

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 33

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God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

By Charles D. Alexander

"Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God"? Romans 9:10-24

A serious and profitable discussion of this tremendous topic cannot be entered upon without recognizing first of all the limitations of our understanding and the silence of the Holy Spirit on vast aspects of the question. Indeed, we may take the whole glorious sweep of revealed truth concerning the person, the work, and the ways of God, and, while maintaining steadfastly the finality and absoluteness of what has certainly been revealed to us by God, borrow the words of Job and exclaim, *"Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion of him is heard?"* (Job 26:14) We do not mean that there will be any revelation of God in eternity that will supersede, set on one side, or render invalid even the smallest detail of truth now revealed unto us, but we simply recognize that God is yet greater than it is possible for us to comprehend; now, we know in part only, but then we shall know even as also we are known.

It behooves us then to tread upon this sacred ground of the sphere of God's sovereignty, and the proper relation thereto of man's responsibility, with reverence, humility and faith, receiving meekly and thankfully what God has to say thereon, and neither adding to nor taking from the plain declarations of the Spirit speaking in the Word of God.

Let us therefore begin by imposing upon ourselves due caution and restraint, and a humble recognition of the limitations of our faculties and understanding. Let us not incur the devastating reproof which the

**"The conception of God in
Christ, stooping in order to
honour His own glorious name,
suffering in order to magnify
His own incomparable justice,
dying in shame and rising in
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the creation of the world and of
those who are therein."**

Spirit lays upon prying curiosity and impious reasoning - *"Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"* Depend upon it, that unless you be possessed of a humble, pious mind, intending only to ascertain and to receive what God has made clear in His Word, you shall not want for materials in this discussion to fire you with indignation and rising wrath against the truth of God's sovereignty; for, whatever the implications may be, you must remember that God is God wherever man comes in. God is sovereign and sovereign means **sovereign**. *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."* Rather let man

have no place at all, than that God's rule, God's honour, God's sway, be impaired or injured for one moment.

I

This introduces us to the first aspect of the question, - **God's eternal reign.** *"The Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also."* (Psalm 95:3-4) Let us begin here and we shall begin well.

What is meant by God being "Sovereign"? The simplest, plainest, directest definition is in that tremendous confession wrung by the judgments of God from the heathen heart of that remarkable monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, and inscribed by the Spirit in Daniel 4:34-35: *"Him that liveth for ever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?"*

Mark those words: *"according to his will."* To those who impiously and imprudently would inquire of God and demand of the Most High a reason for the mysterious and dark sides of His providence, the answer awaits *"None can . . . say unto Him, what doest thou?"* To the like purpose are the following: --

continued next page



(1904-1991)

Charles D. Alexander was a pastor in Great Britain from 1954-1977. His ministry became widespread through his prolific writings and conference work in both England and the United States.

“He taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?” (Job 9:12)

“He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.” (Job 9: 32)

“He giveth not account of any of his matters.” (Job 33:13)

“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” (Isaiah 45:9)

“God’s pleasure” is the rule of the Universe, whether in natural province or in the scheme of salvation by grace, as witness the following Scriptures:

“But our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he pleased.” (Psalm 115:3)

“Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” (Psalm 135:6)

“I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” (Isaiah 46:9-10)

“Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)

Coming more particularly to the fact that God’s sovereign will and pleasure is *the determining factor* in salvation, we have an almost bewildering profusion of scriptural statements.

In Isaiah 53 we are told what is the origin, nature, purpose and result of Christ’s work. Particularly the last three verses proclaim with amazing clearness how God’s sovereign will and pleasure were fulfilled in Christ’s sufferings, death and

resurrection. The beginning and end of verse 10 declare that both the origin and result of Christ’s sufferings are *“the pleasure of the LORD.”* *“It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief”*— that speaks of Christ’s humiliation unto death as being according to the pleasure of the Lord *“when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”* – that speaks of the purpose for which Christ died, namely to make an atonement for sin, which atonement, as it is according to God’s pleasure, is bound to be accepted by Him. As Calvin so pointedly writes: *“If Christ died not by the will of God, then where is our redemption?”*

“He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand”—in other words, Christ shall not die in vain; *“he shall see his seed”* even all that host of elect souls whom the Father covenanted with the Son to redeem. Christ names the terms of this eternal covenant in John 17, where, in anticipation of His death about to be accomplished, He demands in holy and righteous confidence, the fulfilment of the Father’s part – *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”* *“Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* Here He speaks of that elect seed of promise which Isaiah prophesied that He should *“see.”*

Verses 11 and 12 of Isaiah 53 enlarge upon the scope and terms of the eternal covenant of redemption. They speak of the certainty of the result of Christ’s dying, and they commence with the tremendous words, *“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”*

What meaneth this, that Christ shall be *“satisfied”* when He looks back upon the result of His death as enumerated in the host of saved souls? Ask the question of those who sentimentally contend that God and Christ are *“breaking their hearts”* over multitudes of sinners going down to perdition whom they would save if they could, but they cannot, because they left out of account in the scheme of salvation, the two vital factors upon which the whole plan was contingent - the *“sovereign”* will of man, and adequate provision for getting the gospel preached to every creature.

O, modern evangelicalism! What hast thou to answer for! What miserable, small, and God-dishonouring views dost thou entertain of that salvation which was prepared in eternity, and for the display of which, as it called into activity and brought into view all the marvelous attributes of the Triune God, the earth, and all therein, and all its events have their being! Christ was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the earth to be the Lamb slain. (I Peter 1:20) The conception of God in Christ, stooping in order to honour His own glorious name, suffering in order to magnify His own incomparable justice, dying in shame and rising in glory in order to bring into glorious display His own matchless grace and wisdom, had, therefore, priority over the creation of the world and of those who are therein. In the salvation of the Church (the whole company of the redeemed from every age) the manifold wisdom of God is called into display and admiration before the assembled universe. (Ephesians 3:10 and 11)

Can it be suggested for one moment that so immense a sacrifice could be rendered by the Son, and yet that the efficacy of the work should be suspended upon the corrupt, vacillating wills of fallen men? *“He shall be satisfied”* rings out the answer of eternal truth. The result of Christ’s dying was never for a moment in doubt. *“For the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* – *“From henceforth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.”* (Hebrews 12:2; 10:12-13)

Who then will contend, on behalf of wicked men, that God does not have an *“eternal covenant”* with Christ His Son, *“ordered in all things and sure”* for the salvation of an elect host from the midst of a rebellious world? Let us hearken to what the Son saith concerning this covenant of life which He sealed with His blood. (Hebrews 13:20)

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me . . . I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me, and this is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing.” (John 6:37-40)

“Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:17-18)

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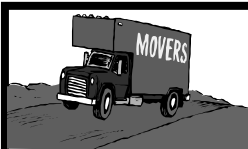
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“Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life ... I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15,26-28)

From all the foregoing, it is plain that God reigns. *“There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.”* (Proverbs 21:30)

His will is the rule of the universe; His plan and purpose roll on, unhindered, to the appointed end, which is His own eternal praise and glory. Who can explore the inner recesses of His wisdom? He must be wiser than God who would outwit Him, and stronger than He in order to defeat His purposes. *“The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”* (I Corinthians 1:25) As in natural providence, so in salvation, God reigns. His choice, before the foundation of the world determines our salvation. (Ephesians 1: 4; John 15:16) He saves whom He will. (John 5:21) *“It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* (Romans 9:16)

The first rebellion against God’s rule was that of the fallen angelic host with Satan at their head. Their first counsel after their fall was the discomfiture of God through the works of His hands, and so they wrought the ruin of man who was made in the image of God. But there is *“no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.”* God’s purpose was wider than, deeper than, greater than their most deadly purpose; and out of the materials of man’s shameful fall, God fashioned a work and sought an occasion of grace, smote His enemies with their own weapons, overcame their strength through weakness, defeated their pride through humility, and built a new spiritual creation far more glorious than the first.

Note in brief the following Scriptures: Romans 11:33; Isaiah 43:13; Proverbs 16: 1, 9; 19: 21; 20: 24; 21:1.

II

The question remains, How does all this consist with what we know, and to which our conscience bears witness, regarding the responsibility of man?

First of all, what is the “responsibility of man”? The easiest definition will no doubt be that man is fully accountable for all his thoughts, words and actions; that he is a moral creature capable of moral judgment,

and that only as he is this, can materials be found in his actions for a just and righteous judgment before the throne of God.

There is a way of disposing of this question out of hand by a simple appeal to the well founded doctrine of “philosophical necessity.” In his book *The Freedom of the Will*, Jonathan Edwards has settled for all time this question.

It is not our purpose, however, to embark upon abstruse dissertations where men of plain and simple mould will find difficulty in following, but to dispose of the question entirely by appeal to scriptural statement and illustration. If it can be safely and plainly established from Scripture that even as God directs and disposes the hearts of men along certain channels, they are none the less accountable for all their doings, all argument will be settled for the pious mind who will accept the truth even while acknowledging with humility the profound mystery of God’s will. As for the rest, for those who would be wiser than God and more just than God, we are under no obligation to give them a reason much less to give them satisfaction.

The blackest crime of which this world was guilty, was the death of the Son of God. But observe the secret providence of God exerted in all the dispositions of that tremendous event. Isaiah says *“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.”* Christ says, *“No man taketh (my life) from me, but I lay it down of myself.”* In the garden He prayed, *“Thy will be done.”* Yet the devil was there, in malignant fury, to make away with his great foe. *“This is your hour and the power of darkness.”* The devil *“put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.”* Judas was there, actuated by the love of gold to betray the Son of Man *“as it was written of him.”* The chief priests and rulers were there, actuated by envy and jealousy. *“Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Him.”* Yet speaking of the accomplished event, Peter declares that Christ was *“delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23) and the Church in prayer acclaims that against Jesus, Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, but only *“to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”* (Acts 4:28)

What does it mean? Only that God employed all these wicked instruments to bring to pass His own *“pleasure”* concerning the death of His Son as a sacrifice for sin. The devil was motivated by hate, Judas by cupidity, and the

Israelites by envy, and were fully accountable and responsible to God for all that they did. Nevertheless, even in their guilt and wickedness and murder and lies, they but accomplished the design and will of God. Ask not for an explanation of how this sovereignty of God consisteth with the responsibility of man. There is the fact of it. Who can challenge it? The humble will receive it, and praise the Most High for His matchless wisdom and perfect work in making even the wrath of man to praise Him; yet withal retaining His perfect integrity—most righteous, most pure, most holy. *“I cannot understand!”* cries this one or that. But God would not be God, and man would not be man if the creature could climb to the Creator’s eminence and see with His eyes and understand with His wisdom. It is enough that God has declared the fact, and who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

Consider the case of Pharaoh. *“Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the whole earth,”* says God to this heathen monarch. (Romans 9:17)

Ere ever God’s judgments fell upon Pharaoh, God said to Moses, *“I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go.”* (Exodus 4:21)

Those who glibly cut the Gordian knot by declaring “God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart until Pharaoh first hardened his own,” always overlook this reference in Exodus 4 of what God said ere ever Moses went to Pharaoh with the first plague. The whole argument of Paul in Romans 9 would be meaningless if God had nothing to do with the hardening of the king’s heart. To what purpose would have been the remonstrance of the objector, *“Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?”* if Pharaoh’s heart had merely been hardened by his own obstinacy without the intervention of God? How easy it would have been for Paul to dispose of the objector by the simple declaration, *“But Pharaoh hardened his own heart to begin with, when God really wanted to soften it!”*

Instead, he acknowledges the mystery and repels the impiety, *“Who art thou, that repliest against God?”* God sought an occasion to pour His judgments upon a wicked people. Causeless His judgments did not come. He hardened His enemy’s heart, yet the enemy remained fully accountable and deserving of the judgments which fell. Pharaoh was

conscious of no compulsion. He boasted of his freedom of action and hurled insults in the face of the God of Israel. God was sovereign, yet Pharaoh was fully “responsible.”

The time would fail to tell of other plain examples of the sovereign disposing of men’s hearts even to minute details. Wicked Absalom chose the evil (to him) counsel of Hushai because “*the Lord had appointed to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that he might bring evil upon Absalom.*” (2 Samuel 17:14) ...

“Only as the Spirit intervenes, quickening the dead soul, reducing it to repentance, and turning it from its corruptions to the living God and to a lively faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and to His blood, which cleanses from all sin, can the soul be saved.”

