me and gave me opportunities to serve. Pastor Moore, again taking the initiative, requested that I bring a devotion to the youth shortly after my graduation. It was just a small informal meeting, but it was a start. Then on Wednesday nights and then later on Sunday nights I began to periodically preach. I suppose I was started out on Wednesday nights where I could do the least damage. My gifts were tested and developed locally and Pastor Moore gave much helpful advice and even critique in an encouraging way without crushing my spirits.

Third, BBC actively participated in my

missions planning. BBC even hosted a representative from World Team who flew out from Pennsylvania to attend our services and talk to our leadership afterwards.

Fourth, BBC endorsed me and gave me their seal of approval at the appropriate time. Pastors Moore and Henry wrote letters and called other churches on my behalf. My ordination, my missionary commissioning service, and the formal start of my missionary support raising occurred simultaneously. Several churches supported me “right out of the chute” even before visiting them, giving me confidence and a certain “momentum” towards the field.

Fifth, BBC continued to manage communications and to campaign on my behalf even after I was overseas. I have received new support from strangers because Brother Tom Henry talked to them; “Yes, your church told me all about you and they think a lot of your work. Therefore, we now support you.”

Sixth, BBC has cleared up misunderstandings on my behalf, acting as my advocate. When I carelessly mentioned “women evangelists” in one prayer letter, Bible Baptist clarified that I was not, in fact, talking about women pastors, but rather referring to female Christians evangelizing women and children in segregated Muslim contexts. Bible Baptist acted as my champion and defender of my cause, even defending me from myself and from my own careless phraseology.

Seventh, BBC takes care of a lot of logistics. They are like mission control. They have duplicated or mailed thousands of letters, special articles, and videos of my ministry. The church (especially Jeannie Henry) has managed the Quilt Project, selling Indonesian-made quilts to support indigenous believers, in such a smooth, low-maintenance manner that I often forget about it totally.

Eighth, BBC offers emotional support. They have always been there to take our calls, to follow up, even to find and send small comfort items that we cannot find here.

Rosemont Baptist’s intentional spiritual development for the Great Commission:

Below is Paul Snider’s testimony of how their home church at that time, Rosemont

Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, helped prepare them to launch.

Through God’s sovereign design, Trish and I (Paul) received a call after our conversion from Pastor Mark Reed to come and worship with them. Little did I know God’s blessings in store for us through this local body. Pastor Reed was intentional in discipleship right from the start. He invested his time to see me grow in my faith and modeled selfless and intentional discipleship for me to see.

This was not an overnight process, but a deep, committed effort of mentoring, grooming, and teaching. At every meeting Pastor Mark encouraged me in evangelism, Bible study, and teaching, even helping me in my prayer life and as a husband and father. Growing through discipleship is never over, but “teaching others to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2), making disciples who can then make disciples, is achievable in even small local assemblies. When this happens, new generations of zealous and engaged disciples will take up the cross and follow Christ to the nations.

As if it were yesterday, I still vividly remember Pastor Reed approaching and asking me to preach at the Saturday night nursing home service. Without delay I enthusiastically agreed, although I could feel my stomach churn with nervousness. This first Saturday message was 15 minutes. Pastor Reed was always there to give feedback and instruction, mentoring me both in preparation and delivery. This process was continual. Seeing my love for teaching, he continued sharpening my tools by having me lead the teenage Sunday school class and speaking at the church services occasionally. He was always intentional, purposefully fanning the flames of my growing desire for greater future ministry where my gifts could be used for the glory of God.

Throughout my time at Rosemont Baptist I never lacked accountability, intentional discipleship, or encouragement. Where would I be if God had not placed such a church with such a shepherd in my path! I consider Rosemont Baptist Church our second sending church. There we were groomed from young believers to missionaries ready for launch. Now as we prepare to leave, our sending church Bethany Bible Church, where my father pastors, has taken up the baton. Praise God for such churches. Praise God for such leaders.

Best Practices for Missions Engagement:

Below are some tips for churches trying to increase missions engagement:

Do you have a plan? Is it action-oriented?
One of the biggest challenges for many would-be missionaries is translating theoretical missionary aspirations into actionable plans.

Is your church living up to its claims?
Every church I know claims to be missions-minded, but the proof is in the pudding. What missions are you financing? How often do you mention the missionary plans of the church from the pulpit or newsletter or elsewhere? Can your church membership name your missionaries and their locations (has missions knowledge disseminated to every person)? What is your commitment beyond money?

Is your missions vision led from the top and supported at all levels?

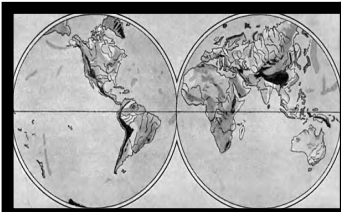
Is there a route for the implementation of missionary plans? I often read about “why” we should do missions, but less frequently about “how” we should do missions or prepare for missions. What steps of training should missionaries take? Do you have a list of good training centers or schools that are recommendable to interested parties? Can you point the aspiring missionary to helpful courses of study and to missionary organizations that would be acceptable and approved by your church? Can your church leadership meet regularly with the aspiring missionary and will their schedule accommodate such a feat and see it as a priority?

Is missions visible in your church?
Advertise missions. Hold a missions conference, create a missions bulletin board, have a “missions moment” every week from the pulpit, have a missions focus month, devote one sermon in 10 to a missionary theme. Email your missionaries! Ask specifics as to what to pray for.

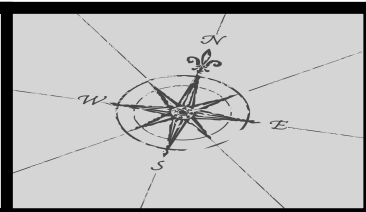
Do regular prayer and financial support help “fill the sails” of your missionaries?

*Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt
down,
'Twas sad as sad could be ;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !*

continued page 18



World Missions



Sovereign Grace Missions in Thailand Wayne Camp

Philippians 1:3-5: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (4) Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, (5) For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

I trust that all of you had a blessed Thanksgiving. We had the blessing of being able to talk to all of our children and most of our grandchildren and see all of them via Skype on Thanksgiving afternoon. It is amazing what this modern technology enables us to do.

We had a good week of school this past week. There were some colds going around but nothing that was kept any of the students out of school. It did get hot this past week. One day I noticed on the thermometer that the temperature in the classroom was 86°F. This in spite of the fact that it was cloudy that day. But with the fans going we were able to complete a full day of school. The next two days were a couple of degrees cooler.

The problem with getting bottled water for drinking purposes has improved. We were able to get a good supply of water one day this week at Macro, a big store similar to Sam's Clubs in the USA. It was a relief to be secure in the fact we would have sanitary water to drink. There are a couple of other problems that we are still facing because of the continued flooding in Bangkok. Saturday we ran out of bread and since Brother Anond was coming into town, we asked him to see if he could get us a loaf of bread. He went to seven different stores and was unable to find even one loaf of bread. Finally today we got some.

Today, Sunday, I preached at Hoe Sum Suk, the first church I ever attended in Thailand. That was in the year 2000. It is always good to go there. Yesterday, Saturday, I prepared a sermon on *Christ And His Sheep*. It was well received. The brother in charge of the service made the statement that it was sure good to know that we are His sheep and that we have such a good Shepherd. On the way home Brother Anond said the people really enjoyed it and that he wanted to translate it and give it to the students.

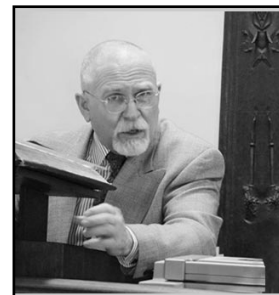
After a bout with bronchitis last weekend I am doing much better. In fact, I had no trouble whatever preaching today. And, I was able to teach my full schedule Tuesday through Friday this week. We appreciate your continued prayers on our behalf. We also appreciate all of those who support us financially and who support the work in general in Thailand. We do indeed thank God for you.

May God bless you as you labor for Him and His vineyard. Jesus said, "*the field is the world.*" I thank God for the privilege of serving in a part of the field.

Brotherly in Christ,
Wayne Camp

From the Sovereign Grace Movement in Israel

By Baruch Maoz



Trends in the Churches in Israel

The Israeli church is maturing. There is a growing generation of second generation Christians, confident of their faith, secure of their place in society and increasingly competent at home and in the workplace.

Most churches still lack solid, theologically mature and biblically informed teaching. As a result, there is a low level of understanding and of theological commitment. But there is a hankering for a more substantial teaching ministry and a refusal to preserve congregational taboos.

At the same time, as has often happened in the history of the church, false doctrines are forcing church leaders to sharpen their theological wits and draw up a more coherent, more biblically based understanding of the Faith.

Congregations that were satisfied to conduct services in Amharic, English or Russian are being increasingly challenged to use more Hebrew and to adopt a more local cultural flavor, without the accretions of Jewish religiosity. Intuitively, the young people sense the Gospel teaching that the people of Christ are one, and that such oneness should find practical expression in the way church life is structured and conducted.

While some have chosen to focus on what might be described as Christian entertainment coupled with a focus on counseling, a kind of 'feel good' spirituality that purports to promote spiritual understanding, a growing number of young people are attending university, sharpening their intellectual skills and bringing their newly developed abilities into the life of their families and churches. It is to be hoped that they will also come to apply those abilities in the realm of spiritual comprehensions, the study of Scripture and the development of a consistently Christian worldview. Characteristically, God is bringing out of the ashes of my generation (I'm one of the oldest local Christians in the country) a beautiful rose.

Be free to share these with interested parties. Subscriptions to our bulletins and to MaozNews are welcome. Please note our new address: bmaoz@themaozweb.com

TAX-deductible support for our ministry should be written to the order of Berean Baptist church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233. Direct bank transfers may be made to Franklin Bank, 24725 West Twelve Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48034 USA, Routing Number 241271957 Berean Baptist Special Account No. 567495976.

A Request for Help from Nicaragua

James Fryer

Friends,

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..."(Prov. 1:7)

As you may know, I was blessed to complete in Spanish a study tool in Commentary form on the book of Proverbs, being that Proverbs is a deeply practical and transformative book. I have been motivated to get our students in Nicaragua through the study course.

So far, in addition to other classes, I have been blessed to teach the material on the book of Proverbs to two groups of pastors and leaders. (about 50 pastors/leaders)

I would like to ask your help by an opportunity to give a one time gift that will be a blessing to a group of Central American pastors.

This resource is the revised edition of the expository study of the book of Proverbs that I have written in Spanish. It is expanded, with additional appendices and an 8 lesson study format that we use for our classes that we offer in conjunction with Miami International Seminary.

This book was also selected by the Professors of MINTS that serve in Central America along with 4 other books to give as a gift to the pastors that will be attending the upcoming international conference for the Central American leaders of MINTS in Jan. in Nicaragua.

Though the cost of the books given at the conference will be covered, I am asking your help with the initial printing of 200-400 of the books, which will be used for students in the MINTS Bible program for pastors and leaders mostly in Nicaragua. This will allow me to give out some of the books to students who may struggle to pay for their copy for the class, and give to future pastors/leaders that begin in the program, etc.

If you would like to help with the cost of printing this revised resource on Proverbs into a regular bound book format, will help me move forward with getting the books printed.

A \$300 gift will cover the transportation cost to the printer, and about half of the cost of the printing of the books. A pledge of \$600 will cover the total printing of the book (about 300 copies).

You can give through our mission agency address newsletter, but please let me know if you can pledge your help.

Yours for Nicaragua, James Fryer

www.mints.edu

www.missionaryventures.org

skype (james.fryer) San Marcos, Nicaragua

The Sniders on the Field in Indonesia

Paul and Patricia Snider



"We made it! We are in Bandung, Indonesia."

