

# TRUTH

m a g a z i n e

Jul - Sep 2015, Summer Edition

*"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths."*

*Proverbs 3:6*



*Working Together to Advance the Grace of God and Impact the World for Christ*



GRACE GOSPEL  
FELLOWSHIP

# TRUTH

Jul - Sep, Summer Edition, Volume 65, Issue 2

Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11

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The publishing of TRUTH, a quarterly magazine emphasizing the doctrines of the dispensation of grace, is to provide individuals and churches with Bible studies, articles of Christian concern and devotion, and news about Grace Gospel Fellowship (GGF), Grace Bible College, Grace Ministries International, Grace Publications, and other Grace organizations and activities.

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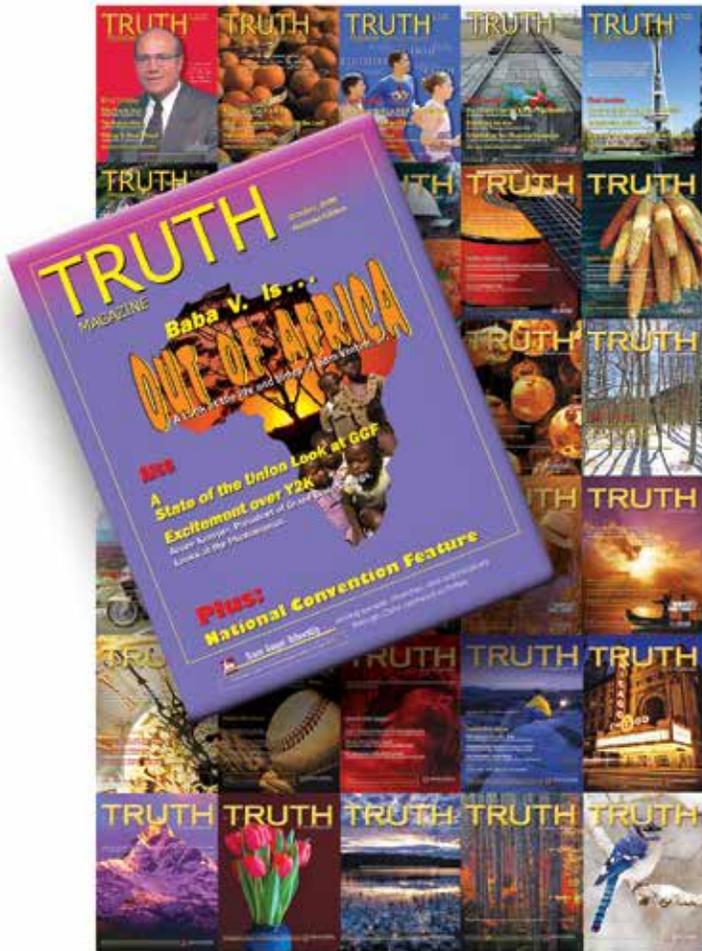
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TRUTH Magazine is the quarterly membership periodical of the GGF. Gift subscriptions can be purchased through the national office.



# Looking Back

*Some things are worthy of noting*

by Philip Cereghino  
Editor, Truth Magazine

*Pictured at left in foreground is the first issue of Truth Magazine that GGF produced in-house using our cottage industry plan devised to keep Truth in print. The October 1999 issue was the first time Truth appeared in full color. In the background is a collage containing front covers from almost half of the issues printed the last sixteen years.*



## ***A Note from the Publisher:***

It is no exaggeration to say that you are able to read *Truth Magazine* today because of one man's devotion to the Grace Message. In 1999, rising costs and the imminent departure of our previous editor caused the GGF National Council to give strong consideration to suspending publication of *Truth*. It was then that Phil Cereghino, a lay representative to the Council from Florida, stepped forward with a plan to rescue and enhance the magazine. Believing *Truth* served as an important conduit, both for conveying Grace Theology and uniting the GGF constituency, Phil offered his services as volunteer editor for the next two years.

Phil's tenure as editor draws to a conclusion with this edition of *Truth*. The original two-year commitment stretched into a 16-year labor of love during which Phil (and at times the entire Cereghino family) spent multiple hours preparing 64 editions of *Truth* for publication. Through his years of service, Phil's commitment was that each edition would reflect the vision statement which appears on the inside cover: "Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11." I would encourage you to read these verses as a reminder of our purpose and calling as grace believers.

For his final edition as editor, we have asked Phil to give us a glimpse at the history of *Truth Magazine* and an inside look at the years when publishing the magazine was a Cereghino family project. We thank our Lord for the personal sacrifice and service of Phil Cereghino for the advancement of the gospel of the grace of God. What an example for us all!

## No Comparison

This might be the last column I ever write for *Truth Magazine*. That's not really worth noting. It's just a passing realization on my part. Can you imagine Charles F. Baker having a similar thought when he turned over his editorial duties of *Truth Magazine* to John T. Dean around October 1974? Interestingly, over the course of about eight years (starting in 1965) these two men basically traded positions: Baker stepped down from the Grace Bible College presidency (having served in this role from the school's inception) and from managing editor of *Truth* (he would serve as associate editor for several more years), while Dean accepted the presidency of the College and became *Truth's* managing editor (after serving as its associate editor for many years).

Now that was exceptionally worth noting, because it was accentuating the end of an era in the Grace Movement; a founding father was transitioning into retirement. This would have ripple effects in several ministries, the Bible institute-turned-college that Baker founded and headed for over thirty years and the numerous Grace organizations he helped organize: Worldwide Grace Testimony (WGT, now Grace Ministries International), Grace Gospel Fellowship (GGF), and Grace Publications (GP).

*Continued on page 2*

*“Through the 1990s... the GGF National Council working with the Boards of the College and Missions admirably kept the magazine in publication, but it was evident by 1998 that something drastic would need to be done.”*

*Continued from page 1*

While Milwaukee Bible Institute was ramping up to become Milwaukee Bible College (1953), the Boards for the Institute, WGT, and GGF determined the Grace Movement needed a periodical that was representative of the “new” Bible College’s mid-Acts dispensational theology or as they called it, Pauline Gospel (*Truth*, v. 1, is. 1; May, 1950; p. 4), and that the president of the College would be its editor (*Truth*, v. 6, is. 5; Sep, 1955; p. 3). The first five years of publication would be with G. L. Hesselgrave as managing editor (1950-1955), allowing President Baker opportunity to focus solely on his role as educator and administrator for the fledgling College. Even during the aforementioned period, Baker served as *Truth*’s consulting or associate editor.

A strong case could be made that *Truth Magazine* is only the most recent iteration of Baker’s earlier *Biblegram* and the Institute’s *Tower Times* (which is my position), making *Truth* the longest running mid-Acts dispensational periodical in America (now in its eighty-first year; sixty-fifth if only counting *Truth*’s publication), meaning Charles Baker’s role as its editor in some capacity or another spanned forty-four years; definitely worth noting. Even after Baker ended his editorial relationship with *Truth*, his affiliation would still continue for several more years. He was listed in the magazine’s legend as President Emeritus well into the 1980s; all the while contributing articles and answering questions from readers in the magazine’s popular “Ask Us Another” column.