III

In the realm of grace, the problem is somewhat different. Predestination to life—God’s eternal decree of election; the choosing of some from the family of Adam to eternal life to the eternal exclusion of the remainder—is sometimes represented by opponents of the doctrine as a monstrous device for keeping souls out of heaven who are striving to get there, and the bringing into heaven of hellish individuals who indulge their lusts and live as they please, knowing that all will be well with them in the end. Nothing could be more fanciful or more utterly untrue. Half the objection to the doctrine of election is founded on the assumption that natural, depraved, sinful man, dead in trespasses and in sins, is capable of holy motives and an honest search after God. The truth is, that until the Spirit of God breathes upon the dead soul, man is

incapable of a gracious act, a gracious thought, or a gracious motive. “*There is none that seeketh after God...there is none that doeth good...there is no fear of God before their eyes.*” (Romans 3) Man is universally depraved and ungodly. His greatest crime is that he does not seek after the true God, even where the restraints of providence have preserved him from the grosser corruptions of human nature. To this effect are the words of Christ, “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*” (John 6:44) Again, “*No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father.*” (John 6:65)

The heart of the sons of men is wholly set in them to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) Every imagination of the thoughts of men’s hearts is only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5) Human nature has not improved since the Flood. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

Does man’s incapacity for good make him any the less blameworthy for his obdurate wickedness? Does not the incorrigible nature of his crime rather aggravate his guilt? Does the fact that God is incapable of doing evil make His goodness less praiseworthy? Does it not rather entitle Him to the greater praise and glory that sin has not, and cannot have, a place in His being? “*God cannot be tempted with evil,*” says James. (chapter 1:13)

Man’s unbelief is characterized as a blacker, more heinous crime in that it springs from an obdurate, unyielding heart, so dead and inured to sin, as to be incapable of elevating itself from the corruption and selfishness, which it loves and in which it expatiates.

From whence then cometh salvation? Certainly not from the black heart of man. No hope of an evangelical response to the preaching of free grace can be expected from man as he is by nature. Only as the Spirit intervenes, quickening the dead soul, reducing it to repentance, and turning it from its corruptions to the living God and to a lively faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and to His blood, which cleanses from all sin, can the soul be saved. So utterly beyond the faculties of fallen man is this great work, that it is represented in the New Testament as comparable with the first work of creation — “*God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give*

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” (2 Corinthians 6:6) - and to the translation of Enoch and Elijah from earth to Heaven, He “*hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.*” (Colossians 1:13)

You will ask, “What then is the use of preaching the Gospel, if dead souls can neither hear nor respond?” Lazarus stank in the grave where he had lain for four days. At Christ’s command, “*Come forth!*” he that was dead came forth, not because he in his death had power to hear or to respond, but because the voice of the Creator carried creative power to the dead, rotting body. So with the salvation of the soul. The Gospel call is sounded over the graves of the spiritually dead, and those to whom the word comes, not in word only, but in power hearing, live. “*The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*” (John 5:25)

Those who “live” do not abandon themselves to profligacy. Their one complaint is that they cannot, because of the warfare of the old man against the new, “live as they please,” for to them, “to live as they please” means to live in perfect holiness, “*conformed in all things to the image of the Son,*” unto which also they are predestinated. (Romans 8:29, 30)

Those who do not believe, are accountable for their unbelief, inasmuch as it is due to their own darkness and sin, which they love and from which they desire not to be separated. Those who believe ascribe all the praise and glory to the free, sovereign, electing love of God, and should any inquire why they should have been chosen from among men for this blessed grace, we leave them with McCheyne’s wondering exclamation, “Why me, Lord? Why me?” Eternal, unchanging, covenant love is the explanation of the one; just, righteous, holy judgment is the explanation of the other. Should anyone repine against this and demand a reckoning with God, they are left with the Spirit’s reproof, “*Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ?*”



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What is Sovereign Grace?

By Holmes Moore

The first thing that must be done, as in any profitable discussion, is **to define the terms used**. In the question of this article, we have two primary terms: Grace, which is a noun, and the main word in our sentence; and Sovereign, which is an adjective that qualifies this noun. We use grace much as all Evangelicals generally do, meaning the *unmerited favor of God, through Jesus Christ*. Since the fall of mankind in Adam, the first man, the only way a Holy God could favorably deal with our race has been on the basis of grace. If otherwise, it could only be on the basis of justice, which because of our sin, would bring us but judgment resulting in our eternal condemnation!

The second term Sovereign we take in its ordinary sense of one having *absolute power, free to do whatever he wills to do*, as “*absolute kings*” used to have. Of course with men, such sovereignty was limited by human nature, for even “*sovereign kings*” could not do absolutely what they would. However, in our usage, both words grace and sovereign have direct reference to God Himself, and not to man. Thus we are asserting that **God has absolute sovereignty**, not limited by anyone or anything outside Himself!

Putting the two words together as we do, the term *Sovereign Grace* means that we believe there is a grace, which is God’s unmerited favor flowing to sinners through Jesus Christ, and that it is absolutely sovereign in its operation and application, being limited only by the will of God Himself. Those of us who affirm this realize that we are saying a great deal, but we willingly stand behind these assertions, believing them to be clearly taught in the Bible, God’s infallible Word.

WHAT SOVEREIGN GRACE MEANS RELATIVE TO OUR SALVATION

The Scripture firmly states, “*Salvation is of the Lord*.” (Jonah 2:9) Relative to our salvation, there are **two important doctrines** that must be understood: the **Doctrine of God**, and the **Doctrine of Man**. If we get these doctrines right, we have a proper foundation to grasp God’s salvation: if we do not, we will never be able to understand

the way God saves sinners. Those who hear the Gospel and reject it do so either because they misunderstand what the Bible has to say about God, and/or what it teaches about man. On one or the other of these rocks their ship of faith is dashed and broken! Their hearts do not like the God Who really is—the God of the Bible—and their minds do not approve His way of salvation; therefore, their wills do not accept this proffer of salvation that He makes. Hence, like the rich young ruler who encountered Christ, when they learn His terms of salvation, they go away—perhaps sorrowfully, yet they do go away! (Luke 18:18-23)

The Bible is very clear that God is absolutely sovereign in all His dealings with His creatures, including man. Hear the personal testimony of one of the greatest kings who ever lived, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: “*I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto Heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?*” (Daniel 4:34, 35) He uttered these sentiments after God had dealt with his pride and had humbled his heart. Before that, he was as proud and haughty as kings, and other people, tend to be, and attributed all his glory and accomplishments only to himself! (See Daniel 4:30) He sounds much like the successful farmer that Jesus tells us about in one of His Parables. (See Luke 12:16-21) He also thought that his success and riches were all due to himself. But God pronounced him a “*fool*” on the night of his death, and he who is a “*fool*” at death, is a “*fool*” forever! How we need to know Who and what God is, and to come to terms with that, for it is one thing that makes the difference between Heaven and Hell for our souls! And absolute sovereignty is one attribute that makes up the Person of God, and beyond all dispute, that is the God of the Bible!



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That other great determinative Doctrine is the truth of who man really is. In our day particularly, our Anthropology (the Doctrine of Man) is all askew! We are apt to hold too high a view of man. As our idea of God is much amiss, (we think that *if* there is a God, He must exist for our use and pleasure.) so our conception of man is fatally flawed. Apart from God’s work in our hearts, we firmly believe in man’s inability and lack of true worth! We have been taught, and most willingly believe, that this world, this universe, this life were all made for us. Now don’t misunderstand what I am saying. Man, as he came from the Hand of God, was a most wondrous and marvelous creature, made in the image and likeness of God. As such, he was submissive to God’s will, and happy to be in that condition. God placed him in a Paradise and gave him a helpmeet, made from his side and perfectly suited to him. Together this first couple enjoyed a bliss that we now can only imagine, as they worshipped God and delighted to do His will. Had they continued in their first estate, again we can only imagine what a wondrous race they would have produced and what a world they would have made for themselves and for us all. But, “*man in honour abideth not*,” and how soon Adam and his bride sinned and brought death, natural and spiritual, upon all our race! (See Romans 5:12, *et al*) For Adam, when he sinned, acted not merely for himself, but for all his race, because he was the Federal Head and Representative of us all. In a mystical, yet very real way, I, you, and each member of our race were in Adam when he sinned, as the acorn is in the tree. But, someone might object, “I don’t remember being in Adam!” Neither do I. Yet I do remember too many times when *Adam was in me*, in his self-will, rebellion,

and defiance of God and His Law! Therefore, it is certain that I was in Adam – and you too!

Since that fateful day in the Garden, a great change has passed upon our race. In the first place, man, who was created in the image of God, **began to die:** first spiritually, then physically. When one says that death is natural, just a part of living, he speaks according to our experience since the Fall of our race into sin. Yet apart from sin, it would never so have been! It is the most unnatural thing for a creature, made in the image and likeness of God, **to die!** The fact of death in our world proves our sinfulness and defection from God. It does not prove that death is natural! Man is dead spiritually, even while he lives in the flesh, in at least two ways. First of all, when a person contracts a fatal disease, all the tests have been run, medicine has done its best with attempted cures and yet the doctors shake their heads and say that there is no hope, it may be said that such a person is a dead man, even while he lives. This is the state of every sinner outside of Christ! Secondly, when a person has committed a capital crime, has been tried and convicted, and all of his appeals have been denied, it may be said of him, even before he is executed, that he is *a dead man* – dead in the law! So, too, is the lost sinner *dead*, in a spiritual sense. And make no mistake about it, sin has caused such a two-fold death! Also it is certain that such a death will become consummate and eternal without the intervention of *God's sovereign grace*.

WHAT THE ROLE OF CHRIST JESUS WAS RELATIVE TO GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE

How grateful we should be that before there was a sinner, there was a Saviour! Life holds many surprises for us human beings, but not one for God! Sin did not take God off guard, for as it was with the

death of Christ, so too with the advent of sin, it was all within the prevue of His ***"determinate counsel and foreknowledge!"*** (See Acts 2:22-36) There has never been a greater sinful act than that of Christ's crucifixion and death, yet Peter tells us by Divine Inspiration that it was all a **part of God's Plan**. So, too, was God's permitting sin to enter into our race through Adam's transgression. Now, let's be perfectly clear about this: God is not the **Author of sin!** Since He is neither the Actor nor the Agent of sin, He cannot be **its Author!** He did not **create sin**, for it is not a thing that requires a Creator. Sin is a state of being within a rational, moral soul: it is not a substance, nor a thing.

**"How we need to
know Who and
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and Hell for our
souls!"**

So it was within Satan, the **first sinner!** There is much that we do not know about the origin of the Angelic Order. Yet we have enough revealed in Scripture that we can be quite sure of the following facts. **Satan**, or **Lucifer**, was once a bright and shining angel, even the Chief of them. Yet, when the **evil state of being** that we call **sin** entered his heart, this bright angel became **the Devil**, and he fell. Isaiah, chapter fourteen, gives us most interesting and instructive knowledge about what factors were involved in his fall. ***"How art thou fallen from heaven,***

O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Verse 12a) And then, as if to answer this question, we are told, ***"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: ...I will be like the Most High!"*** (Vrs. 12, 13) What a proud boast this is, even for a glorious creature like Lucifer! Read this passage entirely and see how many ***"I's"*** and ***"my's"***, and ***"I wills"*** there are in this one narrative. Into the heart of every human sinner this same state of being invariably comes.

So it was within Adam, the **first man** and **great progenitor** of our race! Made

sinless and holy by the Hand of God, the same strange infatuation came into his heart as came into Satan's heart. He came to think that he did not have to obey God's Law, that he could sin and get by with it. He began to give some credence to Satan's lie that they would ***"be as gods, knowing good and evil."*** (Genesis 3:5) This false promise can be taken in this sense: "Ye shall be like gods, determining **for yourselves** what is good and evil!" This is basically the **credo** of every sinner to this day, and by its practice, the wrath of God, which fell on Adam, also falls on all our guilty race. Here is a truth that every person needs to retain in his mind and heart: there are **only two men** in the entire history of our race that **can affect our salvation** for time and eternity. They are **Adam the First, and the Last Adam, Jesus Christ!** (See 1 Corinthians 15:21-26, 45-54) As we have already observed, we all are in the First Adam, and that by our natural birth. That relationship gets us death, both natural and spiritual. We all will forever stay in the First Adam and his (our) death, unless and until we are born again and thus translated into the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. We must come to be in Christ the way we are (were) in Adam. This "transfer," this "relationship" is what the Bible intends by the word, "salvation."