They said their good-byes and left the States on Oct. 18th of this year. They will be in Bandung for one year studying the Indonesian language. The family is adjusting well to their new temporary home but Paul and his son Lane have struggled with stomach ailments common for Westerners living in a third world country. At the time of this writing, Paul is down with amoebic dysentery. Thanksgiving dinner is on hold until he recovers.

- Missions Editor

"During our second week here the first Reformed Baptist Indonesian meeting was held here in Bandung. A few of these pastors spoke and Trevor presented his William Carey article. If you would like that article email him for a copy. These Indonesian pastors need your prayer as they seek to teach their congregations the truths of Scripture in a very dark place.

We have been able to spend time with our friends and partners, Trevor and Teresa Johnson...Trevor and I have been able to catch up and discuss ministry for here in Bandung and in Papua. We are in the process of beginning a Gospel tract ministry that will be formatted and translated for the Papuans. This will give access to many related biblical questions as to what the Gospel is, why did Jesus have to die, why sin in the world, why does God demand repentance, etc.

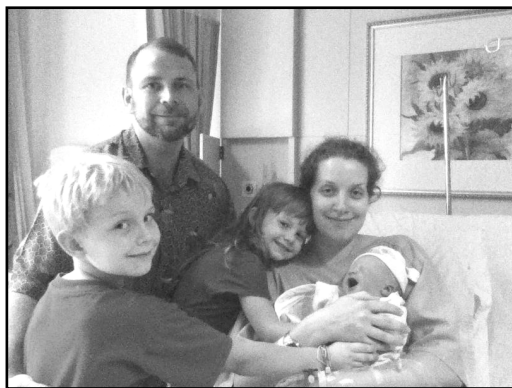
Thank you for the donations for the interior lowlands. We are planning on shipping these items next year after our visas change from a student visa to a work visa." Items donated so far: canoes, paddles, chairs, chainsaws, weed trimmers, blowers, water filters, some tools and containers. Items still needed: tools (hand tools for building and garden tools), nails, ladder, rope, hiking equipment, Tupperware, mosquito netting. All items can be sent to: Bethany Bible Church, 511 Eagle Lake Road, Bib Lake, MN 55309."

Check out our new family blogspot to keep current on what is happening in Bandung. The address is:

pandpsnider.blogspot.com

The Johnsons in Indonesia

Trevor and Teresa Johnson



With Noah, Alethea and the newly arrived Perpetua

As you may know, Trevor and the family traveled from Papua to Bandung on the island of Java for the birth of their new baby girl.

Trevor has reported that the time in Bandung has been far more challenging than he and Teresa had anticipated. The house they have is too small, the roof leaks, and the water supply is sporadic at best. Baby Perpetua has had a difficult time sleeping, which has put a strain on the entire family. Transitioning from 2 children to 3 has proven to be a larger challenge than they expected. Trevor had \$200 stolen from him that was intended for a Papuan student. Teresa and Noah have struggled with stomach problems and Trevor has been forced to postpone work on his dissertation. All of this has contributed to exhaustion and frayed nerves. They have asked for prayer in their struggles.

On a positive note, Trevor reports: "Since coming to Bandung I've been privileged to preach, speak at several international schools, hold a pastor's meeting for Indonesian pastors believing in the doctrines of grace, speak 5 times at a 9th grade retreat for a Christian school, and we are now forming tracts to begin a new tract ministry in Papua. Also, I continue to pray for new missionaries and seek to help any towards the field that the Lord is pleased to place in my path."

Contact information on page 15

Mission Work in Ireland

Miles McKee

We have just completed our first 14 months of gospel ministry in the Republic of Ireland. It has been a time not only of deep blessing, but it has also been a season of piercing challenges.

The Grace Church of New Ross, here in the South East corner of the island is slowly being established. The people whom the Lord has been pleased to assemble with us are growing in grace and their appreciation of the gospel. There are no growth techniques, no programmes and no schemes which we choose to employ to further our cause. Rather we attempt to preach Christ crucified on a daily basis and, as we do so, look to the Lord to bring in His sheep.

It has been of interest to note that the majority of the people of Ireland, by and large, have strayed away from Roman Catholicism. This has been due largely to the continual sexual scandals involving priests and the ensuing cover-ups by the Roman hierarchy. As a result, atheism has risen to a new place of prominence in this once solidly Roman Catholic country. This, however, gives us many more opportunities to talk and preach about the man who is God. Christ claimed to be God so that answers the atheism question. Was Christ Jesus a liar? Was He mentally disturbed? No! ---Then there's a God and Christ claimed to be Him in flesh appearing. Even ex Roman Catholics who have given up on their Church usually do not like to say a bad word about Jesus so rather than delve into theological and cosmological arguments with them we find, once more, that the gospel is enough.

We are praying for a divine visitation in New Ross and beyond. Only the Lord can open up hearts. Only He can command the light to shine in the darkness. We are persuaded that He has many people here in this beautiful country of rain and morning mist.

Miles McKee
Minister of the Gospel
New Ross, Ireland.

Contact information on Page 15

Important News from Oklahoma City

Dan Roten

In the previous Messenger, we reported health problems that had prevented Bro. Dan Roten from deploying to Chile. The following is from information that I have received from him since. - Missions Editor

Health issues and other circumstances in the providence of God made it plain that it was not His will for us to move to Chile at present. We ultimately became convinced that it is His will for us to minister to Spanish-speaking peoples here in the US as a home base, and continue to minister in Latin America by internet and trips.