### A Brief Accounting

For its first decade, *Truth Magazine* was a monthly, subscription based, two-color periodical in booklet format. It cost \$2.00 a year, equivalent to \$10.00 today. Initially (first two years of publication) there was no space—by design—for Grace Gospel Fellowship in *Truth*. It was decided by the three Boards that GGF would publish their newsletter independently. The decision was reversed in February of 1952. From 1952-1960, besides the managing editor, there was a consulting or associate editor and an art editor (notably, Wayne Webb). Many well-known pastors and missionaries and members of the College faculty contributed feature articles. The magazine’s recurring material included: editorials by Baker; “Tower Times,” the College news section and eventually alumni news section; a Missions report from WGT listing programs, needs, achievements, with a subsection called “Congo Communique;” a GGF news section with information about church plants and conventions; and, as mentioned before, a column that answered questions from readers, “Ask Us Another.” About this period and its challenges Baker once wrote:

“This is a big responsibility and involves a considerable expenditure of time and work, endeavoring to get suitable

articles from missionaries, and pastors of the GGF, and news items from the Grace churches and from our alumni; editing them; proofreading; marking up the format; and all of the other details which must be cared for each month before the finished product gets into the mails.”

(*ibid.*)

With the move of the College to Grand Rapids, MI in 1961, Baker convinced the Board to drop the subscription price for the magazine. The College was already picking up some of the expenses and he thought the gesture would encourage a larger readership and that readers “would respond with freewill offerings which would come nearer to paying for the paper than did the subscription price” (*Truth*, v. 11, is. 8; Jan 1961; p. 179). Beyond the cost, Baker desired to have the message of God’s Grace go out to as many people as possible, the main reason after all for publishing *Truth* (*ibid.*). Other changes in the 1960s saw GGF receiving a full editorship (Clarence Kramer was the first). By the way, editorships abounded beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing well into the 1980s. At one time there were as many as five content and layout editors reporting to the president of the College.

Closing out the 1960s, covering the cost of the magazine was still proving difficult. Dropping the subscription fee had not worked. Bringing GGF on board as a copublisher to help defer expenses along with the College and Missions and cutting back to a bimonthly publishing cycle could not reduce the operating burden the magazine had become. In all fairness, all the Grace organizations were struggling to stay afloat, and in the 1990s the magazine was in search of a new home and identity. For a brief time it found a home with Grace Publications but eventually became the membership magazine of the GGF, with the College and Missions submitting articles and providing some financial assistance. Either Grace Publications or GGF changed the magazine’s format from booklet to tabloid, otherwise the content and bimonthly publication cycle remained unchanged. Through the 1990s, then President of the GGF, Roger Anderson, and the GGF National Council working with the Boards of the College and Missions admirably kept the magazine in publication, but it was evident by 1998 that something drastic would need to be done. That year at the GGF annual convention (referring to the convention as the Family Bible Conference is a fairly recent innovation) in Rochester, MN, the National Council entertained a motion during their session to cease publication of *Truth*. The motion took much of the life out of the room, although most knew it was the obvious way to proceed. The floor was opened for discussion and several arguments for and against the motion were shared. It was at that session that a freshman lay representative from the Southeast region with just two years on the Council sat in silence, too much the “new guy” to weigh in, although very much aware,

along with the other men, of the gravity of the moment. It was Lee Homoki, of Bible Doctrines To Live By, whose impassioned plea for saving the magazine turned the tide in favor of *Truth's* continued publication, if the magazine could be structured to reduce its financial drag upon the GGF. The Council resolved to devise a plan that could be presented to the GGF members for approval at the 1999 convention.

## The Plan

On his plane ride back to Florida after the Rochester convention, the Southeast rep mulled over the predicament facing the Council of making *Truth* financially viable. His desire to see *Truth* remain in publication was very personal. Since graduating high school and leaving his home church in Seattle, WA (now Shoreline Berean Bible) he had pursued a twenty-four year military career (naval aviation, 1970-1994). For the majority of that time his only contact with the Grace message was through the pages of *Truth Magazine*, which his father faithfully sent to him. Sometimes several issues would arrive all at once—due to the nature of deployments and the “efficiency” of the Fleet Postal Service—and he would retire to his stateroom, arrange them chronologically, and read them all cover-to-cover, hungry for their Grace message teaching and news about the GGF. Somewhere over the Gulf of Mexico, a possible solution came to mind.

He pitched his idea to Roger Anderson in emails and shared it with Council members at their next session. It had potential yet needed “tweaking” from others on the Council. Basically, the concept that came out of the Council would turn the magazine’s publishing into a cottage industry out of the rep’s home in Jacksonville, FL. By capitalizing upon recent improvements in color laserjets and desktop publishing software available for home computers it would be possible with a handful of people over the course of a couple days to print and assemble a quality product, thus replacing an external and more expensive printing service (the start-up expenses would be covered by a donation and then expendables—paper, toner, etc. by GGF and others). Additional recurring savings would be possible if instead of farming out editing responsibilities to a seasoned, professional editor, the Council would trust the magazine to an in-house, untested editor (willing to work pro bono) who would coordinate the collaboration of numerous authors and submitters, collect and prepare their material, find or create supporting graphics, assemble, approve, and proof the copy; and finally, with a small army of volunteers, collate, fold, saddle stitch, and trim the 800 plus copies, box them, and mail them to Grand Rapids, MI, for final distribution. The Southeast rep volunteered himself for the editor’s position, and his family for the small army position. GGF treasurer, John Hollis, suggested that a portion of a GGF member’s annual fee be set aside in the form of a subscription to *Truth*, that the College and Missions continue purchasing their space in the magazine, and that para-church organizations continue to cover the expense of “ads” running in the magazine. The plan could cut operation

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*“The Southeast rep volunteered himself for the editor’s position, and his family for the small army position.”*

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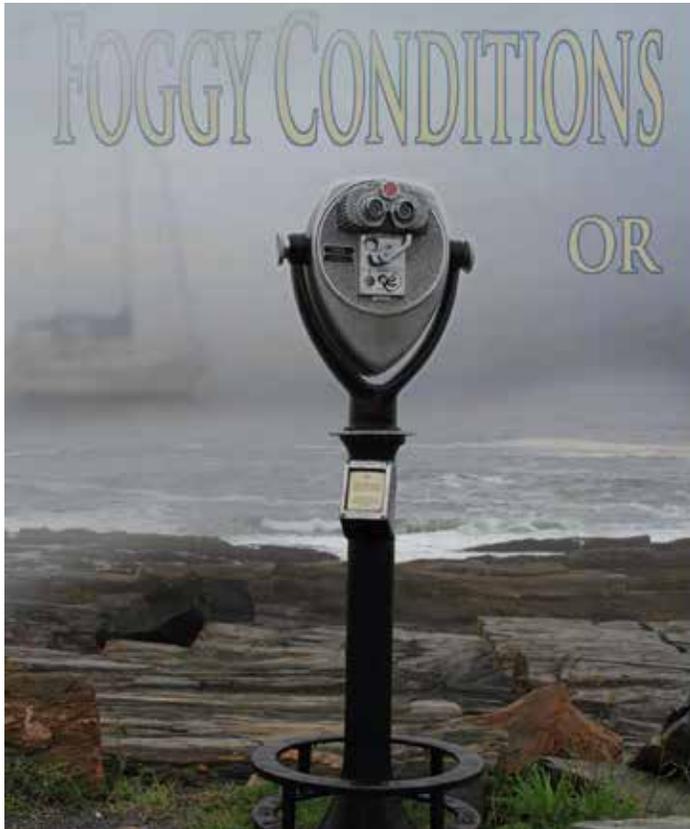
expenses considerably. The Council resolved to present it to GGF members for approval during the general session at the 1999 convention.