The reason the First Adam can have such an effect on us is that we are by natural generation one with him, thus we share **his condemnation**. (See Genesis 3:14-19, 24; Matthew 25:41-46, et al) Anything we can do in an attempt to change this relationship, such as reformation, religious observances, moral or intellectual improvements, or any other human effort will prove to be ineffectual, vain, and at last deceiving to our souls. The only hope that any sinful soul has to be **at peace with God and acceptable to Him** must come by way of **Jesus Christ, the Last Adam!**

The only way there is to come to Jesus Christ and be saved is by **the Gospel of God's sovereign grace!** And God's sovereign grace and mercy is all tied up in **the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Last Adam!** All of the salvation there is in this universe is all bound up in the Lord Jesus Christ! In order for any soul to be saved, that soul must come to God by Jesus Christ and do business with Him! He said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."*** (John 14:6)

continued next page

One of the most beautiful and full passages of Holy Scripture is Philippians two, verses 5-11. Here we have the Apostle Paul's eloquent description of Christ's great condescension as He came into the world to become our Saviour. No one was ever so high as He Who was in *the very Form of God* so that it was no robbery for Him to be *equal with God*. Yet He voluntarily *made Himself of no reputation*, that is, He *emptied Himself* and took *the form of a servant* and was made *in the likeness of men*. That which we value above all things, our reputation, He, as it were, repudiated, though He had the greatest reputation we could possibly think of, for He was *equal with God*, His Father. (See John 1:1-4) Yet rather than clutch that to His bosom, He took "the lower room" and became a servant, even coming so low as to be made a man! But note, He comes even lower yet, for being found in man's nature, He became *obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!* We humans live as long as we can and then only most reluctantly do we give in to death, and that only when we can do nothing else. But this One gave Himself up voluntarily to death, when death had no legitimate claim on Him as the Son of God and Son of Man, except as He took the burden of our sins. It is for the sake of sinners that Jesus died such a death as the death of the Cross.

Yes, this is how we may get into Christ and God's forgiveness! It was the eternal will and plan of God to make Christ to be **the Last Adam**. As we are one with the **First Adam in his transgression and death** through our first birth, so we may become one with **the Last Adam, Jesus Christ in His obedience and life**, through the second birth. (See John 3:1-16) Thus Christ becomes the **vital link to God and the way of salvation** by sovereign grace alone.

The Apostle Peter expresses the plan of salvation through the sovereign grace of God to sinners in the following manner, as found in the first chapter of his First Epistle. There he writes, "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope*

might be in God." (1 Peter 1:18-21) Notice again as the Scripture centers our salvation in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Here Peter uses the term *redemption* to describe Christ's work of our salvation. Redemption means to buy back something or someone by a ransom price. In Peter's day it was not uncommon for property or persons to be taken captive by pirates or other criminals and held for ransom. In order for such persons to be released and set free, a ransom had to be paid, usually by their family. If the ransom was not paid, most ordinarily, the captives forfeited their lives. This fearful condition is a useful picture of the state of the lost sinner: through sin we are "captives" of our lusts and owe a "ransom" to the Law of God which we have seriously violated. To pay this ransom, we do not have the least ability, and therefore our lives, for time and eternity, are forfeit.

Our case would be hopeless if it were not for what Peter here presents: Christ Jesus has paid our ransom, not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, i.e., His own life! Take note that Peter informs us that Christ "*verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world*" to do such salvation work for us. Note, too, that in the second verse of this same chapter, the apostle tells us that all believers are "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*" Clearly we have here the sovereign grace of God! But someone might object that the word used in this verse is "*foreknowledge*," not foreordination. That one might continue to insist that our election is according to God's foreknowledge and that our salvation is therefore dependent on our **foreseen faith**, rather than **God's eternal choice of us!** Compelling as this argument might seem to some, it must be pointed out to the careful student that both *foreknowledge* (Vs. 2) and *foreordained* (Vs. 20) come from the same word in the Greek language. The only difference is that the first is a noun and the second in a participle, which is a verb-noun form. Therefore the meaning in both verses must be essentially the same. Whatever it means in verse two, it also must mean essentially in verse twenty, and vice versa. Let's try that on for size!

The meaning that many like to use of God's foreknowledge may at first seem to fit verse two, that God looks forward down through time and foresees what you and I will do. It is usually insisted that He does not *cause* anything to come to pass, He merely foreknows or foresees what will

come to pass by our own free will! There are at least two things wrong with that understanding: first, God's foreknowledge never bears that meaning in all the rest of Scripture; and second, that meaning makes no sense at all when applied to the same word in verse twenty. In this verse it is clear that Peter is speaking of Christ giving Himself as the spotless Lamb of God for a sin sacrifice. He goes on to state that this Lamb was by God "*foreordained before the foundation of the world.*" We readily understand how **foreordained** fits the clear meaning in this verse, but how would **fore-know** do here? Let's "run it up the flagpole and see how it waves!"

Keep in mind that this is the Person and work of Christ that here is in view. God the Father would have to have looked down through the future and have *seen* that early in the First Century a virgin would conceive without the help of a man and bring forth a son! Keep in mind that God **is not causing** such a thing, only **seeing** that it would happen. He then would have to say to Himself, "This is wonderful! I had better get in on this! I'll make that one to become my Son! Furthermore God *sees*, He does not *cause*, that this one will grow up and live a sinless life. Then, too, God *sees* that this one will go to Calvary and die; what's more, that he will, after dying, rise again from the dead! Remember, God is not *causing this to happen*, He only *sees* that it *will happen all on its own!* The case is even more compelling now: God just has to *get in on this act!* If, at this point, someone is compelled to say that such a scenario is **ridiculous**, remember, I am only interpreting this passage by using the meaning of foreknowledge that many insist is the proper way to understand God's election and foreordination. I agree, such a meaning as is forced on this section of Holy Scripture is **past ridiculous**, it is just plain **silly!** Yet that is the way too many good people understand God's foreknowledge in connection with His election. If such people were consistent, they would be forced to interpret this, and other like passages, in the above ludicrous manner.

Happily, such a twisting and gymnastic approach to Bible interpretation is not at all necessary: plain, honest Bible exegesis will do just fine! In verse 2, "***Elect according to the foreknowledge of God,***" does not refer merely to God's prescience, i.e., to His knowing things ahead of time. God certainly knows all things that shall come to pass, for Scripture proclaims, "***Known unto God are all His works, from the***

foundation of the world." Yet when God's foreknowledge is spoken of in connection to our election and salvation, a much higher meaning of the word is ever intended. It means that the Eternal God has taken us as sinners and hugged us to His Great Heart in Eternal Love! It also ever intends His eternal intention, or purpose, to save us. Surely this is so in Romans 8:29: ***"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."*** Who cannot see there God's eternal love and purpose? Who will there say that all this is founded on something God merely foresaw that we, the sinful descendents of **the First Adam**, would do of ourselves? Surely we are elect ones according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, that is, according to His eternal love and purpose to make us like Christ by His own sovereign and gracious work!

Now take this same essential meaning to verse twenty of First Peter one, and to the word, *"foreordained."* There it fits perfectly. Peter is telling us that God the Father, in eternal love to His Son, purposed that He should become ***"a lamb without blemish and without spot"*** that He might be ***"manifest in these last times for you, Who by Him do believe in God."*** It surely

was in such purpose and love that Christ died for sinners and was ***"raised up from the dead,"*** and given ***"Glory."*** (Vrs. 19-21) God's purpose, that is, His foreordination, is plainly in view, just as the text says. However, we must remember that the word in this verse is essentially the same **as it is in verse two of this chapter.** When we allow the clear meaning in both verses to say what it says, then there is harmony of meaning in both verses, as well as in the rest of Scripture. If we force it to mean mere prescience, then all becomes nonsense and confusion.

WHAT SOVEREIGN GRACE HAS TO SAY TO CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, GENERALLY.

Those of us who hold to **God's sovereign grace** in Creation, Nature, Providence, and especially the Gospel, hold the view of God Himself that is thoroughly Biblical and is consistent with the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments. This is what the saints of old believed, this is what Christ and His apostles taught, this is what the Christians throughout the centuries have held to, and this is certainly what the great Reformers insisted on. Furthermore, those who are familiar with the Historic Baptist Confessions of Faith, will recog-

nize that this is what most Baptists have believed down through the centuries.

It is not everything to stand in the same faith as the confessors, martyrs, preachers and evangelists of the universal Christian Church have held to, but it can be most satisfying and challenging. Though I hope we would stand up for and promote the doctrine of Scripture whatever others might believe or stand for, yet it is encouraging to know that we **are not the first** and doubtless **shall not be the last**, while the world stands, to believe and joy in **these grand truths** of God's sovereign mercy. We recognize the fact that not all Christians agree on every little point of doctrine. Still, until ***"we know as we are known,"*** until we stand in glory with Christ and all believers of all times, until we all are a part of that ***"Church of the Firstborn, the spirits of just men made perfect,"*** may we all, according to the light that God has given to each one, strive for ***"the faith once delivered unto the saints"*** in love, knowledge, understanding, and the unity of the Spirit of Christ.

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(1834-1892)

Charles H. Spurgeon Commenting on John 6:37

***"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."***

This declaration involves the doctrine of election: there are some whom the Father gave to Christ. It involves the doctrine of effectual calling: these who are given must and shall come, however stoutly they may set themselves against it; yet they shall be brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. It teaches us the indispensable necessity of faith; for even those who are given to Christ are not saved except they come to Jesus. Even they must come, for there is no other way to heaven but by the door, Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives to our Redeemer must come to Him, therefore none can come to heaven except they come to Christ.

Oh! the power and majesty which rest in the words "shall come." He does not say they have power to come, nor they may come if they will, but they "shall come." The Lord Jesus doth by His messengers, His Word, and His Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come in that they may eat of His marriage supper; and this He does, not by any violation of the free agency of man,

but by the power of His grace. I may exercise power over another man's will, and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he yields cheerfully to His government, subdued by sovereign love. But how shall those be known whom God hath chosen? By this result: that they do willingly and joyfully accept Christ, and come to Him with simple and unfeigned faith, resting upon Him as all their salvation and all their desire. Reader, have you thus come to Jesus?

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Chosen in Christ

By Ron Staley

Why do some who once shunned the thought that salvation is all of God, and that election to salvation was decreed by God from eternity, “*before (the sinner) had done any good or evil,*” now embrace this truth and find it to be a matter of the highest joy? How is it that they surrender all thought of human worth or merit and bow to the clearly-revealed Biblical truth of sovereign election? How could that which was thought to be an enemy, now become the closest friend; and that which was thought to be unjust, now be called “*grace*”?

Is there a distinction between God’s love and His grace? If so, it could only be in that love chose and grace bestowed. But if the sovereign love of God was placed on His elect before the world began, as it surely was, then it is inseparable from His grace; for the salvation of God is “*according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*” (2 Timothy 1:9b) Whatever distinction there may be between God’s love and His grace, it is all “*in Christ Jesus.*” Through Him alone, God chose and bestows His glorious salvation. If we merely systematize God’s electing love into a doctrinal statement, using only logical arguments to establish its obvious necessity, we remove the very heart of this glorious truth. In love, God chose an innumerable multitude out of this fallen world. He chose them individually, but chose them all “*in Christ.*”

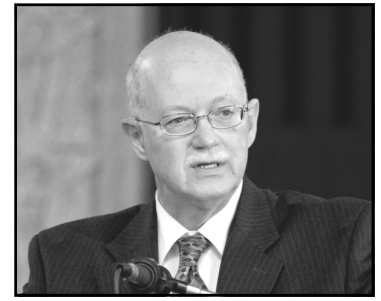
There can be no true preaching of election, of grace, of calling, of regeneration, of conversion, or any other component of God’s salvation, apart from the preaching of Christ. All is in Him, all through Him, all from Him, and all to Him! Thus the apostle Paul summed up the whole of his ministry as “*the preaching of Jesus Christ,*” “*the preaching of the cross,*” being determined, as he said to the Corinthians, “*not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*” To the great apostle it was not simply a logical, systematic doctrine that formed the substance of his preaching and teaching: it was not so much what He preached, but Whom. This Person he preached is the eternal Logic of God, “*the Word,*” who was from eternity “*with God, and was*

God.” And yet – wonder of wonders – He “*became flesh.*” Not a single Divine truth can be rightly learned or received apart from Him. This glorious Person is the Alpha and Omega of all true knowledge. So if we are to rightly set forth any aspect of God’s “*so great salvation,*” it must begin and end in Christ Jesus the Lord, “*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” (Colossians 2:3)

We quote, with a hearty “Amen,” what Charles Spurgeon preached in December of 1863 at Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. Here is an excerpt from his sermon on Christ as “*Alpha and Omega.*”

“Beloved, here is a theme worthy of many discourses from the most eminent divines. The thoughts of God, the eternal decrees, the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah; these are deep things; but we know this concerning them, that from first to last they all have a relation to Christ. Concerning our race and the elect out of it, the whole matter is encompassed in the person of the Redeemer. Speak ye of election? “*Mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth,*” is Christ’s name. We are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. Speak of our being predestinated to be sons—we are only made so in Him who stands as the elder brother. Every separate individual of the chosen tribe stands only by virtue of a union which was established from of old between his person and the person of the Redeemer. Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of divine grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the wellspring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one objective was always aimed at—the glory of the Son of God.