Let me give an update on our health situation. For Janet, we have had the scheduled testing and evaluations at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston that were mentioned previously in emails. It appears from the MRI and sonogram that the nodules have not spread outside her thyroid, and aren't growing rapidly right now. The doctor says that one in five of these cases will turn out to be malignant, so we are very hopeful that this will prove to be non-cancerous. The needle biopsies already performed are not helpful with this particular condition, so there will not be a definite determination of whether or not it is cancer until after surgery. Although her thyroid function is affected, he wants to save half of her thyroid and do surgery to remove only the half of the thyroid with the dangerous nodules. Janet has other conditions that affect the situation. For one, her diabetes has been uncontrollable for quite some time due to other medications, and he does not want to do the surgery, if possible, until the diabetes is controlled. For that reason, he has tentatively set her next evaluation for November. So, her sarcoidosis, diabetes, and thyroid problems are all complicating one another. Janet is actively researching and implementing means to improve these conditions as quickly as possible. All of this adds up to the fact that her condition is presently unstable and timing for

treatment is indefinite. Regarding my own health, doctors are still trying to improve some thyroid and hormone test numbers to help my stamina.

Right up through December 2010, we were on track to be finished with all preparations by the end of February, and we expected to make the move to Chile in March. But the medical check-ups which were required for the visa application turned up problems for both Janet and me that are still unresolved. Problems were also discovered at that time in Michael's health which we hope are improved, but it will take time to find out. The broken bone, requiring surgery on Daniel's hand, is fully healed, for which we praise the Lord. Besides our health issues, changes made by the Chile government in requirements for the visa paperwork meant that the paperwork already done (FBI background checks which can take months to obtain) was already expired before we could possibly present it to the consulate. So we were moved back to square one, without possibility of beginning again until after health issues are settled. Testing and treatment now have taken 6 months, and the prognosis is uncertain. We could not guess when a move to Chile might be possible, and we could not just "wait and see." We have to serve the Lord today in the circumstances in which He has placed us. After months of evaluating and praying over all of this, we feel compelled to accept that the Lord is working in such a way that now is not the appropriate time for us to make a move to a foreign country.

Sherwood Baptist Church, (Oklahoma City, OK) has been praying with us for months that the will of the Lord might be made evident. I have spent some weeks with the church, and over the last 2 Sundays I presented to the brethren the new direction that the Lord has placed on my heart. We began with John 4:35: "I say unto you, look on the fields." Stop and look around. Do you know which segment of the U.S. population is the fastest growing? Their number almost doubled (a 43% increase) during the last 10 years. It is the Hispanic population, and its growth rate is 4 times the growth rate of the total population. It accounted for more than half of the total growth of the U.S. in the 10 years since the 2000 census. With the current growth rates, it is very possible that your children and mine will live to see the Hispanic community become the majority ethnic people of the USA. Of that population, 36% are foreign born, which means that their English language skills are often weak or non-existent. There are multitudes of businesses and neighborhoods where Spanish is the predominant language. Over the last several years many churches have found their surrounding neighborhoods becoming predominantly Hispanic, and have found themselves unable to minister to neighbors who were uninterested in attending an Anglo church with English services. If we are to preach the Gospel to all nations (i.e. ethnic peoples), then we must preach to the ethnic peoples that God has brought right into our midst. And fluency in Spanish is an essential for reaching this segment of our society. The faith of Hispanics is by far predominantly Roman Catholic, and non-Catholics are usually Pentecostal, or Jehovah's Witness. Gospel light is rarely found. The need is evident. The Lord has prevented us from moving to a foreign country, so we will preach right here. Specifically, we plan to move to Oklahoma City, and begin witnessing, befriending, evangelizing and teaching among the Spanish-speaking population. We believe that God has prepared hearts to receive the Gospel, and that it is His purpose to save some, and establish churches in this city and people. All the elements of our mission work will remain the same – only the location will be changed.

Grace and Peace, Bro. Danny G. Roten

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...Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean...

-Samuel Coleridge Taylor, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Doldrums were the fear of sailing men of ages past, being stuck on a still and painted ocean until provisions ran out and the crew slowly succumbed to slow weakening and death.

The book *Too Valuable to Lose* analyzes data drawn from thousands of cases of "negative missionary attrition," i.e., premature and preventable departure from the mission field. Loneliness and emotional factors rank highest, as well as inadequate support. A third reason, an inadequate sense of call, will be dealt with shortly below.

Don't let your missionary get caught in the doldrums! Fill their sails with contact, loving affirmation, and enough material support to keep them on their voyage.

Own not only your missionary but your missionary's burden: We must become more missions-focused rather than merely missionary-focused. To be missionary-focused is merely to care for your own personal missionary. A good thing, yes. To become missions-focused is to expand that care beyond just your individually-supported missionary and to embrace the people and the country your missionary serves. If a church is missions-focused rather than merely being missionary-focused, that church has a greater tendency to raise up future teams of multiple people to the same region. Love not only your missionaries, but also love the people they serve.

Be able to distinguish kinds of missionary labor: Types of missionary service differ.

From pioneering to pastoral leadership to discipleship, to development and relief, to medical, to leadership training, etc. Become acquainted with each kind of labor and what is needed to be effective in all kinds of work. Don't needlessly disparage any of these sub-types of missionary labor, but please do familiarize yourself with how these labors differ, and what different demands and preparations these types of labors call for.

Reaffirm the missionary call: I have known missionaries who have undergone stress almost to the breaking point. These stressed-out missionaries have then gotten well-intentioned emails from church folks back home suggesting that the missionary come home if things got too bad. Please be careful in this area.

You can love your missionary best by encouraging them to do their best. Love pushes people through the hard times and doesn't allow them to quit. Be like a supportive but firm coach, "Get back in there, you are doing great. Yes, your opponent is tough, but hang in there." Affirm your missionary's sense of call to keep him on the field. Remind him, "We affirmed your call when we commissioned you; we trust that these trials will pass and you will stick by your post and that God will reward your faithfulness." A church's firm affirmation through ordination and/or missionary commissioning grounds a missionary with a firmer confidence when all of his own confidence has drained. A solid sense of the missionary call is an anchor in rough seas and comes, in large part, from one's home church.

Be active, not passive: There is nothing wrong with pastors approaching church members of high potential and asking them to fast and pray specifically about whether the Lord would call them into missions. God works through His Body and one way in which the missionary call may become

manifest in a church member is through a pastor or fellow church-member burdening them to pray and seek whether missions might be for them.