Since Frosty already spilled the beans in his note from the publisher, the Southeast rep will now dispense with his third person narrative. I was not exactly sure how the membership would respond to our proposal. The 1999 convention was at the YWCA of the Smokies outside Ashland, NC. During the general session I explained our plan for going forward and laid out some of our objectives: (1) to reduce costs, by going from a bimonthly to a quarterly publishing cycle—without reducing coverage because we would add a couple more pages per issue; (2) improving the magazine’s appearance by using full color laserjet printing and state of the art publishing software; (3) further cut costs by using volunteers to proof and assemble *Truth*, and acquiring the services of an untested and unpaid editor, namely me (might have seen some raised eyebrows on this point, but I stated I had some college and occupational experience, which garnered approving head nodding); and finally (4) revisit and reevaluate our plan after the initial two-year trial period. I also briefly mentioned my personal reasons for keeping *Truth* in print, sharing I was certain that over the years many people would have had an experience similar to mine; one that had them relying upon *Truth* as a lifeline for holding fast to the Grace message. The members approved the motion and we had the first in-house produced *Truth* in the mail for the 1999 Oct-Dec quarter.

## The Reevaluation

So, here we are, sixteen years later because you—it is worth noting—the members of the GGF have been steadfast in your support of *Truth*. After our two-year trial the Council once again “tweaked” the plan a little bit. When our laserjet expenses started climbing, we were able to find relatively inexpensive printing alternatives, allowing us to abandon altogether the cottage industry approach. I must confess it was a pleasure retiring our commercial, departmental sized, toner gulping 6500-page rated behemoth with a footprint the size of a washing machine, which caused the lights to dim every time it sucked in an 11 by 17 inch sheet of paper. Each issue required 4800 duplexed 4-page spreads; that meant three and a half days of running the laserjet non-stop, turning out six, 800-page stacks placed in sequential order atop our family’s dining room table. We would cue up and proceed around the table—me, Brenda, my parents—and collate, then crease, saddle stitch, feather cut, and box eight hundred copies,

*See Looking Back, continued on page 17*



# GRACE BIBLE COLLEGE

## CLEAR SAILING?

by Ken B. Kemper  
President of Grace Bible College

I recently was with a group of men in northern Michigan, near Petoskey, driving along the shores of Lake Michigan. An offshore cool air mass was moving inland, which created a dense fog prohibiting us from seeing more than 100 yards ahead. Since nothing at a distance could be seen, as would have been possible without the fog, we drove with caution, carefully slowing down for each turn and for reading each road sign. There were times when—though we knew the lake was out there somewhere—we could not see it due to the lack of visibility. This fog is part of the reason why so many tall lighthouses dot the shoreline of Lake Michigan.

Just as this experience slowed our progress and ability to move forward, so too, a lack of clear vision for any organization will impede its progress. If one does not see where he is heading, it is quite difficult to arrive there! And, to put it another way, when others sense that vision is lacking, well... nobody wants to get on a bus which isn't heading in any particular direction. In relation to church activity today—in America as well as around the world—visionary leadership is drastically lacking. Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold explain in their recent book, *ReVISION*, 80% of churches in America have plateaued or are in decline (p. 21). Their research shows a discouraging forecast if trends remain the

same as they are going. My observation does not differ from theirs as it pertains to our own Grace Gospel Fellowship. Their figures show a gap in numbers for young adults in our churches today, which more specifically is also observable in many of our Grace churches. Malphurs and Penfold contend the issue is a “lack of strong, visionary leadership” (p. 29). There are leaders, but they have never been trained or have not experienced how to seek a vision from God together with their church leadership, and then articulate it and move a group of believers toward the vision. These authors contend this is one of the most critical factors for the exodus of young adults. Younger adults and teens crave to be part of a vision, and will seek and find one to follow if their church does not supply that clear vision which will motivate and engage them. “The solution to the state of the church problem is a renewed vision for both church planting and church revitalization among our pastoral and denominational leaders” (p. 33). I would also add to their statement—a vision for reaching the lost!

Much has been written in leadership studies on organizational vision, strategic planning, and “mission” and values. What follows are some helpful thoughts which may guide our thinking and planning as we seek God’s direction for the ministries and places we serve.

## Vision—What Is It?

Vision is a description of the preferred future which one believes God desires for their church, family, organization, or personal life. It is always aimed at the future and is different from a mission. Mission is a description of what a group is and why it exists—it is present and intellectual. Whereas vision is where the group is headed and what that mission looks like wonderfully fulfilled in the future. Vision is not purely intellectual, it is emotional and motivational, and is based on prayer, seeking the leading of God about his will and desired progress. Vision gets people excited and expresses a moral obligation to change, move, and address a critical issue or problem in society or an organization itself.

## Vision—Why Is it so Important?

I like to describe vision as the “destination” at which the organization is committed to arrive, in a specified time period, and how it will look at that point in time if God has his way. It should be an image which everyone can picture and desire. It is vitally important because people naturally want to move forward and progress. People want to know where they are going. They desire to join in on the journey! If an organization does not point to a destination, people resort to “survival,” and try to hold the organization together “as is”—which inherently never happens—and leads to organizational demise. A group which fails to give vision ends up in division with key players left to create their own conflicting visions and pursue short term successes in lieu of a longer term vision. No vision becomes a “sentence” of division, argumentation, and fragmentation. On the other hand, vision brings unification, collaboration, and cohesiveness!

Vision unites people toward a cause which makes them move. Vision motivates leaders of all levels to step up and help move forward. Vision prompts resources—and resources will be allocated to where vision moves the heart to give. Vision clarifies direction and calls for participation. When vision is clear, all the people in the boat can put their paddles in the water and begin to row in the same direction! What a picture of partnership—all on the ship, straining against the elements to move the vessel toward the lighthouse in the distance! Sadly, many churches and organizations without vision paint a whole different picture: one of a boat adrift in the current with people paddling in different directions or not rowing at all! We have all experienced that reality at some point in our lives, and realize the frustration, the wasted energy and resources from dealing with the disagreement rather than addressing the problems with a clear vision. Vision creates energy

to move, and even initiates some strong faith—regardless of risks. Vision gives assurance and confidence to members of a group to keep moving and stop nearsighted self-focus.