The Father begins with exalting Jesus, and concludes with glorifying Him with the glory which He had with Him before



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the world was in existence. How I do love the doctrines of grace when they are taken in connection with Christ. Some people preach the Calvinistic points without Jesus; but what hard, dry, marrow preaching it is. The letter killeth; it breedeth in men a controversial, quarrelsome spirit; but when you preach the doctrines of grace as they are in Christ, as Dr. Hawker would have preached them, when you talk of them as Rutherford would have talked of them, oh, then a holy unction rests upon them, and they become inestimably precious; and let every believer remember he does not get these doctrines as he should get them, unless he receives them in Christ. Everywhere the Lord Jesus is to be considered not as the friend of a day, or our Savior only in His life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. By faith I see Him as the eternal Son of God; I see Him standing in the purpose of the Father as the covenant head of the elect. I see Him in due time born of a woman, but I do not forget that His goings forth are of old from everlasting, and that before the daystar knew its place, His delights were with the sons of God. I see Him; He cries “*It is finished!*” He bows His head. I do not, however, forget that He is not dead, but that when the world shall die, and time shall conclude its reign, then He who is the Ancient of days shall live, and shall flourish in immortal youth. Alpha and Omega is Jesus Christ, then, in the eternal purposes, and in the covenant transactions of God.”

A Love Choice

God is tender in mercy to all of His creation, as the Lord Jesus taught, for “*He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*” (Matthew 5:45) There is a wondrous divine benevolence that extends

to those who live in sinful ignorance of Him and make use of His creation and His gifts for the fulfilling of selfish and vile purposes. To idolatrous pagans Paul preached of God as the Creator, saying *“He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”* (Acts 14:17) Thus, He bestows temporal blessings even upon those who walk *“in their own ways,”* not His. Yes, man is born unto trouble! Yes, man is the very agent of the devil and fulfills the vile desires of the wicked one! So the creation itself rebels against men, and men suffer tragic calamities. Sin’s deadly results extend to both body and soul. So the marvel is that God, who is infinite in holiness and purity, whose very throne is said to be inhabited by *“justice and judgment,”* is bountiful in mercy by allowing fallen men to live one more hour, much less in large measure *“filling (their) hearts with food and gladness.”*

Make no mistake about it: though God is incredibly merciful to mankind in general, He is *“angry with the wicked every day”* and reserves His wrath for sinners. His righteous judgment tarries for now, but it shall come more surely than the sun rising tomorrow. Yet, from among the fallen human race, the living God chose for Himself a multitude of those who were *“children of wrath, even as others”* and had no ability to do anything about it. He chose them individually in His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just hours before *“the travail of His soul”* when the cross would claim its willing Victim, the Lord Jesus prayed for those whom the Father gave to Him, in whose stead He would stand, whose sins He would bear, and whose salvation He would secure. If anywhere the incredible breadth, length, depth and height of God’s sovereign and distinguishing love for His chosen ones could be measured, surely it is found in the wondrous words of our Lord’s high priestly prayer! Listen to the words that fell from the lips of the Father’s *“Beloved”* as He prayed for those who were given Him to redeem – for those who would hear His

voice and come to Him. What an expression of His deep love for them when He prayed, *“that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them”!* (John 17:26) Those chosen in Christ were chosen in love! They would be *“accepted in the Beloved”* and loved with the same love! How could this be other than to *“the praise of the glory of His grace”?* (Ephesians 1:3-6)

“It is but a step from knowing salvation in Christ crucified alone to the glorious truth of divine election.”

Before it is known to its blessed recipient, this wondrous love of God – sovereign, respecting only the will of God, and independent of anything in its object – begins its manifestation. Awakened to the awful reality that God *is* and must be faced, sin is seen for what it is, bringing with it an inescapable sense of guilt. As scenes of judgment fill the mind’s eye and fear grips the heart, the sinner cries *“What can I do?”* Many, when convicted of sin and becoming painfully aware that God is indeed holy and they have sinned against Him, seek to make amends. They resolve to do better, to produce some acceptable work, to do something righteous. But then sin’s subtle power returns, because it cannot be continually resisted. At least, that was my experience. Blessed the day when the convicted sinner comes to truly hear the best and most joyful news that could ever be heard – the gospel! God has done it all; He who was the offended has done everything necessary to save the offender! And what was heard, believed, and embraced was not complicated, although only then heard in truth in the heart. God gave His very own Son, and gave Him to take the place of the sinner, bearing all of God’s wrath though He never sinned. Through His death on the cross, all was finished; the blood of the Son of God, the *“fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness,”* secured eternal cleansing from sin and reconciliation to God. All thought of anything to add to His work ceased! Through the gospel, we are called to repent of sin and believe only on Him, trusting only what He has done and completed. To look to the Son of God alone as the only way to God! Then comes the blessed realization that in spite of what we were and what we have done, God loved us. The cross of the Lord Jesus

Christ speaks this truth clearly to the penitent heart. It is but a step from knowing salvation in Christ crucified alone to the glorious truth of divine election. Blessed are those who come to embrace the gospel truth that we could have been chosen only *“in Christ”!*

An Eternal Love

The love revealed in the gospel is wondrous love indeed! No conception of love by nature is worthy to be compared to what the Scripture distinctly calls *“the love of God.”* There *is* a natural love, as the Lord Jesus said, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.”* (John 15:19a) But this kind of love always looks for something to love in its object, such as personal attraction or some such thing. Thus, natural love can diminish or even turn to hate, given the right provocation. Let some conflict arise, or some painful encounter take place, and previous attraction begins to lose its appeal. Natural love can vanish as if it were never there at all. And, in truth, it was not! What often passes for love among men is nothing more than self-love. But God’s love is different in its issue because it is different in its source. Before regeneration, sin against God permeated every constituent part of our being, and was there to repel God’s love and even rightly call forth His judicial hatred. He is righteous and holy, and we were vile! Not only did we transgress His law and defy His sovereign right to rule us, we even made use of the natural gifts He gave us for our own sinful ends. Moreover, we were guilty of gross ingratitude for His abundant goodness and kindness toward us. We did not love Him, as Scripture so clearly reveals; in fact, we were His enemies. And we would never have come to truly love Him had He not first chosen to love us and draw us by that love. And how blessed when He broke down every barrier we could erect and pointed us to Christ, causing us to hear and believe that *“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”!* Happy indeed was the day when we heard *“the joyful sound”* of the gospel in truth and rested in the finished redemption of Christ Jesus the Lord! God provided everything for us and at great cost to Himself. And in giving His Son for us to die on the cross, He proved the incomparable nature of His self-sacrificial love. Thus, we who were His enemies are now reconciled to God through *“the blood of His (Christ’s) cross,”* and can confidently say with the apostle Paul, *“He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”*

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We come to know and love God, by grace alone, when He makes Himself known to us in Christ and points us to the cross alone as His proof of it. *"We love Him, because He first loved us."* (1 Jo.4:19) But when did He come to know and love us? Did He send His own Son to die for our sins so that He could love us; or did He do so because He loved us? The apostle John enlightens us by saying, *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."* (1 Jo.4:9) How shall we say it? We could never satisfy God's perfect justice other than by eternal punishment; and He ever remains holy and just. So we understand that the justice of God poured out all of its holy vengeance on Christ crucified or we could never have been saved. In this way God supplies the perfect righteousness of Christ, imputed through faith alone, and ever remains *"just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Romans 3:26) But if God's sovereign and distinguishing love sent Christ to die for us, He must have loved us before. But before what? Scripture supplies the only answer, showing that it was *"according to His own purpose and grace (and grace is never without love), which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* (2 Timothy 1:9) In God's eternal decree, those destined to salvation were those *"whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Revelation 13:8) Election is all bound up with Christ, and never apart from Him, and Him crucified. So those bound up with *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,"* were *"chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."* (Ephesians 1:4a) God's love in Christ was set on His elect from eternity!

But let us consider the special significance of that word *"know"* in Scripture, especially as regarding persons. Any serious student of the Scriptures recognizes that the word *"know"* is often a relational word; that is, it speaks of a special relationship between people. When used in regard to persons it is more than an intellectual apprehension, it is a close, personal and loving relationship. When the Lord Jesus said *"I know my sheep,"* and *"I lay down my life for the sheep,"* He spoke of those He loved and for whom He died. On the contrary, when He says to some in the day of judgment, *"I never knew you,"* it certainly cannot mean He knew nothing about them. He is the omniscient judge, knowing all things about all people. It

clearly means that He had no saving relationship with those who shall be forever banished from Him. It was not speaking of knowing things about them but of knowing them.

God had a special, covenantal relationship with Israel of old. He undertook for them, delivering them from Egyptian bondage and eventually bringing them to Canaan, the land promised to them. It was surely not because of anything in them, seen or unseen, for He said to them in Deuteronomy 9:6, *"Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people."* God's sovereign choice of Israel involved a special kind of love not set upon the other nations. *"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."* (Deuteronomy 7:7-8) In this special relationship God would say, *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth."* (Amos 3:2) How utterly erroneous would we be to say that the living God, Creator of heaven and earth, who knows the hearts of all men, *"neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight,"* didn't know about all the other families of the earth?

God knew His own elect before the world began, before they existed in creation, before they were born, just as He said to Jeremiah, *"Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee."* (Jeremiah 1:5) This is what God's *"foreknowledge"* of persons is all about. The two words that make up the word *"foreknow"* simply mean to know before. It has reference to persons, not things. It is *"whom He did foreknow"* (Romans 8:29a) not what He foreknew. What He foresaw is clearly revealed in Scripture, without contradiction. Far from being a faith drawn

from the natural will of men, *"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Psalm 14:2-3) The faith in Scripture called by the apostle Paul *"the faith of God's elect,"* was certainly also before known by God. How could it not be since He is the reason for it, the giver of it, and His power the source that sustains it, so that *"as many as were ordained to eternal life believed?"* (Acts 13:48) But *"whom He did foreknow"* is not referring to foreseen faith, works, or anything else people do. So that in referring to the elect among the Jewish nation, including himself, the apostle Paul wrote: *"I say then, Hath God cast away His people?...God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew."* (Romans 11:1a, 2a)

Then consider how closely associated that relational word *"know"* is to a love relationship. It is interchangeable, virtually synonymous, as in 1 Corinthians 8:3: *"if any man love God, the same is known of Him."* Those who were before in eternity known of God, *"whom He did foreknow,"* He set His love upon, choosing them in Christ, binding them to the *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* According to Romans 8:29-30, this knowledge/love secured all the work of God: predestination, calling, justification and glorification. That this foreknowing those whom He predestinated involves sovereign, eternal and unchangeable love is assured by the victorious note with which Romans 8 concludes, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* Nothing and no one shall ever *"separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord."* (Romans 8:35,39)

Joy Inexpressible

There is no joy like joy in the Lord. All worldly joys are transitory, fleeting, of short duration. Man is born unto trouble: grief, pain, disappointments are ever lurking even in times of joy. Not so with joy in God! This joy, opposite of worldly joys with the ever present danger of disturbance, is even accessible in times of

"We can have the exceeding joy of knowing that when God begins His work of grace He will infallibly finish it."

suffering. How could it not be so, if the believer understands that even suffering is not in vain? Why? God has revealed the purpose for which those who hear the gospel call and come to know Christ alone as their “*wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,*” have a hope accompanied by the highest form of joy even in divinely appointed sufferings. Blessedly for the saint, Biblical hope is not a wish, an unfounded desire that perchance something longed for may be realized. Biblical hope is founded upon what God reveals or promises, which carries with it no doubt as to accomplishment. As Abraham knew, “*what He hath promised, He was able also to perform*” (Romans 4:21), so any doubt is to be overcome by firmly embracing what God has revealed. And God has revealed both the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega of salvation, and it is all purposed and secured in the One who describes Himself as “*Alpha and Omega.*”

There is a joy known only to those who come, convicted of sin and fearful of God’s face, to cease from all self-effort, seeing by faith their sins all taken upon Christ who died in their place, and resting only in a finished redemption. They were sinners, loving sin, bound to sin, loving the world and the things of it, and unable to rid themselves of it. But grace has found them, and they now believe and trust their very selves to the One who died for them and rose again. It is but a step to realize, from Scripture and experience, that their faith was not something they produced; as the Lord Jesus himself said, “*not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” (John 1:13) They believed, just as the Word of God declares, because God gave them the gift of faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 13:48; Philippians 1:29; 2 Peter 1:3) If one truly comes to know that even his faith is not of himself, but the gift of God, he cannot help but know that he believes because he has been regenerated, not in order to *be* regenerated. And this

new birth is a sovereign act of God's will, having nothing at all to do with man's so-called “free will.” “*Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth.*” (James 1:18) I cannot help but remember the enhanced joy when these glorious things were made known to me through the instrumentality of my then pastor, Roger Lackey. Going from Christ crucified as my only hope of salvation to the understanding that even my faith was God’s gift, it immediately dawned upon me that this could only be if God had chosen me in love from eternity. We whom God has saved by His marvelous grace alone were absolutely as vile and sinful, helpless and hopeless in ourselves as all others. But sovereign mercy found us, and joy filled our souls!