Sending your own doesn't mean denying help from others: Utilize the larger body of Christ for training. Take the Perspectives Course (www.perspectives.org), utilize missionary prayer letter services, work with a missionary agency to help launch your missionary. The independency of the local church does not mean isolation; we are all interdependent in Christ and can utilize outside resources and band together for the sake of large enterprises such as fulfilling the Great Commission, training future leaders, or publishing Gospel materials.

Be encouraged. It is not our seating capacity but our sending and praying capacity that counts: Some hesitate to act because they fear that they cannot make a difference. However, the majority of the support that we receive comes from small churches, and a great number of missionaries are sent out from small churches. Small churches are disproportionately impacting the world!

We count it all joy to serve Christ in a needy land and pray that God would raise up a wave of new workers that will break upon pagan shores and sweep away their idolatry.

Join us in the work! Connect with us. Use us as missionary resources. Give us the privilege of helping you fan the flame for missions in your own local church.

Trevor Johnson: oct31st1517@hotmail.com

Paul Snider: smile0979@aol.com

♦ ♦ ♦

Sovereign Grace Bible Conference

March 21-25, 2012

Community Baptist Church, Elmendorf, Texas

Speakers: Don Currin, Don Johnson, Tom Henry, Dean Olive, John Greene

For Information, contact Pastor Kyle White

Phone: (210) 723-6568 Email: cbelder59@gmail.com web: www.cbweb.net

The Gospel and Generation Z

Dustin Segers



Dustin Segers is an elder and local missionary at Shepherd's Fellowship Baptist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina (newest member church of the SGBF). He has labored in church planting, does open-air preaching and college evangelism.

- **Relativism:** Or have you ever heard something like this when it came to arguments over religion? - "Look man, you've got your truth and I've got my truth. There is no *one* truth for all people, so stop trying to push your religion on other people!"

The Problem

Since the 1960's, America has been a post-Christian nation. The truth is, we never really were a *Christian* nation per se (as if the New Testament actually envisioned one of those), but before the 1960's, public expressions of Christianity were accepted as part of the warp and woof of American society. But since the sexual revolution of the 1960s, that has all been turned on its head. While putting chewing gum under desks was one of the biggest discipline problems in public schools in the 1950s, gang violence and school shootings are the biggest problems now. So what happened?

The 1920s through the 1960s were a time of great social, philosophical, and religious upheaval; both in society in general as well as the educational system and evangelical churches in the United States. After the Scopes "Monkey" Trial of 1925, American Christianity was labeled as backwards and dimwitted with the help of the media after John Scopes, a high school substitute science teacher was fined for teaching evolution, which at that time was illegal to teach in the state of Tennessee. When evangelical Christian statesman William Jennings Bryan failed to give credible Biblical and scientific refutations of the supposed evidence for evolution offered in the interrogations of agnostic ACLU lawyer Clarence Darrow at the Scopes trial, the news media promoted this as a sure sign that fundamentalist Christians were backwards, dim-witted, narrow-minded, obscurantist, anti-intellectuals that were in a war against scientific truth. Almost a decade later, the founders of modern public education were well into training the next generation of educators in their educational philosophy that implicitly promoted a godless humanistic ideal. These students eventually founded educational departments at major universities throughout the United States and thus public education in America has

been formally secular ever since then. When the "space race" of the late 1950s and 1960s proved successful, Americans began to generally trust the conclusions of the professional scientific consensus. This paved the way for a greater acceptance of evolutionary theory for up and coming university students. All of that, combined with the assumption of naturalism¹ laid the foundation for skepticism regarding claims of divine involvement in the world and the Bible being accepted as God's revealed truth to mankind.

When husbands went off to war in World War II, the wives had to take to factory jobs to provide income for the family while dad was away. Before, the wives were stay at home moms while dads worked to provide. However, when the dads came back from war, many moms stayed on the job, and for the first time in American history, many families became dual income households. Thus, the consistent loving care of mothers in the home was replaced by day-care workers, after school programs, and the hunger for that second income that mommy now provided. This was a clear step away from the Biblical pattern that women were to be known as "workers at home" (Titus 2:5).

The evangelical church of the mid to late 1950s saw its lightning rod appear in evangelist Billy Graham. Billy started well and strong as a young evangelist, but due to ecumenical² pressure, he eventually caved in to religious pluralism³. Sadly, the watered down nature of Graham's ministry has also been reflected in various evangelical denominations since the 1950s. As a result, many large churches today look more like a shopping mall or

¹Naturalism is the belief that *only* the natural world exists; i.e., that there is no supernatural, otherworldly realm.

²The "ecumenical movement" was/is a movement within Christianity that seeks to promote unity among professing Christians that deny essential doctrines of the Christian faith. These beliefs would include things like the absolute necessity of repentance and faith in Christ as the only means of salvation, the Bible as the only inspired and infallible word from God, the literal, physical, resurrection of Jesus, the literal, bodily second coming of Jesus, the virgin birth, and the existence of the supernatural. According to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, false unity is no unity at all.

³<http://www.ondocline.com/10grahab.htm>

INTRODUCTION: Are you part of Generation Z? In other words, were you born sometime between 1991 and the early 2000s and characterized by the following things?

- You have grown up using savvy technology such as the World Wide Web, instant messaging, text messaging, MP3 players, mobile phones, iPods, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, and YouTube.
- You essentially carry the internet in your pocket on mobile devices such as iPhones or iTouches.
- You or many of your friends enjoy gaming, blogging, and vlogging.

Whether you know it or not, your generation has also been born completely into an era of postmodernism, religious pluralism, and relativism. You may not know what all those big words mean, but the point I'm making is that those big words represent mindsets that affect the way you and the rest of your compadres think. Let me give you a few examples:

- **Postmodernism:** How many times have you been in a conversation about the Bible or religion and kind of got "stuck" in the conversation when someone said, "that's just your interpretation?"
- **Religious Pluralism:** How many times have you been in a conversation about religion when you heard someone say something like this, "All the religions of the world basically teach the same things and get you to the same god?"

continued next page

Starbucks coffee than they do the church that we find in the pages of the New Testament. This has all been caused by the pragmatic desire to do what works. The purpose is to bring more people through the front doors of a church building than to protect and proclaim the truth of the gospel and promote holiness in God's people. Such is the case when success is measured by man's standards rather than God's (Psalm 118:8).