## Vision in Biblical Focus

People have stated vision is fine for the business world, but it is not “in the Bible.” In other words, some think vision is worldly and secular, and has no relation to the Church. Really? It appears to me for the believer in any dispensation, that God is the source of vision, and his work in the world is always a result of his people humbly seeking his leading, and responding with bold vision and actions to take him seriously. I recently wrote a biblical review of many passages from both the Old and New Testaments in which God gave direction to leaders who then communicated God’s desires to others and led them in dynamic ways to follow that vision for God’s glory. Consider the examples of Abram, Joseph, Moses, David, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. God instilled a clear vision in each of these men of a future which demanded leadership bring about change; and they acted in obedience and motivated large groups of people to move forward toward the goal.

In the New Testament, Jesus came to fulfill a clearly articulated vision of ministry to his twelve disciples, the nation of Israel, as well as the world, which had been prophesied from ages past. (Gen 3:15—to crush the serpent’s head; Mk 10:45—to serve and give his life as a ransom for many; Lk 19:10—to seek and to save the lost; Jn 1:17—to bring grace and truth; Jn 15:126—to choose the disciples to bear fruit that will last; Jn 17:4—to complete his work in disciple-making and bring God glory; Jn 19:30—to pay the penalty for sin “in full;” Phil 2:5-11—to humble himself and be exalted by God for redemption and an example for man.) He daily did the Father’s will and refused to be distracted from going from village to village and town to town to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Apostle Paul is another example of a clear focus on a vision for the future of churches planted all over the ancient Near East: (1) Full of new believers who were growing disciples—preaching the gospel to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16; 15:35-40; Eph 3:1-10), and congregating in new churches (Acts 16-28); (2) Who in turn were reaching out farther and to more places (Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 10:16); and (3) Making more disciples for the glory of God—developing deeper leaders who themselves reached beyond to others (2 Tim 2:2; e.g. Titus and Philemon).

It may be understood that when God’s people lacked vision it was not due to the silence of God’s voice, rather the people of God were neither listening nor responding to his voice to lead and

*See Clear Sailing, continued on page 19*

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*“When vision is clear, all the people in the boat can put their paddles in the water and begin to row in the same direction!”*

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# Consider These Stories

by Jeremy Clark  
Executive Director of Grace Ministries International



*As you consider the following stories of churches in the Book of Acts,  
think about how your congregation might change the world.*

## The Church at Antioch, Rich with Leadership

Nicolas, from Antioch, was a Gentile who first became a proselyte, converting to the Jewish faith, and then became a follower of Christ. It could have been he became a Christian through Peter's ministry at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Perhaps a pilgrim visiting Jerusalem during Pentecost heard Peter's message of repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit and then shared the news of the risen Messiah with Nicolas while traveling north from Jerusalem and passing through Antioch. Regardless of the circumstances by which Nicolas became a believer, Luke records that he was from Antioch—a city second only to Jerusalem in historical significance—as he recounts the history of those first followers of Jesus Christ. Nicolas was among the seven chosen to handle a troublesome situation in Jerusalem, the daily distribution of food among the widows (Acts 6:1-7). Of the seven, only Nicolas' home city was mentioned (Acts 6:5).

It may very well have been that the local church in Antioch was started by Jewish missionaries who preached only to the Jews after the persecution of Stephen (Acts 11:19-20). Even if it was not started then, those who were "preaching the Lord Jesus" in Antioch

saw a "great number" believe and turn to the Lord (Acts 11:20-21). Because of what God was doing, Barnabas was sent to Antioch where he encouraged the believers "and a great many people were added to the Lord" (Acts 11:22-24). As the church was experiencing this tremendous growth Barnabas left for Tarsus and brought Paul back to Antioch, where "for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:25-25). During this same time prophets arrived from Jerusalem and because of their message of an impending famine they marshaled relief, sending it back to Jerusalem for the benefit of the believers there.

The "pastoral staff" at the church in Antioch had its share of all-stars. Luke writes, "In the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul" (Acts 13:1). Barnabas had been numbered among the believers since the beginning, was often an emissary of the church at Jerusalem, and served as a liaison to Paul (Acts 9:26-27, 11:25-26)—the man to whom

*“There will always be that natural reaction and pull to hold on to those who have significantly touched the life of your church, who have set it on a course to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ.”*



*Pictured opposite page: Talo Vergara was a young man in Grace Bible Church-Uruguay when he decided to attend Grace Bible College and then become a missionary with Grace Ministries International. When he visits Uruguay he is able to share with his sending church congregation what the Lord is doing throughout Latin America.*

*Above left: GMI Partners Carlos and Denise Brunk have always been key leaders in the churches he has pastored until leaving to begin new ministries. Now they live on the Island of Bonaire, where they are working to plant a church through evangelism and discipleship.*

*Above right: Before becoming an Associate Missionary with Grace Ministries International to Nicaragua, Emiliano Seravalli (bottom right) was a young man who was part of the leadership team at his church in Costa Rica, where he was in charge of several different ministries and taught at Grace Bible Institute. Now he is planting a church in Nagarote, Nicaragua, along with his wife, Raquel.*

God revealed his grace so that he might preach the “unsearchable riches of Christ” to the Gentiles (Eph 3:8). Manaen’s background was that of a life formed in the context of a relationship with a governing—if not a royal—family.