Then there is that special encouragement that comes to those of us whom God has called to the gospel ministry. What once was thought to be a deterrent to preaching and evangelism becomes the greatest incentive to continue, no matter the trials and disappointments that inevitably accompany true gospel ministry. God chose the means of preaching to save those given to Christ, and we may be assured that no matter how things appear, He will accomplish His purpose. Given the inability of the sinner to ever repent and believe the gospel of him or herself, we realize that it would be futile business had not God chosen some to salvation and chosen to justify them through the gift of faith in Christ. Our business is to preach the Word as we are charged, leaving the results in the hands of our Lord who “*came into the world to save sinners.*” The Lord has guaranteed that those given Him to redeem will hear His voice and come to Him, without the loss of a single one. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30) They were chosen in Christ unto salvation from eternity, but will only be saved when they truly hear and believe the gospel. So preach the Word, my brethren, and continue preaching the Word. When God sends you it is because He has sheep, and

they will hear. Your labor can never be in vain “*in the Lord.*”

Finally, we can have the exceeding joy of knowing that when God begins His work of grace He will infallibly finish it. This is what we learn in that highest peak, the 'Everest' of the Roman Epistle, the glorious 8th chapter. What is the good for which all things are working together for the called of Jesus Christ, who alone truly come to love God? It is this: “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” (Romans 8:29) Verse 28 declares that these are “*the called according to His purpose.*” It is God; He is the Divine workman who is conforming His foreknown and called ones to the image of Christ. If it were left to us; if it were in our hands, how quickly we would “*faint in the day of adversity.*” But God’s purpose, “*purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began,*” was “*to bring many sons unto glory.*” It is as good as done already, for He who says, “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,*” the higher than the highest, has purposed it from eternity. Even our deepest sufferings, appointed by God for this purposed good, are all perfectly controlled by His loving hand! And if we can lay hold of this we may even “*joy in tribulations.*” The end is worth all the means to it! And the end is as certain as the beginning. There is a glory to be revealed, not simply about us or for us but “*in us.*” (Romans 8:18) And it is all because God set His love on us in Christ before the first light shed its beams across a newly created universe! So how can we not but echo the victorious note that concludes the revealing of God’s eternal purpose for His chosen ones in this 'mountain top' chapter of Romans? Nothing, no one, no power in heaven or earth, “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

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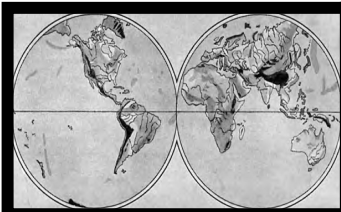
The Mission Quilt Ministry began under the leadership of Trevor Johnson to help Indonesian women who lost the support of their Muslim families when they confessed faith in Christ. They make beautiful, high quality quilts (like the one shown here) that would normally sell at much higher prices in the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

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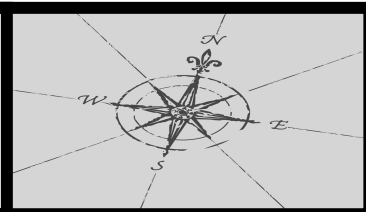
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World Missions



David Rasmussen served as a pastor from 1982 to 2011. He has been appointed as a missionary to Papua, Indonesia, where he will teach future Gospel ministers in the Bible College in Sentani.

The doctrines of sovereign grace are missionary doctrines. It is on the doctrine of God's sovereignty in saving to the uttermost, by sheer unmerited, irresistible grace, those He has chosen, that the call to missions is built and established. The Bible teaches that God's sovereign authority – His *right* as Lord of all things and all nations, especially His right to elect persons for salvation according to His own good pleasure, and His *power* to do whatever He pleases, especially His power to draw men irresistibly to Himself, and to give life to those who are dead in sins – requires that the Gospel be preached to all nations with urgency and with confidence.

This truth is found throughout the Old Testament. Rahab and Ruth are Gentile women who turn from idols to the living God, and become mothers in the line of Christ. Ittai the Gittite is a Philistine serving as a general in David's army, who refuses to abandon God's anointed king (2nd Sam. 15:18-22). The tyrant Nebuchadnezzar, having heard God's Word through the prophet Daniel, is humbled by God, and ultimately issues a decree to "*all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in the earth*" (Dan. 4:1) praising God for His sovereignty and grace. John Piper, in *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, lists 34 passages in Psalms and Isaiah where "*the nations*" (also translated "heathen" or "Gentiles"), or "*the peoples*" are called to come before God with joyful praise, or where it is promised that they will come, or where the Psalmist commits

Sovereign Grace and the Motives for Missions

By David F. Rasmussen

himself to take God's Word to them. (Note Psalm 18:49: "*Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.*")

In all these Old Testament places, several things are in view:

- God's sovereignty as Creator, Ruler, and Judge, over all the peoples of the earth.
- God's eternal purpose to glorify Himself by sending His Son to save His people.
- God's right to elect Gentiles unto salvation.
- God's power to change human hearts, including Gentiles, and to draw anyone He chooses to Himself.
- God's promise that He actually will save people from the ends of the earth: that the knowledge of God will fill the earth as the waters cover the seas, and that the nations will come before Him and rejoice.
- God's plan to accomplish this promise through the preaching of His Word. This is taught most dramatically in the book of Jonah.

Jonah did not doubt that God could or would save Nineveh by bringing it to repentance through preaching. He did not doubt God's irresistible grace. But he had a problem with God's election – not the concept that God sovereignly chooses, but who it was that God seemed to be choosing. The problem for Jonah was that God chose people whom Jonah would not have chosen.

Unconditional election is one of the greatest of missionary doctrines. As God explained to Jonah, and as the Lord Jesus continually explained to His detractors, it is grounded in the vastness of God's mercy. Given the depravity of all people, that is all it can be grounded in. If there were conditions, all would perish. But God's love is, as the old Welsh revival song says, vast as the ocean.

Jonah knew this, and angrily complained, "*I pray thee, Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my own country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.*" Here we have the prayer of the anti-missionary: This is why, when You told me to go to Assyria, I took the first boat to the Spanish Riviera – not because I was afraid of the Assyrians, but because I was afraid You would save them! Jonah's problem was not the sovereignty of God's grace so much as the graciousness of God's sovereignty.

Just as God elected Israel not because of their greatness but for His own glory, He has also elected a countless number of sinners from every tribe and tongue and people and nation to sing the praises of the Lamb forever and ever. And sovereign election not only means that God chooses, but that He has a perfect right – a right He has exercised – to choose people we would not have chosen. It should be remembered that the Pharisees believed in sovereign divine election, just as they believed in the resurrection, angels, the prophets, and the promise of a Messiah. Their problem was that they didn't want *Jesus* to be the Messiah. And part of what they had against Jesus was not His doctrine of

election but who He said were the elect – people whom the Father would draw to *Him*, not only a multitude that didn't include them, but also one that did include people they didn't approve of.

But for those who know that they themselves are saved only because God has chosen to save sinners and to justify the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), God's command to take His Word to people and cultures and nations unlike themselves is one they delight to obey. If missionaries were impelled by the attractive elements of other cultures, or the beauty or potential or even needs of people, they might easily become disappointed in the people and discouraged in the work. And there would be some places they might never go. But when we understand that God has chosen people of every race and culture to be saved through the Gospel, because of the same unmerited love that called us out of our darkness, it is a privilege to be His instruments and to follow His call.

This theme of God's sovereign election and transforming mercy toward the unlikely sinners He has chosen permeates the Gospel records of our Lord's ministry. When a centurion confesses faith that the Lord has not found in Israel, He declares, *"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 8:12) This is not a mere prediction, or even no more than a window into the future – though it surely is that. It is a statement of God's sovereign choice to save millions from the ends of the earth.

Nowhere do we see the relationship between God's sovereignty and the spread of the Gospel to all nations more clearly than in Romans. Paul summarizes the teaching of the first two chapters in 3:9: *"What then? Are we any better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."* In support of this he quotes extensively from the Old Testament, beginning with the opening verses of Psalm 14: *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom. 3:10-12)

Every human son and daughter of Adam is dead in sin. Every human being of every generation, place, culture, and degree of

exposure to spiritual truth, is a willful rebel against the good and sovereign Creator and Lord of the universe. God has revealed Himself, in one way or another, to all people, but all people have rejected Him and His Word. They have instead chosen false gods and false words, whether they worship dark spirits of earth and sky or the false gods of materialism, evolutionary atheism, and unrestricted pleasure, or believe the words of a false prophet who claimed to represent the God of Abraham, but denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

The romantic notion that there is at least a little good in all religions vanishes before the fact of universal and pervasive human depravity. False systems of religion only aggravate sin as they attempt to substitute human ideas and efforts for faith in the real God of salvation. If we understand the truth about the sinfulness of the human heart, and the judgment that all people everywhere will face without Christ, we will understand that what humanity really needs – even more than economic opportunity, education, or even basic medical care, important as these things are – is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

The reality is that all men everywhere, not only pagans and atheists, but also self-righteous monotheists (including professed Christians) who seek their own righteousness and not the righteousness of Christ – all people everywhere are dead in sin and are enslaved to *"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience."*

Paul's use of that phrase, in Ephesians 2:2, is part of his description of the past of both (a) the Ephesian believers, who had come out of the grossest idolatry in a city devoted to the worship of a fertility goddess, and (b) himself, a formerly upright Jew who had kept the letter of the Law to the limits of unregenerate human ability. Those limits were demonstrated by his own miserable failure, when his very religious zeal led to his persecution of the Messiah of Israel. (Acts 9:5) Far from standing over his formerly pagan converts in a spirit of condemnation, Paul identifies with them as no less a sinner saved by sovereign grace. Understanding human depravity not only means that we see missions as necessary; it also shows us what it means to be a missionary and a missionary-sending church. We are all alike beneficiaries of mercy without which

we would still be people without hope and without God in the world.

Near the end of his life Paul summarized his story in his first letter to his protégé Timothy: *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* (1st Timothy 1:12-17)

The ministry to which Paul was appointed by the mercy of God was the ministry of a missionary, a preacher of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the unbelieving peoples of the world. Paul's own experience as a sinner saved by grace provided an outstanding example and evidence to those to whom he was sent of God's love to sinners and His power to save them – and a demonstration of the fact that the very reason Christ came into the world was to save sinners.

When Paul calls himself *"the chief of sinners,"* he is not only comparing himself as an individual and a former persecutor with all other sinners. He is also comparing himself as a zealously religious Jew with the pagan people of Ephesus, where Timothy now ministers as Paul had before him. It is a remarkable statement: that Paul with all of his religious background and lifelong observance (see Philippians 3:5-9) is, apart from God's sovereign mercy, if anything, a worse sinner than the heathen to whom he is sent.