The civil rights movement of the early 1960s, combined with the influences of postmodernism coming from the secular universities of the mid-1960s caused a massive social and philosophical upheaval; some for the better (i.e., ending racism), and some for the worse (i.e., promoting the acceptance of open societal wickedness). The rapid spread of rock-and-roll music and the promotion of the drug culture fostered a rampant hedonism that developed among many young people in American society from 1965 to 1969. This set the stage for the hippie movement, "free-love" (i.e., the sexual revolution), the famed "Woodstock" concert that occurred in the late summer of 1969, and the open acceptance of what was heretofore considered evil and unacceptable behavior. The post-Christian era had dawned and the older era of societally accepted Biblically based morality was gone.

That *very* brief outline of historical events explains why Generation Z doesn't have the philosophical and religious foundation to believe in truth, certainty, or absolutes. Worse yet, combine that brief historical overview of philosophical and spiritual meltdown with a 30 second sound-byte mentality that has been programmed to subconsciously think "you can't hold my attention longer than 10 seconds without me being entertained via fast, flashy images and sounds" and suffers from an internet information fog⁴, we wonder why Generation Z seems to be a little "distracted" and skeptical when it comes to religious truth claims. Thus, regardless of form, many older, mature teens and college students I've talked to have told me that most Christian churches they have visited seem fake, trite, and irrelevant to answering the world's problems. At best, many of them view professing Christians as people who work hard in trying to solve

⁴The "internet information fog" was a phrase coined by Dr. James White. It occurs when someone is overwhelmed by too much information about a particular subject such that they can't decide what to think about it.

the world's problems by going about it in all the wrong ways. I'm sad to say that I agree with many of these types of objections. So, if the problem is that the Gen Z'ers lack truth, certainty, and absolutes because of their spiritual and philosophical baggage, what is the solution?

"We all like to defy God in our sin, but Christ has come to set us free from that satanic "Kool-Aid" that wants to bring us under bondage and a heavy yoke of despair."

The Solution

The solution is simple but profound. It's so simple that it's scandalous, and it's so profound that theologians and philosophers are still overwhelmed by it. The solution is the person and work of Jesus. When people reject Jesus they are telling God that He is cosmically insignificant in their lives, that He isn't interesting; that He's underwhelming. They are telling God that Jesus wasn't really Truth incarnate, that He didn't come to set the captives free, that He didn't come to free us from the willing and voluntary enslavement to our own evil passions. No, they are actually doing worse than this; they are telling Jesus to *shove off*. Wow. Can you imagine telling *this* Jesus to shove off?

Who is the image of of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. (Colossians 1:15-17)

- Verse 15 says that if you want a visible picture of what the invisible God looks like look at Jesus. And we tell *that* Jesus to shove off.
- Verse 16 says that Jesus created everything, and we tell *that* Jesus to shove off.

- Verse 17 tells us that everything is held together by Jesus, including our own beings, yet we tell *that* Jesus to shove off.

Imagine being a soldier in the military, and your commander-in-chief gives you a direct order and your obedience to that order involves the fate of the entire nation, and instead of being obedient to the order you tell him to go take a jump in the lake. The order doesn't involve causing harm to anyone. It merely involves refraining from doing something, namely, from thinking that you know better than the commander-in-chief. But let's make the situation more dicey than that. Let's say that you betray that confidence of your commander in chief to his chief enemy after telling him to take a long walk off of a short cliff. Not only would you be subject to charges of treason; you would likely be hanged or subject to execution by a firing squad in many countries. Now I ask, given the heinous nature of this crime as committed against a human commander-in-chief, how much more heinous and aggravated would it be with the Ultimate Commander-in-Chief? Can you imagine any greater example of heinous arrogance than that which involves essentially telling the transcendent Creator that He's irrelevant, uninteresting, and vapid? Such is the deceitfulness of sin.

This same lie was there at the beginning with the first human beings God ever created. God told them not to eat and the deceiver told them to, thus, a direct contradiction. What was the motive for disobedience that Satan gave to the first people? Very simple: "God is holding out on you. God isn't looking out for your best interests but only His own interests. God's agenda is to destroy you, but I have come that you might have the knowledge of both good and evil and have it abundantly. So if you're weary, heavy-laden, and ignorant because of the heavy yoke of obedience to God's law, then cast off that heavy yoke and take and eat your fill of the knowledge of good and evil!" And so they did. As a result of that act of disobedience the entire universe has been thrown into a cataclysmic storm of hurt and sin ever since (Romans 8:20-22).

But there's more: God is deceitfully put forth to you as a hate-monger; as One who takes joy in your hurt. You see, that's the most cruel part of the lie; for what God intends for our good Satan twists as an intention for our hurt and we buy into that

masterful deception, hook, line, and sinker, just like Adam and Eve. In the end, apart from Christ, we too are left joining in chorus with Satan, Did God really say? “. . .” (Genesis 3:1) Such is the history of Western philosophy and all other modes of thinking that seek to determine truth and reality apart from reference to God.