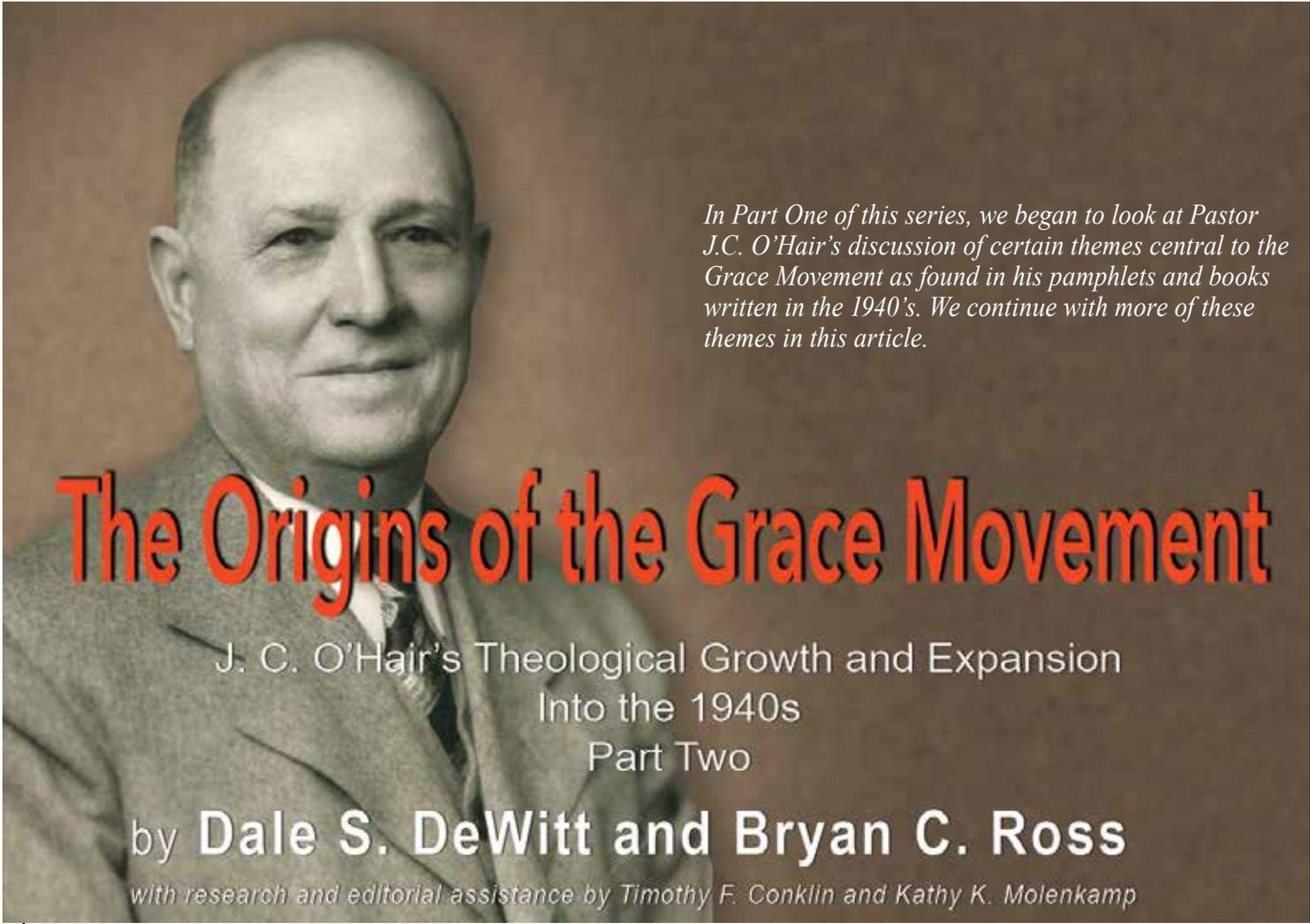
The church at Antioch was growing, influential, and casting its own very large shadow over the landscape of Christianity. At this point only Jerusalem held more sway. A natural reaction of any church, which has momentum and is trending in the right direction, is to maintain the inertia and continue to grow. One of the last things a congregation experiencing this kind of success might consider doing is tinkering with the chemistry that has brought them great results. Paradoxically, that is exactly what God desired. In the case of Antioch, as the leaders served “the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2). Perhaps the church leaders feared what this kind of change to their successful formula might bring their way. Nevertheless, they “fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3). God’s plan was that the rest of the world experienced the grace which Barnabas had seen when first sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:23).

We do not know if anyone replaced Barnabas and Paul when they were sent away, or if the church continued to grow, or even experienced a downturn. What we do know is that the church was blessed in many ways. Paul’s three missionary journeys started in Antioch (Acts 13:2, 15:35-36, 18:22-23). The church was afforded the privilege of sending Paul out to preach the gospel of the grace of God to the world. Furthermore, upon returning to Antioch after his journeys, Paul shared with them “all that God had done” (Acts 14:27); taught and preached to them the Word of the Lord (Acts 15:35); and simply spent time with them (Acts 18:23).

### Youthful Timothy, Paul’s Missionary Recruit from Lystra.

The church from which young Timothy came, in the region of Derbe and Lystra, had a different story than that of the church in Antioch. When Paul arrived in this area he preached to a primarily pagan audience that worshiped idols and did not know the Creator of the universe (Acts 14:15). Jews from the region stoned

*See Consider, continued on page 18*

A black and white portrait of J.C. O'Hair, a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the right of the camera.

*In Part One of this series, we began to look at Pastor J.C. O'Hair's discussion of certain themes central to the Grace Movement as found in his pamphlets and books written in the 1940's. We continue with more of these themes in this article.*

# The Origins of the Grace Movement

J. C. O'Hair's Theological Growth and Expansion  
Into the 1940s  
Part Two

by Dale S. DeWitt and Bryan C. Ross

*with research and editorial assistance by Timothy F. Conklin and Kathy K. Molenkamp*

## Law, Israel, Kingdom and Church

*The End of the Law:* O'Hair frequently mentions the end of the Law. Sometimes he enlarges on details of how the Law ceased, on Israel's related fall, and on the church's freedom from both. The end of the Mosaic Law is discussed in pamphlets like *The Christian—Eternal Life and the Ten Commandments* (post 1944), *God's Grace Program* (c 1945), *Under the Law and Under the Water* (1945), and the article, "The Dispensational Answer to Un-dispensational Religious Practices."<sup>22</sup> In at least two such pieces he produces lists of up to thirty Jewish practices grounded in the Mosaic Law or Israel's special miracles which churches mostly ignore except for a few they choose to retain by tradition and sentiment; the aim is to challenge critics to practice their reactionary claims of obeying the *whole* Bible. Among the Jewish practices he cites are [public] stoning for Sabbath-breaking and waiting at Jerusalem (or some other city) for power from on high.<sup>23</sup> While O'Hair denied the Christian is under the Mosaic Law, he emphasized the church's embrace of love and law, noting

the place already given to this central value in Jesus' summaries of love and law. Jesus' value on love over law is also found in Paul's discussions in Galatians 5-6 and Romans 12-14. O'Hair noted how Paul correlated the end of the Mosaic Law with the beginning of the church in Ephesians 2:14-18. In the larger contexts of Galatians and Romans, the end of the Law is also tied to salvation by grace through faith and to the movement of salvation into the Gentile world.

*The Fall of Israel:* At least two other pamphlets discuss details of Israel's fall from divine favor and the resulting Gentile mission. In several pamphlets and articles O'Hair notes passages in which Israel is called "the children" by Jesus or the apostles in contrast to Gentile "dogs." He notes how the tragedy of Israel's unbelief changes them from "children" to "vipers."<sup>24</sup> *He Came unto His Own and His Own Received Him Not* (1941) and *The Great Divide* are full discussions of all New Testament texts or themes related

<sup>22</sup> Unsearchable Riches of Christ, pp. 13-19, 103-107.

<sup>23</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *God's Grace Program* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1938), pp. 3, 8.

<sup>24</sup> One among several of these is "The Children of the Kingdom and The Gentiles," in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, pp. 92-94.

to Christ and the Twelve's mission to Israel from Matthew 1 through Acts 12. *He Came unto His Own...* is entirely scriptural and inductive, gathering details from New Testament texts on the theme with close coverage, and drawing from details appropriate conclusions. The pamphlet illustrates O'Hair's tendency in the 1940s to move away from arguments based on deductive logic of terms as in his debates with Ironside-Gray (1930s), and Fuller-Haggai (1940s); instead, these pamphlets shift to inductive gathering of biblical details and related meanings and implications.