There are some people we would think, in our human way of evaluating (which is really pride and self-righteousness), to be impossible to be saved. And of course that is the point that Jesus makes when He says that a person who has too much money, even if he is nice, handsome, and religious, can no more be saved than a camel get through a needle's eye: *"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."* (Mark 10:27)

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As one who has received amazing and undeserved mercy, the missionary announces God's call to repentance and His free offer of salvation to people who by human effort will never be converted. He does so not as a superior person representing a superior culture, but as a reborn sinner appealing to his perishing fellow human beings, and also as a representative of the One to whom all power and authority in heaven and earth has been given. It is on the basis of His own unique authority – His sovereignty – that Jesus commands His disciples to go to all nations in all the centuries until He returns. But with this command there is also another promise: *"and lo, I am with you alway..."* (Matthew 28:20b)

Throughout the Bible God being *"with"* His people and His spokesmen is far more than a comforting sense of not being alone. It is a promise of His presence, blessing, and enablement, in the exercise of His sovereign power through His people for His glory and the fulfillment of His purposes on earth. His promise to Isaiah was that He would not allow His Word to return void. (Isa. 55:11) This promise endures. God will ensure, through the

sovereign working of His Holy Spirit, that with the call to all who hear the preaching of His Word there will also be, to those God has chosen, the effectual, inward call which will summon the spiritually dead to life and will call people out of darkness into light – a summons they will not refuse. We call this effectual calling, or irresistible grace. It was what Jesus promised when He said that all whom the Father gives to Him will come to Him. (John 6:37; cf. v. 44)

There is no more powerful encouragement for missions than this. The Savior Himself has assured us that the outcome is not in doubt. The Gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes, of every tribe and nation. The almighty Holy Spirit will open hearts.

Our Arminian friends assure us that the human will is more or less free, and all that is needed are commitment, skill, and sensitivity, and people can be brought to believe in Christ. But in the real world in which we live, polarized and hostile to the truth, billions seem by all human accounts to be past hope of conversion. If it were up to the persuasion of human wills by human

efforts, there would seem to be little hope of the adherents of the world religions ever coming to Christ. Much less would we expect that the jaded agnostic and atheistic millions of Europe or northeast Asia would ever come to believe.

But we can praise God that the universal unwillingness of human beings to repent does not hinder the power of our sovereign and gracious God. He who calls things into being that are not, who raises the dead and who will give life to our mortal bodies when Jesus appears, in this time is drawing men and women bound in darkness, enslaved to degrading sins, and held captive by the imaginations of their hearts and the lies of the world and the devil. He is drawing them to Christ out of false religions and no religion and even out of hypocrisy and self-righteousness. He is sending his missionaries through His churches, but He is doing the work. To Him, the sovereign, eternal King, will go all the glory and honor, now and forever. And this is the greatest motive for missions of all.

♦ ♦ ♦

Mission Reports

Larry W. Dean, Missions Editor

Mission Trip Report From Braxton Hodgkin

Braxton, grandson to Lynda and Holmes Moore of Bible Baptist Church in Maplewood, MO (St. Louis area) is on a visit to Indonesia at the time of this writing. This is a mid-visit report from him. Please add Braxton to your prayer list that God may guide him forward. - Editor

June 26, 2012

My trip to visit Trevor and Teresa and family in Papua, Indonesia, has been one of a lifetime (and yet hopefully the first of many). The Lord has blessed me with a great opportunity to see His work being done through some of His amazing servants in a remote country. Trevor and Teresa sacrifice so much for the glory of Christ and His Gospel. Trevor's main concern is the Gospel going forth and reaching the hearts and souls of Papua, Indonesia.

After meeting Brad Kinnison, my travel partner and now good friend, in North Carolina and flying across the world to arrive in Danowage, Indonesia, we met the Korowai people and the Dani evangelists on the side of the river as we landed via floatplane. We

were carrying in some important medicine, albuterol, for a poor, sickly baby named Sebideyos. He was probably close to 9 months old and had something like a bad cold where he could barely breathe. As the Korowai and Dani people carried our luggage and Trevor's supplies to his house, Trevor, Brad and I floated down the river (the easy route) with Noah on Brad's back and Alethea on mine. We felt welcomed and loved by everyone. Once we got

settled in, I immediately felt I was being watched, not because I was paranoid but because there were 20-30 Korowai people looking in at us through the screens of the house. I found out that if you really want any privacy you might have to wake up an hour or two before everybody else (which would be when it is still dark since everybody wakes up at dawn), but then you are still bothered by the never-ending annoyance of the flies. So just within a few hours I realized that Trevor and Teresa were saints who have more patience than I can imagine. Trevor and Teresa not only

have a burden to spread the Gospel to these people but along with that they feel responsible to better the lives of the Korowai people. They take care of the sick, they have brought in a variety of crops that will help the people's diets, they clothe the people, they give



Braxton, Trevor and Noah

the kids entertainment with soccer games and movies, etc, they minister to help the Dani evangelists and they are teaching some to read and write. These are just some of the things on top of Trevor trekking village to village so that he can teach the Korowai Bible stories.

The first few nights of being there we all had to take 2-hour shifts to minister medicine to baby Sebideyos and boil water to steam in his tent. Sebideyos' mother stayed with her baby to the end. One of my last shifts taking care of him, I remember hearing him barely breathing and choking on his own mucus. I remember praying that the Lord would spare him so that he could grow up to be saved and be used mightily in His Kingdom. The next morning Trevor and Teresa decided to have him medi-vac'd to a hospital in Wamena. They felt that since the hospital there had oxygen and a suction machine that he should go, but they hesitated because they worried about the care he would get. Two days later, we found out that he didn't make it (due to being suctioned too aggressively without breaks, thus killing him during the procedure). To add to this, the father of the baby, Yonas, had threatened to shoot Trevor with an arrow if we flew his son out and Sebideyos died. But, Yonas realized the efforts we took and, finally, even thanked us.

Just within a week, we saw a major trial for Trevor and his family. The Lord is in control and Brad and I were meant to be there to experience these things, too: the death of baby Sebideyos, the death of a Korowai woman with malaria, and seeing Trevor deal with a sick Dani evangelist who Trevor flew out to Wamena to be tested for TB and HIV, later finding out he has HIV.

Trevor can seem to be bogged down with many negative stresses all the time which can make it hard to see the wonderful fruit that the Lord has already produced through him. After an 8-hour trek we came across a very sickly elderly woman in a tree-house which was about 2-3 hours away from Danowage. Trevor gave her malaria medicine and we left her with food. The next day after church, Amsal, Musa and Daud, the 3 boys that guided us on our trek and who seem to be beginning to understand the Gospel (Musa is saved, Trevor believes), decided within themselves to trek back to the tree-house to bring food, medicine and teach the Bible stories that they know to her. Also, Simson (one of Trevor's main language helpers, along with Musa) regularly hikes the 8 hours back to his clan village of Wo-man and holds services there himself, praying and explaining the Bible stories that he knows to his own clan. These boys are just some of the examples of the Gospel taking root in some of the hearts of the Korowai tribe. I could go on and on with how the Lord is using Trevor and Teresa, but there is just not enough space here.

I would like to end with commenting on how lost Trevor would be without Teresa. While he is focusing on learning the tribal language, teaching Bible stories, trekking from village to village, handing out tracts in multiple cities, mentoring and discipling a select few, and bringing out interns and visitors that could be future missionaries, Teresa is taking care of the kids, doing the dishes, washing the clothes in the river, taking care of the sick, trading with local people, teaching the women, making breakfast, lunch and dinner, nurturing their new-born baby and helping Trevor with many of the hard day-to-day decisions.

After all that I have experienced and observed, I strongly feel that the Lord is calling me to the mission field. Please pray for my preparations and guidance from the Lord.

Mexico - Andres Galaviz

Excerpted from the 2012 Spring/Summer Newsletter - Editor

"We greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who has been so very good to us. He has blessed us more abundantly than we deserve or can even ask for. Thank you for your prayers on our behalf personally as well as for the ministry that the Lord has given us here in Mexico. We know He has put us here to be light in the midst of darkness and in spite of any danger or insecurity that certain groups present our God has kept us and given us peace in our hearts to continue preaching the Gospel."

Prayer points:

- That God will permit those who hear the Word to be freed from the power and condemnation of sin.
- Continuing opportunities to pray with the officials of the city of Cuauhtémoc.
- Deliverance of the cities and towns from the control of the drug cartels and the violence and fear associated with the drug wars.

Written from a report received from Jean-Claude Souillot of the French Speaking Africa Mission

Over the years, many of you have prayed and helped the work of the Gospel of Free Grace in the French-speaking world. This has been a great encouragement to me, and a means to accomplish a lot, both here, in darkest Europe and in needy Africa.

The work here has faced many, serious challenges. The constraints of the current economic crisis on the western world has hit us too. We have tried to face and weather this situation but this looks impossible as the days go by. Due to the shortage of means, we have only been able to publish 2 new titles in the past 12 months, and are unable to reprint popular titles now out-of-print. In turn, sales have gone down. This has also had serious repercussions on our involvement in Africa where the new titles help fan the interest for the message.

Over the past 2 years, several doors have opened in third-world countries for the Gospel. We regularly receive proofs that the message changes lives and ministries all over the place. Several of you will remember that we have started distributing the books in Haiti and in the huge country of the DRC, in the Central African Republic, in Congo and Gabon. And the work continues in West Africa. We had over 60 attendants at the last Grace conference in Benin. In the Ivory Coast, one year after the country was torn by civil war, my young colleague Vincent is once again travelling around the country, distributing the books and preaching.

In addition to the regular visits I make to places like Togo and Cameroon, I have been invited to go to new countries to preach and teach the Gospel of Free Grace. Later this month, I will leave for a 5 week, 4 country visit to Central Africa for a number of preaching engagements. So, maybe this is not yet the end of the road! Will you therefore join us here in besieging the throne of grace so that we can continue to serve this very needy field with the only message that saves? If the Lord should lead you to help practically, together with the team, I will be happy to give you more details about the needs we face.

Thank you for your friendship, prayers and support. May the Lord make His name great in the earth once again!

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Interview: The Doctrinal and Experiential Effect

of “sovereign grace” in the lives and ministries of Jon Cardwell and Jim Gables should echo in the hearts of those who know *“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”* This interview should be of great interest to the readers of this publication.



Jon Cardwell is pastor of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Anniston, Alabama. He is the author of several books, including “A Puritan Devotional,” and serves as the current Chairman of the SGBF.



Jim Gables is the former pastor of Oakland Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama. He still resides in Birmingham, serving as an elder in the Vineland Park Baptist Church and heading “Grace Abounding Ministries.”

Q. How did you learn that salvation was all “of God” and nothing of yourself? When did the glorious truth that you were chosen in Christ and called out of that eternal purpose of God first dawn upon your soul?

A. (Jon Cardwell) While stationed as a U.S. Navy diver in San Diego, California, the Lord saw fit to surround me with several Christians of various beliefs and backgrounds. Although every one of them had a confession of faith in Christ, not all were in agreement in what they believed with regard to God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. In the autumn of 1984, when these brethren first began to share Christ with me, I wanted nothing to do with them or their message. I wasn’t seeking God. Like Adam after he sinned, who hid himself among the trees when he heard the voice of God (Gen 3:8), I ran away from the gospel and its ministers. Nine months of the Holy Spirit’s work through their witness finally brought the light of God’s salvation to my life.

Yet, this is where it gets interesting. Although I was so overwhelmingly saved by God’s grace, the truth of God’s sovereign election didn’t come to me easily. As I went to Bible studies after I was saved, I was influenced much by the brothers who emphasized man’s “free choice” in salvation over God’s sovereignty. When they explained it to me, it seemed to make sense. I mistakenly reasoned that “this trusting faith must have been in me all the time, but that I didn’t know it because I rejected Christ.” Why did I think that? It was because this faith seemed such a part of me; and it certainly was. What I wouldn’t realize for another several months afterward was that when God gives a gift, He doesn’t just give it part way. He gives faith and repentance so perfectly to His elect ones that it is really and truly a part of his or her soul: *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”* (Ezek 36:26)

I read the entire Bible in about nine months after I was saved. The Navy also transferred me to Hawaii and it was within my first or second year there that I read two very important works: John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and Jonathan Edwards’ sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

It was probably a combination of many things, yet it seemed more from *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and Mr. Bunyan’s other writings that sovereign grace was opened to me. One element from the book stands out in particular. When Mr. Goodwill said to Christian, “An open door is set before thee, and no man can shut it”—it struck me

that “no man can shut it” because no man could open it except the God-man, Jesus Christ. In fact, the command to even knock on the door came from God’s Word (Matt 7:7), written above the gate, not from within the pilgrim’s soul. I do recall that Ephesians 2:8, 9 came forth with more clarity in those days: the words echoed in my soul: *“by grace...” “through faith...” “not of yourselves!” “gift of God!”* I had been saved less than two years at the time.

A. (Jim Gables) My religious upbringing was in a small rural Baptist church with no real doctrinal basis, but was of a revivalistic practice. It emphasized the practice of the “altar call” or going to the “mourner’s bench” to “pray through” for salvation and acceptance with God. The evidence of being accepted by God was manifested in various ways, such as shouting, weeping, gladness, clapping of hands and the “lifting of a burden.”