However, in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Wisdom and knowledge can't be had with autonomous skepticism, for skepticism is self-defeating since to be consistently skeptical we'd have to be skeptical of skepticism. Only people locked up in padded rooms really live that way, while the rest of us show by the way that we live that we really believe in our heart of hearts that the Creator is there and that we can't escape His presence. We expect uniformity, regularity, and consistency in nature, yet the best that secularism can do to explain those things is to appeal to irrationality⁵, while Jesus has told us all along that He's responsible for holding everything together and sustaining

⁵This is what philosophers have called “The problem of induction”. The problem of induction says, “How do we know that the future is going to be like the past without appealing to past instances of the future being like the past?” The problem is that when the skeptic responds with, “Well, we don't know it with absolute certainty, but we have a high degree of probability that the future will be like the past because its always been that way in the past” then they are committing the informal logical fallacy of begging the question because they're assuming the very thing they're trying to prove. This is a basic problem in philosophy that can't be solved by appeals to secular solutions. For an extensive treatment of this, see Dr. James Anderson's paper here: <http://www.proginosko.com/docs/induction.html>

it by His power (Genesis 8:22; Colossians 1:17). Barring disease and drug use, we expect people to be reasonable and rational, but we can't make sense out of that either without an appeal to irrationality⁶, while Jesus has told us all along that He's created our minds to function in such a way that we can reason with Him, know Him, and love Him (Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 22:37-40). When repentance and faith comes, so comes an enhancement of the image of God in the new believer. The image of God for the believer is defined in Scripture as “*righteousness and true holiness*” and being “*renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). I take that to mean that over and against the knowledge that the deceiver offered and the world now offers in its many varied forms, this knowledge is God's knowledge found in His written word, the Bible, and most importantly, in His incarnated word, Jesus. This written and incarnate form of knowledge counters the false knowledge of the world, which offers itself to us in both written and incarnate forms. The world

⁶How does one who believes in naturalism and evolution know that the deliverances of their mind are giving them a true picture of the world when the very brain that produces those thoughts is itself the product of mere time, chance, and natural processes? Natural selection doesn't answer this problem because it would only guarantee that our supposed evolutionary hominid ancestors that had beliefs that produced survival value would be passed on to succeeding generations, not that those beliefs themselves give us a true depiction of the world. Thus, beliefs that produce survival value don't necessarily equal true beliefs. They could just as easily be false yet produce survival value. This is what is known as the *Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*. See here: <http://philofreligion.homestead.com/files/alspaper.htm>

offers its autonomous skepticism in the gift-wrapping of hedonistic, incarnated, bodily pleasure, whereas Christ offers escape from the shackles of that deception and provides us the true light; i.e., the true interpretation of reality as well as the concomitant spiritual effects that go along with it, viz., being a God-lover, full of the joy of the Holy Spirit as well as being eternally grateful for Jesus' sacrificial provision and redeeming, transforming love.

IN CONCLUSION, if you are in Generation Z and find yourself skeptical of traditional and institutional expressions of Christianity, then get in line. I do too. However, don't throw out the baby with the bathwater, for Jesus died for messes like that, just like He died for messes like yours. What I mean by “mess” isn't a “boo-boo,” but *sin*. Sin is the breaking of God's law, and it occurs when we determine that we are going to take up arms against the God of heaven and earth (1 John 3:4). Our first parents did it, we've all done it, and it's evident in all of us. The mess that they created in their rebellion feeds into us today in its many and varied forms. We all like to defy God in our sin, but Christ has come to set us free from that satanic “Kool-Aid” that wants to bring us under bondage and a heavy yoke of despair. This is why He says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
(Matthew 11:28-30)

We welcome Shepherd's Fellowship Baptist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina as the newest member of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

Their stated purpose: We are seeking to bring glory to the Triune God by a commitment to the sole authority and complete sufficiency of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). That commitment to God's Word should lead us to a love for God that fuels God-honoring worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). When there is a genuine love for God expressed in true worship and a commitment to obeying and proclaiming His truth, then there is a proper foundation that enables a church to honor and glorify God. By God's grace, this is the foundation upon which Shepherd's Fellowship of Greensboro is building.

Dustin S. Segers, pastor
Sterling J. VanDerwerker, pastor

For information email: pastor@sfofgso.org

WE CAN PRAY

A Devotional on Prayer

By Greta Dean



Greta Dean is the wife of Pastor Larry Dean of Bridgetown Baptist Church of Nesbit, Mississippi. We are indebted to Greta for her desire to keep up with the needs of pastors and their families, sending out regular prayer updates.

Prayer may be one of the most neglected commands and privileges we have today. Scriptures instruct God's children to pray ALWAYS. We are to pray when we are down in the valley, up on the mountaintop or anywhere in between. Bottom line is that God's children are to PRAY!!! The apostle Paul states in 1 Thess 5:17-18:

"Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Have you ever found yourself approaching the evening hours and realizing you have not prayed? As wives, mothers, sisters it is very easy to allow 'busy-ness' to push prayer time to the back burner for a more convenient time and then before you know it ...it's late, you're too tired and it's the end of the day. Thus, another day slips away without that special quiet time communing with our Heavenly Father, that each of us so desperately needs.

Or have you ever been in a situation where you see a need and feel totally helpless because there is nothing you can do? In those times we are not helpless - we can PRAY!! There is no greater gift or display of love for a brother or sister in Christ than to sincerely pray for their good in whatever circumstances they may be in or whatever their need may be. There is a song that I have come across several years ago that I have come to really appreciate and it reminds me there is always something I can do! The song is entitled "I Can Pray" and is sung by The Dove Brothers:

You say I'm not able
I'm too young or I'm too old,
I can't sing or teach
And no title I hold.
Lord, what can I do for I want to do my
part?
And I want to help the hurting
With all of my heart.

My family shows no interest
My child has gone so far,
Though I try my best to reach them
Their hearts just seem so hard.
Lord, what can I do to bring them back to
you?

My family is lost and dying
And my words do not get through

Chorus:
I can pray...until the walls come down
Till there's healing all around
That's something I can do.
I can pray in my secret place
Calling on Your Name
That's something I can do,
I can pray.

**"There IS something we can
do, something we MUST do....
WE CAN PRAY!!!!"**

Or have you ever found yourself in a place of needing the prayers of the saints and someone tells you they will pray for you? Have you ever had someone tell you they'd pray for you and you believe without a doubt that they will truly follow through on that commitment? If the Lord has allowed you to be in that place of need and have brethren praying for your need, you most certainly know the encouragement and comfort those prayers have brought to your heart.