In *He Came unto His Own...*, his thesis is the title: Christ came to Israel ("his own") and Israel rejected him and his kingdom, even when the mission and its miracle-signs continued without change in the Twelve's kingdom preaching to Israel (Acts). This "re-offer" of the kingdom was possible—rather than the church's origin in the first part of Acts—because Jesus' prayer that Israel be forgiven for killing the Messiah (Luke 23:34) was answered positively. Thus the mission to Israel was resumed by the Twelve after the ascension; sadly, Israel's rejection persisted through the events of Acts 12 and beyond. After James' death (Acts 12), the Spirit directed Paul to turn to the Gentiles, although he was not directed to completely turn away from Israel. An Acts story symbolizing Israel's rejection and Paul's turn to the Gentiles—to which O'Hair returned often—is Acts 13's scene of the blinding of the Jew Bar-Jesus. In *Three Blind Jews* he notes poignant details of the story symbolizing the Jews' rejective attitudes while the Gentiles turn to the gospel.<sup>25</sup>

*The Mission of the Twelve in Acts:* O'Hair also expanded his discussion about the continued kingdom mission of the Twelve to Israel after Pentecost (Acts 1-12). The pamphlet *Why Did Not the Twelve Apostles Do What the Lord Jesus Told Them to Do* (1942) makes the question its subject. Though short, the pamphlet grapples with scholars and students who were saying (and still say) that by staying in Jerusalem and limiting their ministry to Israel, the Twelve were disobeying their commission to go to the nations and teach them what Jesus taught. This limited outreach is said to have persisted because of their narrow Jewish nationalism. O'Hair disagreed with this view because Jesus had previously commanded the Twelve to not go to Gentiles, and then added to this order of Matthew 10:5 a further statement in 10:23 projecting their activity to remain in the cities of Israel until his return. To these texts O'Hair added Jesus' prophecy that at his return they would become the governors of the New Israel (Matt 19:28). Within this perspective Israel must have been included among the "nations" of Matthew 28's commission. This means the apostles were conducting their operations based on several related "Israel first" instructions of Jesus and had no reason to change their mission to Israel for the immediate future; the use of "nations" in Matthew

28:19 is inclusive, not exclusive of Israel. The Twelve's extended mission to Israel in Acts 1-12 assumed Israel's forgiveness for its earlier crime of killing Jesus. Even after Peter obediently went to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), he and his colleagues continued to confine their mission to the Jews—a division of labor agreed to between Paul and the Twelve in the conference of Galatians 2:9.

*The Gospel of the Circumcision and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision:* O'Hair also continued to discuss this distinction. He believed the terms "gospel of the circumcision" and "gospel of the uncircumcision" of Galatians 2:7 referred to two different gospels preached respectively by the Twelve and Paul. This distinction belonged to and enhanced the broader kingdom-church distinction. O'Hair thought the two terms were used to state in another way the difference between Peter's "gospel of the kingdom" mentioned in Matthew, and Paul's "gospel of the grace of God" mentioned in Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:24). In his pamphlets of the later 1920s and 1930s, O'Hair thought these expressions denoted the respective *content of the two apostles' preaching*. The meaning he opposed thought the two terms denoted not the preached content as though circumcision was "good news" (gospel) to the Jews and "uncircumcision" "good news" (gospel) to the Gentiles, but *two different groups of people to whom one apostolic gospel was preached by both Peter and Paul.*

An early statement of a difference in the two apostolic gospels appeared in *The Twelve Apostles and Paul* (c 1928-1929). The distinction appeared again in *The Great Blunder of the Church* (1930) where it occupies more than twenty pages of comment. It was discussed yet again in *Bible Study for Bereans* for November, 1935; here O'Hair thought mainly of Jesus' "gospel of the kingdom (Matthew only)" and Paul's "gospel of the grace of God." The distinction reappeared in several articles of *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (1941) where O'Hair emphasized Paul's terms "my gospel," and "the mystery of the gospel" as parallels to "the gospel of the uncircumcision." Then in 1945 he issued the pamphlet, *Did Peter and Paul Preach Different Gospels?* (1945). The pamphlet again distinguishes Paul's "gospel of grace" and Jesus' (and Twelves') "gospel of the kingdom," as well as "the gospel of the uncircumcision" (Paul's preaching to Gentiles) and "the gospel of the circumcision" (Peter's preaching to Israel). These are not the only treatments of the subject, but they are major and the view is sustained but commented with some variations.

O'Hair is not always clear on how "circumcision" can be good news for Jews who had practiced the rite since Abraham, or how "uncircumcision" is good news for Gentiles who had never practiced it; there is a sense in which "uncircumcision" (no-circumcision) is more easily understood as good news for Gentile converts under pressure from zealous Jewish Christians (Acts 15:1, 5) to become full Israelites (proselytes) through male circumcision as at Galatia. Despite the fact that "the circumcision" elsewhere in the

*Continued on page 10*

<sup>25</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Three Blind Jews* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c. 1940), pp. 7-10, 15-20; see also *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, pp. 169-170.

New Testament is regularly a term for the Jews (“the circumcisers”), O’Hair was willing to stake the case for his interpretation of Galatians 2:7 on James’ speech in Acts 15:15-18. He saw James’ use of Amos 9:11-12 as focused on *three ideas about Israel’s future* and another way of explaining Jesus’ “gospel of the kingdom” as the opposite of Paul’s “gospel of the uncircumcision,” even though James did not use these terms. In the pamphlet, O’Hair read the three ideas about Israel’s future as follows:

1. Christ’s return to build again the tabernacle of David (at the Second Advent; Am 9:11);
2. The Jews/Israel [then] receive Christ (Amos’ phrase, “the residue of men,” apparently the latter day remnant of Israel);
3. The Gentiles receive Christ (Amos’ “all the Gentiles”).<sup>26</sup>

He adds about this outline, “This kingdom program is prophesied very many times in Israel’s Old Testament Scriptures. This means the kingdom will be restored to Israel. . . . Then because of Israel’s belief and salvation, the Gentiles will come to Israel’s Messiah and Lord.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, O’Hair finally settles on this outline as the exact content of “gospel of the circumcision.”

Putting the matter together this way is the third and perhaps final effort of O’Hair to explain James’ use of Amos to interpret Peter’s mission to Cornelius. In 1936 he simply adopted Scofield’s summary of the passage: “During this present reign of grace, God is taking out from among the nations a people for his name,”<sup>28</sup> that is, according to Scofield, James made Amos 9:11-12 a description of the *present church age!* Slightly later, perhaps in later 1936 or early 1937, O’Hair explained James’ use of Amos’ three details as *partly fulfilled historically* in the ministry of the Twelve to Israel.<sup>29</sup> Finally in the mid-1940s he adopted a *futurist* view of the passage as discussed above. O’Hair was moving about on James’ use of Amos 9’s prophecy in search of a suitable way to correlate the passage with his more consistent and thorough-going dispensational theology, and the way he saw Peter’s “gospel of the circumcision” in Galatians 2:7.