As a 12 year-old, I went forward three consecutive nights in an extended period of revival services. When nothing happened, I became disillusioned and angry at God because He would not accept me. I became a professing atheist during my high school years. I enjoyed debating the rural preachers over the things found in the Bible. They would often leave with tears in their eyes because they could not answer my questions.

My conversion to Christ occurred during my senior year. It was a sudden dramatic occurrence during a one-on-one conversation with a country preacher who had a burden for my lost soul. By this time I knew that the gospel consisted of the life, death and resurrection of Christ on behalf of lost sinners. I knew that sinners needed to repent and believe in Christ’s substitutionary righteousness and not trust their own, but I had no interest or need of such things. The preacher had nothing new to say that day, just the same old story, but suddenly in the middle of the conversation, God shut my mouth and I did not want to argue anymore. For the first time I saw myself as an unrighteous sinner in need of a Savior. I trusted in Christ to be that Savior and confessed Him as my Lord in baptism. I knew nothing about the term “total depravity,” but I knew that God had taken the initiative in my salvation and if He had not done so, I would not have been saved.

I surrendered to God’s call into the ministry when I was 22 years old. I attended a Bible college in my home area of Springfield, MO. During my time there, the Calvinist-Arminian issue was being debated among the students. The majority of the faculty held the “Arminian” viewpoint. The few who were sympathetic to the

Calvinist viewpoint considered themselves to be “Calminians” - Calvinistic in doctrine, and Arminian in practice. For the most part the professors painted such a distorted picture of Calvinism that I wanted nothing to do with it, even though there were things about it that were consistent with my conversion experience. I was taught a method of soul-winning and church building in which Calvinism was not conducive and was believed to be a hindrance.

Upon graduation, I moved to St. Louis and started a new church from the ground up. While the church grew in numbers, I was uncomfortable with the methodology that I was using, in that it seemed to eliminate the need of Holy Spirit conviction of sin. This was what I later came to understand as “Decisional Regeneration.” This, coupled with the lack of perseverance on the part of the converts, led me to reject the methodology I had been taught. At this time, I was introduced to the book, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination by Lorraine Boettner. While I was in school, a friend of mine said he had started reading this book only to quit half-way through it because he found himself starting to believe its contents, and he did not want to believe such “damnable heresy.” This book not only revealed to me how the subject of God’s sovereignty had been distorted by my teachers, it also confirmed the manner of my conversion and explained why the methodology I was using was producing the type of converts that were occurring. I came to see that election and predestination explain why one believes the gospel and another does not. It also explains why some persevere and others do not. It was indeed a thrilling time for me.

Q. Did the knowledge of the sovereignty of God in salvation increase in you the knowledge of God and, if so, what difference did it make in your understanding of the Scriptures?

A. (Jim Gables) Yes, it certainly did, it has continued to do so, and it will continue to do throughout this life and the life to come. I see now that God works all things according to a purpose originating in His eternal wisdom and made effectual by His omnipotent power. While His revealed will, as expressed in the law and the gospel, comprises man’s duty as moral beings, and is often resisted, His secret will of decree covers all of His created order and shall bring to pass everything that is included in that will. Not one thing that He has decreed shall fail to come to pass. The incarnated life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the clearest example of this. At the cross man was doing his will, the devil was doing his will, and God was ruling over all in the execution of His will! The moral agency of men and angels is not violated, but operates under the control of God’s agency. This enabled me to become more centered upon God and His glory, and less centered upon man and his happiness. It enabled me to see that my chief end in life was to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and the primary way of doing this is by spreading the gospel of Christ throughout the world of sinful mankind.

The Scriptures took on new meaning. Rather than being a loose collection of disconnected pieces, they began to come together in one harmonious whole with Christ as the central figure. I began to see all of God’s providential workings as moving toward and upon the person of His Son so “*that in the dispensation of the fullness of time, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him.*” (Ephesians 1:10) Rather than seeing God sending His Son into the world on a mission of salvation in an effort to save and keep as many people out of hell as possible, I now understood

Christ’s mission was to redeem and save a remnant out of Adam’s fallen race, which He would use to populate a new heaven and earth in the eternal world to come. This elect remnant was chosen not on the basis of who they were, or what they did, but purely on the principle of grace and mercy. This eliminates all boasting and human pride, and imparts a spirit of humility and thanksgiving to Christ in the hearts of believers for the gospel way of righteousness.

The issue with which sinners are to be confronted is not primarily heaven and hell, but sin and righteousness. Sin and self-righteousness lead to hell; Christ and His righteousness leads to heaven and eternal life. The Scriptures contain the gospel message or record of how God saves sinners as opposed to how sinners save themselves. This message contains propositional truth upon which sinners are called upon to believe and receive. Instead of seeking a mystical religious experience, they are to repent and believe the record, which contains God’s way of righteousness. In Romans 10:9-10, Paul explains it in these words, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

Notice the question is not, “*if you should die would you go to heaven?*” The instructions are not, “*walk an aisle,*” “*ask Jesus to come into your heart,*” “*pray through until a reluctant God finally gives in and saves you.*” We are to instruct sinners to believe or trust in the righteousness that is found only in Christ and His substitutionary death on behalf of guilty sinners. He is a living Lord and welcomes sinners to partake of His righteousness. Rather than pressuring a person to believe in something they don’t understand, I now saw that it was my job to make clear the way of righteousness upon which a sinner is to believe. “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) Sinners are not to seek a religious experience, but seek to become righteous by believing the record God gave of His Son.

A. (Jon Cardwell) By the time I received a clearer understanding of the sovereignty of God in salvation, I had read through the Bible twice. I didn’t understand everything I read, but I was surprised at how much made sense to me; especially of those things that pertained to the simplicity of the gospel truths. The gospel of Christ became increasingly precious to me.

Of the Scripture portions I didn’t understand, the knowledge of God’s sovereignty in my salvation developed in me and increased my trust in Christ’s righteousness, His atoning sacrifice, and God’s grace; and this revelation of His sovereignty convinced me that His Word was authoritative whether I understood it or not.

Although I had embraced the sovereignty of God in man’s salvation, I wasn’t attending a church that held to its truth. I was still a Navy diver then, stationed in Hawaii. It was actually in that church where *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and Edwards’ “Sinners” sermon had been mentioned from the pulpit. So the providential manner that God used to set me on my way in the knowledge and understanding of the doctrines of grace (by the works of Bunyan and Edwards) came as a result of me being in a church that did not embrace the precious doctrines in the works they cited.

Because the church I attended didn’t hold to the doctrines of grace, it caused me to trust in God’s Word more zealously; yet, because I

was so young in the Lord, and recognized how very little I knew, I was further humbled in reading Scripture; not only before God while seeking to understand His Word, but also before the brethren in the church I attended.

Q. How did the truth of Divine Election affect your ministry of the gospel and the special trials that attend true gospel ministry? Please add what encouragements you draw from the truth that salvation is all of God.

A. (Jon Cardwell) I wasn't called to the pastoral ministry right away. The Lord had graced me with a gift for evangelism, however, and I shared Christ wherever and whenever I could. I wanted to tell anyone who would listen of what Christ had done at Calvary, and how my mind had been renewed to apprehend its truth; how my heart had been replaced to know its truth; how my soul had been resurrected to embrace its truth. The *doctrine* of divine election didn't really play much of a part in my early ministry. I really couldn't articulate the doctrine at the time anyway. The *truth* of divine election did affect me personally, however; and as a result, it did play an important underlying role in my ministry.

Because of its truth, I was able to share the gospel very confidently knowing that I was merely a vessel that God used to convey the truth of Jesus Christ. Divine election allowed me to see myself in light of Scripture, and to see the Scriptures by their fulfillment in Jesus Christ; thus recognizing that apart from God's grace, I could do nothing because I am a vile offense to God; yet, by His grace in Christ Jesus, I am as beloved a son as the Lord Jesus himself. Therefore, I preached the gospel, told the good news, or shared my testimony in Christ more because of the truth that His salvation is glorious rather than being a doctrine I must teach.

For me back then, divine election was more experimental (experiential) than it was doctrinal, I think, because I was a babe in Christ. Many things in Scripture I just had to take at face value. I had no other experiences in Christ to draw on like others who understand divine election later in their Christian walk; and as a babe, I was still learning the Word so I had no deep intellectual context. I truly thank the Lord for that.

The particular trials and tribulations I faced are those common to any young Christian that is starting to grasp the fundamental truths of the gospel. It was quite often humbling because I could not formulate an answer in defense of the doctrine. I was often misunderstood concerning grace. Quite often, I could not articulate these doctrines with clarity. But these were providential safeguards against pride; something that I have a tendency toward more than most.

Those who are just awakened to divine election might have a tendency to rush headlong doctrinally and almost force others to submit to its truth. Because the doctrines of divine election and God's sovereignty are so lofty and illuminating, the disparity between where we once were doctrinally compared with the truth of grace in Scriptures now revealed to us, that difference makes one feel like we weren't even really saved at all before. We, who have been walking in grace for awhile, need to gently encourage against this tendency. We must remind those new to these doctrines that heavenly truth comes by revelation (1 Cor 2:14; Mk 4:33-34), and that the gospel still saves by grace alone through faith alone. (Eph 2:8-9) Just as we must not add works to the saving grace in

Christ, we must neither add intellect nor emotion. While each of these are a very part of our individual make-up, and that there will be good works, deeper doctrine, and genuine emotion following after regeneration in salvation, and accompanying holiness in sanctification, these are never to be added to the gospel work found in Christ alone.

Be encouraged that if the gospel of Christ crucified, risen and reigning since His ascension is central in our churches, we can have all manner of confessing believers working out their own salvation with fear and trembling according to wherever they may be practically, experimentally and doctrinally. You and I need to be in a local congregation like that, made up of a variety of believers for mutual edification and encouragement. To wish for a church that is otherwise, is to wish for a church that is nowhere found in God's Word, except on the other side of glory.

A. (Jim Gables) I came to see that one's methodology should be based upon one's theology. I ceased using the church growth methods based on self-interest and gain, and replaced them with preaching, praying, and godly living. I saw that faithfulness, rather than success, was that which was pleasing to God. I saw that you cannot motivate people to come to church in order to "get" something and then try to convince them to "deny" themselves and "give" their all to a suffering and despised Christ. Whatever attracts a person to come to a church service should be that which keeps them coming. We must preach a Christ who is on a throne who got there by way of suffering on a cross. Then we should pray that God would give them eyes to see His glory in Christ's way of salvation. If this does not draw the hearer to Christ, then nothing else is to be added so as to appeal on a lower level of motivation. In essence, my method of ministering became that which Paul describes in II Corinthians 4:2, "*I have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*" I have been preaching the sovereignty of God for about 44 years and have made II Corinthians 4:5 my model for ministry. "*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*"

The trials that accompany the gospel ministry are numerous. They are magnified when you preach the doctrines of grace. In II Corinthians 4:7-18, Paul characterizes the ministry as being accompanied by suffering, both physical and mental. He likened it unto a dying process. Soon after I started preaching more on this subject and changing my methodology, I was forced to leave the church that I had founded in St. Louis. We had purchased 8½ acres of prime land in a growing section of the county, built a nice building, and owned a church parsonage. I had a wife and four small children and no income or place to go. I drove a school bus for over a year before I was called to my next pastorate. I told a minister friend of mine that it felt like something inside of me had died and I was fearful that my ministry was over. I shall never forget his words of encouragement. He said, "*Jim, remember, there is a resurrection after a death!*" This proved to be true, as God began to open doors of ministry for me, which I had never visualized.

Along with these opportunities came added trials. It has been a constant confrontation with the flesh of men, including my own. People either do not understand sovereignty or they despise it. It takes patience and discernment in making the distinction. It

involves a constant effort of explaining the topic and how it relates to the free agency of man's choice. I have had numerous people leave my ministry over the doctrine of unconditional election and my refusal to use the church growth methods. However, for every person who has left my ministry over election, there have been 10 leave over the truth that we are "elected unto holiness of life." It did not take me long to discover that "Calvinistic flesh" was no different than "Arminian flesh." Flesh is flesh wherever it is found or by whatever its label!

If one is going to embark upon a grace ministry, he should be assured that the sovereignty of God has gotten a hold of him, and that he has not merely gotten a hold of God's sovereignty. If the latter is the case, he will not endure the trials which are to accompany such a ministry. In II Corinthians 4:13, Paul quotes Psalm 116:10 in describing the Christian warfare. The Psalmist says, *"I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted."*

The main encouragement I have in ministering the grace of God has been in seeing how God has kept His hand upon me enabling me to persevere. I know that He has some sheep which must be brought into the fold and He shall not fail in any of His endeavors. I quote from Psalm 116:1-9 in describing my encouragements in knowing that salvation is all of God. *"I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."*

Q. Considering the whole of salvation, from start to finish, what do the Scriptures mean by teaching that in Christ we were "chosen to salvation"?