Every one of us needs prayer! The needs may vary greatly, but the needs are still present. There are many among our families and brethren that have experienced and some are still experiencing major health issues. There

have been many circumstances among pastors and their wives or their families of debilitating diseases or injuries and so many of them have faithfully expressed thankfulness to the Lord for sustaining them, but also appreciation for the prayers of the saints on their behalf. It has been an encouragement to me through the years to hear and observe the testimony of trust and confidence in the Great Physician to see them through, in spite of the despair, fear and at times in the midst of severe pain. And many have shared that they could feel the Lord and the prayers of His people carrying them through their lowest valleys. Many of us have experienced those times of not knowing what the future held and at times not even feeling able to pray...the words just wouldn't come. What an encouragement to have brothers and sisters that will come along side and pray when we can't. Or to pray with us in our hour of need.

James 5:16: *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

It is truly a testimony of grace to be able to look to the Lord completely for our wisdom and direction regardless of how desperate our trial may be at the moment and to know He is ever faithful to guide us, comfort us and give us that *"peace that passeth all understanding"* (Phil 4:7). He is ever faithful to provide for His children exactly what is needed at the time it is needed.

As sisters in Christ, wives, mothers and daughters we can set as a priority to faithfully pray for our husbands, children, church family, extended family and our pastors. I would encourage all of you ladies to become prayer warriors in your churches. We have much to be thankful for and there are many needs among us. May we live *"rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; and given to hospitality"* (Rom 12:12-13). There IS something we can do, something we MUST do.... WE CAN PRAY!!!!

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From the New Chairman of the SGBF

Jon Cardwell

What an incredible blessing it has been for Sovereign Grace Baptist Church to host the recent Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship Annual Meeting on September 13, 2011. It was wonderful to renew old acquaintances as well as begin new friendships. Our scheduled speakers, Terry Worthan, Ron Staley, Tom Henry, and Don Currin expounded the Scriptures with words of exhortation and encouragement. The ladies were also blessed with encouraging Biblical insights from Cindy Currin, wife of this year's special guest speaker, Don Currin, of Don Currin Ministries and HeartCry Missionary Society.

Shepherd's Fellowship of Greensboro (North Carolina) was added to the SGBF membership this year. Sterling VanDerwerker, as a pastor of the church, representing co-pastor, Dustin Segers, and the entire congregation of SFoG, was received joyfully into our number, as their letter desiring membership was read to the assembly. They are a welcome addition and we warmly extend to them the right hand of fellowship.

Two other items were discussed at the meeting: first, a more active involvement by the SGBF in matters regarding the Sovereign Grace Youth Camp; and second, a better working solution for our website. Progress in both areas, especially with the website, has already begun. Information will be forthcoming as it is made available.

As it is with every meeting, a vote was conducted to select executive officers for the upcoming year. We are grateful to the Lord for Tom Henry who, having been elected as chairman in 2009 and re-elected last year, provided wisdom and leadership in coordinating with the Sovereign Grace Baptist Association for a very blessed combined fellowship between the two groups in July 2010. As our constitution limits the chairman to only two terms, the vote for the new chairman fell upon me. Ryan Butler, pastor of Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Summit, Arkansas, was elected as this year's vice-chairman; and since there are no limitations for the offices of secretary and treasurer, Larry Dean, pastor of Bridgetown Baptist Church in Nesbit, Mississippi, and Ron Staley, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Mechanicsville, Virginia, have been re-elected to their respective offices.

When the business meeting adjourned, Ryan asked me what his duties were as the SGBF vice-chairman. I told him that, in matters like those regarding the Youth Camp and website, the executive officers will provide leadership and guidance for the progress of those issues as we communicate with one another throughout the year. I added: "As I see it, our offices should not detract from our practical functioning as ministers within our local congregation. If it does, we're doing something wrong." The SGBF exists to enhance the work that takes place in the local churches: for the benefit of our local churches, its ministries and missions; not to add to the pastor's workload or detract from the central function of the local church. Despite my physical ailments, by God's providence I have been elected as this year's chairman. I look forward with joyful anticipation to putting my words to the test.



Evangelist Don Currin



Cindy Currin with some of the ladies



Ron Staley, Ryan Butler, Jon Cardwell, Larry Dean



The Mission Quilt Ministry

The Mission Quilt Ministry began under the leadership of Trevor Johnson to help Indonesian women who lost the support of their Muslim families when they confessed faith in Christ. They make beautiful, high quality quilts (like the one shown here) that would normally sell at much higher prices in the U.S. Please consider supporting these converts by purchasing one of their fine hand-crafted pieces.

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

Available Quilts may be viewed on the web:

www.flickr.com/photos/mission_quilt

This is a non-solicited and non-compensated announcement.



February 21-23, 2012

A Convocation for Prayer for Revival and Awakening
Bridgetown Baptist Church, Nesbit, Mississippi
Larry Dean, pastor

A call for a gathering of concerned believers to lift united prayer for a special visitation of the Spirit of God on the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and through them to the nation.

Pastor David King is the scheduled speaker.

For information on the web: www.bridgetownbaptist.org

Pastor Larry Dean's email: larrywdean@aol.com

April 17-19, 2012

Spring Sovereign Grace Bible Conference
Bible Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri
Holmes Moore, pastor
Tom Henry, assistant pastor

Services

The conference begins Tuesday morning, April 17, 2012 and continues through Thursday evening, April 19, 2012. Morning sessions begin at 10:00 AM and evening sessions begin at 7:00 PM.

Devotional and prayer at 9:00 A.M. each day of the Conference

Two meals a day, each day of the Conference, are provided by Bible Baptist Church for all who attend. Dinner follows the morning sessions. Supper is served before the evening sessions at 5:30 PM.

For information on accommodations in the St. Louis area, contact the church office at: (314) 645-4248

Check out the SGBF website: www.sovereigngracebaptistfellowship.org

If you are not on the mailing list and desire to receive *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, add another recipient to the list, have a change of address, or would like your name removed, please send your name and address to:

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