<sup>26</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Did Peter and Paul Preach Different Gospels* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1945), p. 10. The grace movement as a whole has never paid much attention to O’Hair’s treatment of Peter’s speech in Acts 10 and James’ review of it in Acts 15:13-17. Many people seem unaware of his view of Peter’s speech, perhaps because of the wide use of the *Scofield Reference Bible* in the grace movement combined with the relative obscurity of this pamphlet. In fact, in *Two Gentile Movements*, p. 22, from the later 1930s, O’Hair adopts Scofield’s view of James’ meaning completely: “During this present reign of grace, God is taking out from among the nations a people for his name.” This is not his later view as discussed above.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Two Gentile Movements* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1936), p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Progressive Revelation and the Dispensations of the Bible* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c. 1937), p. 43; “The Book of Acts—Peter and Paul,” *Bible Study for Bereans*, Feb-Mar, 1937

Instead of criticizing his meandering, one should give O’Hair some leeway in his search for a suitable explanation of James’ speech in Acts 15 considering the difficulties of interpreting both Galatians 2:7 and Acts 15:15-18. The question remains, though, whether the two phrases “gospel of the uncircumcision” and “gospel of the circumcision” in Galatians 2:7 referred to two different gospels preached by two different apostles or simply to two different groups of people, and what might be the basis for identifying the “gospel of the circumcision” with James’ use of Amos 9 in his Acts 15 speech. O’Hair’s finalized view of James’ speech in Acts 15 at least has the merit of consistency and is certainly a plausible view of an otherwise difficult passage. The difficulty is that a wholly futuristic view of James’ use of Amos distances the passage from the event it was explaining, i.e., Peter’s historic mission to Cornelius in Acts 10.

When the Grace Gospel Fellowship founders drew up their original doctrinal statement in 1944-1945, they adopted O’Hair’s distinction between the “gospel of the circumcision” and the “gospel of the uncircumcision” as different gospels. They did so, however, without explaining his equation of the “gospel of the circumcision” with Jesus and the Twelve’s “gospel of the kingdom.” Nor was O’Hair’s appeal to James’ speech of Acts 15 offered in explanation. Consequently the phrases and the exegetical problems of Galatians 2:7 were left unresolved. Subsequently in *A Dispensational Theology* (1971), Charles Baker began to make cautious qualifications on O’Hair’s reading of the two phrases. Baker’s cautions, let alone their implications, have not received much attention. Baker did bring forward O’Hair’s futurist reading of Amos’ three clauses; Baker also turned James’ use of Amos toward a discussion of how James defended Gentile non-circumcision from Amos.<sup>30</sup> Thus O’Hair’s discussion of Acts 15 virtually ended among early leaders, even though his two gospels view of Galatians 2:7 was adopted. In the meantime, C. R. Stam energetically advanced O’Hair’s two-gospels view without questions or qualifications.

*The Unpardonable Sin:* A related theme on Israel’s situation during Jesus and the Twelve’s mission is the “unpardonable sin,” who committed it, and when and how. The offense is specifically blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, while even blasphemy against Christ himself is forgivable. This subject also received earlier attention in several 1930s pamphlets and in an article in *Unsearchable Riches* under the title “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—Who Committed the Unpardonable Sin?” Shortly after publishing *Unsearchable Riches*, O’Hair followed with a booklet on the subject. His answer is—Israel committed it in blaspheming the Holy Spirit as reported in the Israel-in-unbelief scenes of Acts 7 and beyond. Rather than referring to individuals, O’Hair saw the “unpardonable sin” in Acts as a national, corporate offense of

<sup>30</sup> C. Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1981), p. 96.

Israel—the first and only nation to engage in such a sin against its own God. This is to say this sin is localized and time-framed within the period of Israel’s probation and fall.

The booklet, *Who Committed the Unpardonable Sin?*, offers more detail: (1) Israel could not have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit before Pentecost (Acts 2), since the Spirit was not given until then. (2) In Stephen’s speech he said “Lord, lay not this sin (his own stoning) to their charge”—a prayer which appears to have kept the door open still longer for national repentance. (3) Immediately after James’ murder in Acts 12, the “dispensational miracle” of Acts 13 occurred. The Jewish sorcerer Bar-Jesus is blinded by a divine judgment and the Gentile Sergius Paulus believes as Bar-Jesus rejects. (4) Paul’s speech in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia follows; at the end of the speech the Jews *blaspheme*, and Paul condemns their unbelief and turns to the Gentiles; a similar scene of blasphemy occurs in 18:6 with a repeated turn of Paul to the Gentiles. (5) Romans 11 shows that by the time the letter was written (Acts 20), Israel had come under divine judgment and was already blinded. (6) God’s judgment of Israel, though announced by the time Romans was written, was not carried out in full until the fall of Jerusalem; accordingly “to the Jew first” prevailed through the end of Acts. (7) O’Hair pondered the time of God’s decision against Israel and how and where it appears in Acts.

To answer the question who committed the “unpardonable sin,” he noted the coordination of Gentiles turning to God and Israel’s blasphemy against the Spirit (Acts 13). Since God’s decision to reject Israel is viewed in Romans 11 as having already been made, and the passage was written during the events of Acts 20, it is a fair inference that God’s decision against Israel occurred between Acts 13 and Acts 20. In consequence, Israel’s hope of realizing its promised kingdom through repentance vanished for the time being while the church grew and would flourish until the Second Coming and Israel’s final salvation.

*Defining the Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven:* O’Hair seldom expresses uncertainty about subjects he discusses; occasionally he acknowledges a subject is difficult. His comments in a special note appended to *The Salvation . . . of Little Children* (c 1942) about his puzzlement on defining the two terms for the kingdom is a case in point. He expresses uncertainty about how to understand the exact meaning of “kingdom of God” after reviewing Scripture texts where the terms are used. He does feel sure the “kingdom of heaven” is not the church, even though at one point he states, “However then the Body of Christ may be related to the kingdom of heaven—if it is any part of it—there is a great difference.” The connection of the term “kingdom of God” with the church remains a point of discussion in the grace movement.

Probing both the meaning of “the kingdom of God” and its relation to the church, he says in *The Salvation . . . of Little Children*,

“... no diligent student of the Scriptures will teach that the Body of Christ is *not* (authors’ italics) a part of the kingdom of God.”<sup>31</sup> In a message in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, he adds:

Members of Christ’s Body are already in the spiritual kingdom of Colossians 1:13. . . .The Body of Christ is a part of the kingdom of God. But the kingdom of God, in the Bible, is not always the Body of Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Still another message in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ* makes the usual sharp distinction between “The kingdom of Matthew” as “a prophesied kingdom” and “The kingdom of Ephesians and Colossians” as an un-prophesied kingdom, the Body of Christ.<sup>33</sup> After his inductive study of the terms, he notes that “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are often interchangeable, and that the “kingdom in Matthew” is vague since both “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are used in Matthew. His way of resolving questions about the identity of the kingdom in these biblical phrases is to separate them into what he calls “phases.” He prefers this term over “aspects” which suggests he thought in terms of their chronological sequence even though he notes several overlaps. At other times he seems to speak as though there is only one kingdom of God. These ambiguities were left unresolved. Thus the grace movement inherited O’Hair’s puzzlement on the “kingdom of God.” No resolution has emerged up to the present, although Professor Matthew Loverin’s recent comments on the question are a significant step toward clarity and integration.<sup>34</sup> The subject merits attention here since both the original and revised Grace Gospel Fellowship Doctrinal Statements are explicit about the pre-kingdom return of Christ.