A. (Jim Gables) I must be brief in my answer to this question, thus I cannot be thorough.

First, "to choose" means to elect. God's decree of election is as eternal as His being. With our finite minds, we think chronologically, but being of an eternal mind, God does not think chronologically. Thus all things appear before Him at once. God does not have to learn anything by foresight. He foresees everything because He knows everything. *"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."* (Acts 15:18) God's works in time comprise His providence. In eternity, God chose what He would do in time. God decreed to create the world. In time He created it. Matter has not always existed just because God decreed that it would come into existence. The decree makes it certain, the providence makes it actual and real.

Secondly, election is not salvation, but is unto salvation. *"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* (Acts 13:48) While election made the salvation of the elect certain, it did not actually save them. They must in time hear and believe the gospel. *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17) While it is certain that the elect shall be saved, it is necessary that they be saved. Certainty does not rule out necessity.

Thirdly, salvation is a broad term covering our past (justification), our present (sanctification), and our future (glorification). Thus, we have been saved, are being saved, and will yet be saved. It is a complete deliverance from sin and its consequences, and restores us to a state of righteousness before a holy God.

Fourthly, we were "chosen in Him" as our mediator. This means we were viewed as sinners, since holy beings have no need of a mediator. Some angels were elected, but not in Christ, for they were created holy and upright. In Adam's un-fallen state, he did not need a mediator. But after his fall, he and all his offspring did need a mediator. This addresses the supra-sub-lapsarian debate. God may preserve a holy being (angels) from sinning, but He can only save a sinful being through a representative (mediator), and that mediator is Christ. Thus we are "chosen in Christ" unto becoming delivered (saved) by Him. Ephesians 1:4 says, ***"According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy."*** Our election was not because we were seen as holy but as sinful in need of being made holy. Christ is the instrument by which this is achieved.

Fifthly, our salvation awaits and begins with our vital, living union with Christ. This is achieved by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in making us "new creatures" in Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 states, *"That if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation); old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."* Through our physical birth we were placed in union with the first Adam. Through our spiritual birth we were placed in union with the second Adam. This occurs at different times in the individual members which make up the elect. In Romans 16:7 Paul says, *"Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."* He cannot be referring to their election since all the elect were chosen at the same "time" in the mind of God. But he is referring to their spiritual birth in which they were joined to the life of Christ and inherit all the blessings that He has prepared for them. cf. Ephesians 1:3

A man was asked one time how long he had been saved? He replied, "I have always been a Baptist!" That is just a little too long since Baptists believe in the new birth and a regenerate church membership. I asked a group of men one time to tell me when they were saved. One man said, "I was saved before the foundation of the world!" That also is just a little too long. No, brothers, election is not salvation, it is "unto" salvation!

A. (Jon Cardwell) It is worth quoting Ephesians 1:4-5 here: *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."*

That we are chosen to salvation is a holy truth that expresses that we are objects of He who has chosen. The grammar here express it; and it is also found in numerous Scriptures, as proofs to its consistency. *"He hath chosen..."* We need not think of ourselves more highly than we ought because we have been chosen—God has chosen, and has done so in Christ, *"in love,"* by predestination, for Himself, because it has pleased Him well to accomplish His will, and all this before the foundation of the world. We cannot control any of this; neither have we provided, nor can we provide, God any reasonable advice or counsel thereby. For God's choice is in His Son, who is eternal; in love, which is perfect and lacks

nothing; by ordained decree (*predestinated*), which came before the foundation of the world; for Himself, who is Self-sufficient; in His pleasure, which is good and holy, distinct from sinful men; and by His desire, which no man can approach unto as it is as lofty as the majesty of God Himself.

The key to our understanding, however, is by the gospel truth that salvation is in Christ alone; that God became a man through the incarnation; that Christ lived a righteous life as a man, perfectly pleasing to the heavenly Father; crucified as the atoning Substitute; risen in power; ascended in glory; returning in judgment and the consummation of all things. "Chosen in Christ" is truth because it is secure in Jesus Christ, the precious and perfect Lamb slain, foreordained before the foundation of the world. (1 Pet 1:19-20)

I think a very good way to approach our understanding of being chosen in Christ is to first look at our purpose and then at God's. What is the purpose for our being chosen? We are chosen in Christ because man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. What, then, is the purpose of God in Christ? We might simply say Christ crucified. The cross is the greatest manifestation in the entire eternal universe of God's purpose in Christ; yet, it will not be fully realized until the return of Christ, which will reveal the effects of God's eternal plans and purpose in Christ by the cross. Then, what is the purpose of the cross? It is simply this: the purpose of the cross is for the entire universe, for all eternity, to find glory in God through Christ, *and to glorify God in Christ.*

Q. What is meant by "the means of grace," and how are we to understand the use of means in relationship to the Divine choosing of individuals to salvation.

A. (Jon Cardwell) The term "means of grace" is not found in our English Bible. It was used by English Reformers and Puritans; and we understand the use of this term from their writings, and most especially from the early Confessions and Catechisms. Although compiling it much later, Charles Spurgeon retains the use of this term in *A Puritan Catechism*:

"Q71. What are the outward means whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to us the benefits of redemption? Answer. The outward and ordinary means whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to us the benefits of Christ's redemption, are the Word, by which souls are begotten to spiritual life; Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Prayer, and Meditation by all which believers are further edified in their most holy faith."

According to this catechistical statement, the ordinary "means" is a term applied to the method, manner or instrument God has ordained in Scripture for the salvation found in Jesus Christ. Is God free to work outside of these means? He has, and can. Nevertheless, the outward and ordinary means of grace comes by the Word of God, *"For ... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* (1 Cor 1:21)

Men are accountable to God, responsible unto Him, and culpable before Him regardless of their spiritual condition. We acknowledge that the Word declares that God is sovereign; yet, it would be foolish to suggest that God would bring it all to pass apart from His acts of providence by the use of redeemed souls as instruments of His mercy, love and grace. As redeemed souls in the midst of a

corrupt world, the tribulations we suffer by a wicked generation work in us patience, and patience experience, and experience hope (Rom 5:3-4): the hope of the glory of God to come, which we rejoice in (Rom 5:3), because we have peace with God through justification in Christ (Rom 5:1), and have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. (Rom 5:2) If we exalt the doctrine of divine election apart from the practical application and experience of divine election, we actually defy the doctrine we propose to know and believe.

A. (Jim Gables) In the eternal decree of election, it pleased God to ordain that the elect would be saved through the method and means of hearing the message of the gospel. The elect are not saved until they believe. *"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* (I Corinthians 1:21 KJV). The idea is not that the act of preaching is foolish, but that the thing preached (the message) is foolish to unbelievers. The NKJV better translates it, *"It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save them that believe."* God's grace is communicated through faith. *"For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Ephesians 2:8,9) The message of the gospel proclaimed through human instrument is addressed to lost men who need to be saved, not to saved men who are just unaware they have always been saved. What you believe about this point will affect how you preach, and what you believe is the purpose of the gospel.

In addition to the preaching of the gospel message, there is the ministry of the Holy Spirit accompanying the message to sanctify and make effectual the saving response to the message itself. We are told in II Thessalonians 2:13, 14, *"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* The Spirit's work is to remove the sinner's old heart of unbelief and plant within him a new heart of belief (faith). This faith embraces the way of righteousness contained in the gospel message, and the repentant sinner is thus declared justified in the sight of God. Election is God's choice to save. The gospel is the instrument through which the elect are saved. The Spirit makes the elect willing to be saved by God's way and not man's way.

Some people believe that a belief in election either discourages or nullifies the preaching of the gospel, thus preventing the sinner from being saved. I ask, "how so?" Some of these same people believe that "marriages are made in heaven" - the belief that either God or some impersonal fate formed a purpose for them to be married before they were ever married. Yet they further believe that the man (usually) had to search for his future bride. He had to date or court her, propose to her, and she had to accept. Finally, they had to confess their vows to be married. How interesting that their belief in a pre-ordained purpose did not discourage them from the diligent use of means, but encouraged them to use the means to be married. Thus it is in God's method of saving sinners. Election not only renders certain the marriage of the elect to Christ, it ordains and encourages the use of the gospel means of calling out the bride to be married to Christ and obtain the *"glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

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Trevor Johnson & Family

Trevor, Teresa, and the children took some time off the field in Papua, New Guinea, returning to the states for 3 to 4 weeks in July. This was primarily a rest time for them, not a time for visiting supporting churches. Please pray for them as they return and resume the demanding work God has given them.



Paul and Trish Snider

Paul continues in language school in Bandung, planning to move to Papua when his schooling is complete. Braxton Hodgkin and Brad Kinnison have moved on (as of 6/28) from Papua to Bandung to spend some time with him.

Continue to pray for Paul and Trish as they proceed forward with their training.



Danny Roten

Please continue to pray for Bro. Roten as he continues to labor in the work in Oklahoma City, Iglesia Bautista Todo Por Gracia (All of Grace Baptist Church).

- They are having regular visitors who desire to hear the Word of God preached in Spanish. Some are hearing the gospel for the first time. Pray that God will open hearts and give abiding fruit for the new church.
- Pray for the Spanish-speaking inmates at the federal prison in El Reno. Bible classes are being held and Bro. Roten has been invited to hold Spanish worship services on Thursday evenings.
- The Spanish website is having good traffic. Through it they are ministering to every country in Latin America.
- From Bro. Roten, "We are very cognizant that we are wholly dependent on the grace of God, and your prayers and financial support for this work to move forward. We thank God for you all."

China - There is a large Evangelical presence there and some are serving quietly (if you know what I mean). There are challenges, and each servant of God has unique ones. If you know of any by name understand that we cannot mention them in print for the sake of their safety. Please pray earnestly for them. If you do not know of any, know that they exist and that God, Who hears our prayers, knows exactly who they are. - **Larry Dean, Missions Editor**

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Special Notice - The 2013 Convocation of Prayer for Awakening and Revival will be held at Bridgetown Baptist Church, Nesbit, Mississippi, February 19-21, 2013 (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)
Please join us for 3 days of prayer imploring God for an Awakening in our time.

Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship



Annual Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship Monday Evening & Tuesday, September 10 & 11, 2012

Host: Bridgetown Baptist Church
2779 Malone Road N., Nesbit, Mississippi 38651

www.bridgetownbaptist.org

Larry Dean, Pastor

Scheduling Information

1st Service, Monday, September 10, 7:00 PM
Speakers: Bobby Amos, Sterling Vanderwerker

2nd Service, Tuesday, September 11, 10:00 AM
Speakers: Jon Cardwell, Holmes Moore

Lunch (and Dinner) served at the church building

SGBF Business Meeting: 1:30 PM

3rd Service, Tuesday, September 11, 7:00 PM
Speakers: Ryan Butler, Kyle White

Accommodations

Drury Inns and Suites, Horn Lake, Mississippi Mention

'SGBF' Group # 2153500

Phone: (662) 349-6622

Room rates \$89.95 until Aug. 10. Booking Link:

<http://www.druryhotels.com/Reservations.aspx?groupno=2153500>

Key West Inn, 5115 Pepper Chase, Southaven, Mississippi -

Phone: (662) 280-8826

Room Rates \$59.99 when you mention 'Bridgetown Baptist Church.'

Rooms 'as available,' so call early.

Other fine accommodations are available in the area.

For further information, contact Pastor Dean. Email: LarryWDean.aol.com - Phone: (662) 449-6000

Annual Fall Sovereign Grace Bible Conference

October 22-26, 2012

Grace Baptist Church, West Milton, Pennsylvania

David King, pastor

Schedule of Services: The conference begins Monday evening, October 22, 2012 at 7:00 PM and continues through Friday morning, October 26, 2012. There will be two speakers in the morning sessions and two speakers in the evening sessions. The morning sessions will begin at 10:00 AM. The evening sessions will begin at 7:00 PM.

Recommended Lodging: Comfort Inn, New Columbia, Pennsylvania (a short driving distance from the church building). Comfort Inn offers comfortable accommodations with a free deluxe breakfast included. Call early and mention Grace Baptist Conference to receive a special rate. Phone: (570) 568-8000

Pastor King and Grace Baptist Church invite all to attend. For further information, contact Pastor King at: (570) 742-8915.

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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