Two implications of this all-too-brief summary of O’Hair’s thought on this crucial subject are: (1) in looking for the precise meaning of the kingdom of God, he appears to have wisely made a fresh start by doing his own complete review of all occurrences of the terms in the New Testament—the uses of the terms in their own contexts.<sup>35</sup> (2) In doing so he began to move away from Scofield’s definitions and thinking about the kingdom texts, but not yet in any significant way. Slight movement away from Scofield on the meaning and “phases” of the kingdom is parallel to what he was also doing on the seven dispensations and their terminology. In these two important areas O’Hair was moving in his dispensational thought rather than keeping strictly to the received dispensational system, terminology and definitions.

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<sup>31</sup> O’Hair, *The Salvation—The Baptism—The Dedication of Little Children* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c 1942), p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 153.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125; the two-kingdom thought is also found in *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, p. 17: “. . . a difference between the prophesied kingdom of God and the un-prophesied kingdom of God.”

<sup>34</sup> M. Loverin, “Beyond Retrenchment: Toward A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God,” *Journal of Grace Theology* (Spring, 2014) 1: 3-20.

<sup>35</sup> *The Salvation . . . of Little Children*, p. 19.

*Salvation and the Kingdom:* For the most part, O’Hair does not relate salvation to the kingdom in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Rather, salvation is mostly said to be available during Jesus’ mission without connection to the available kingdom. He says, for example in one such statement, “Let us always keep in mind that while the Lord Jesus was on earth, God was carrying a twofold program, in that Christ was offering salvation to individual Israelites and presenting the prophesied Kingdom to National Israel.”<sup>36</sup>

This “twofold” way to describe the two topics suggests they are not correlated. On the other hand, in at least one case, he does tie salvation to the kingdom preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus:

In the verses quoted from chapters two, three, and five of the Book of Acts we learn that God was dealing with Israel and her rulers, and presenting to them the same kingdom salvation offered to them by John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth in His incarnation. Christ was raised up in resurrection to be Israel’s Saviour.<sup>37</sup>

And three pages later in the same pamphlet:

Sinners have always been saved on grounds of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter and Paul and all of the Lord’s evangelists preached to sinners that Christ died for our sins and was buried and was raised. This was all in fulfillment of the Scriptures.<sup>38</sup>

The Acts passages he has in mind offer Israel salvation based on Christ’s death and resurrection, and Israel’s repentance. The passages include one (Acts 5:29-32; cf 3:19) in which forgiveness of sins is mentioned. This is further evidence that O’Hair did in fact at times think of the kingdom’s salvation as proclaimed in all Testament preaching after the resurrection. However, the connection is not frequently made by O’Hair—certainly not regularly or clearly. Although in these passages he does plant the seed of such a correlation, the connection is not developed as it was a quarter century later for example by G. E. Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament* (1974). Such a correlation remains undeveloped in the grace movement as well.

*Multiple Kingdom Offers:* The idea of multiple kingdom offers was noted previously. During the 1940s O’Hair was also considering the point raised by *The Scofield Reference Bible* and other fundamentalist studies about an “offer” of the kingdom to Israel before the cross. Scofield and his fundamentalist followers believed Jesus offered the kingdom to Israel at the beginning of his public mission during the events of Matthew 4-10.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 98.

<sup>37</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *God the Builder* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c 1942), p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> *The Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1011, n. 2.

In *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, O’Hair commented on the “offer” idea:

Thus we learn of three definite offers [of the kingdom] to Israel. First: during the days of their prophets in the Old Testament. Second: during the days of the Son of Man. Third: during the Acts testimony of the Twelve to Israel. Read the parable of the Vineyard in Matthew 21:33 to 46.<sup>40</sup>

The comment embraces a serious possible implication of the parable’s meaning. By about 1945 in *Important Facts to Understand Acts*, O’Hair was thinking mainly of *two kingdom offers* to Israel—one before the resurrection, another after the resurrection during the events of Acts 1-12:

... When we read God’s kingdom promises to Israel in Acts 3:19 to 21 and 5:29 to 32, and read Luke 21:21 concerning the days of God’s vengeance upon Israel. . . , we ask, how the kingdom could have been offered to Israel, in good faith, either before or after the resurrection of Christ?<sup>41</sup>

The present authors first thought this might be a rhetorical concession to the Scofield-Ironside view. But the earlier three-offer passage from *Unsearchable Riches* shows that O’Hair did in fact embrace multiple offers of the kingdom before as well as after the cross and resurrection; hence the double offer of the above passage is not merely rhetorical. O’Hair seems never to have finally dropped the pre-cross kingdom offer idea, since he embraced it again as late as 1955—less than three years before his death and only shortly before he fell seriously ill.<sup>42</sup>

O’Hair’s way of explaining how there could be a kingdom offer before the prophesied passion and resurrection is not to deny any such pre-passion offer of the kingdom, but to appeal to the wonder of God’s sovereign grace. He affirms again that the Lord could “re-offer” the kingdom to Israel after the resurrection based on the facts that (1) he answered Christ’s prayer on the cross for Israel’s forgiveness, and (2) in his patience he could overlook Christ’s murder as a matter of his planned death for sins (Mark 14:21, 49) and Israel’s ignorance (Acts 3:17). If such a dual offer of the kingdom leaves one “bewildered,” says O’Hair, he should think of the wonders of God’s sovereign grace,<sup>43</sup> without attempting to explain multiple offers any further. The later leaders of the grace movement soon rejected any “offer” before the cross out of respect to the prophetic necessity of the *rejection* and passion of

<sup>40</sup> O’Hair, *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 270.

<sup>41</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Important Facts to Understand Acts*, (O’Hair, c 1944), p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> In *From Melita to Miletum* (c 1955), p. 28, he says “. . . their Messiah was raised up ‘twice’ to be [God’s kingdom nation’s] Ruler and Savior, first in ‘incarnation’ and again in ‘resurrection,’” adding a lament that “. . . Very few of our present-day ‘Fundamentalists’ teach that Christ was raised up in ‘resurrection’ to be Israel’s Savior.” See also *ibid.*, p. 4, where the same “twice” is mentioned earlier in a shorter statement.

<sup>43</sup> *Important Facts to Understand Acts*, pp. 16-17.

Christ;<sup>44</sup> they did so, however, without resolving the meaning and implications of the Parable of the Vineyard (Matt 21:33-46) on which O’Hair based his notion of three offers.

*The Transfer of Kingdom Believers:* O’Hair also expanded another idea introduced in the 1930s about what happened to those Jews (sometimes called “kingdom saints”) who had believed before Paul’s Gentile mission and the Jew-Gentile church began. In the later thirties O’Hair suggested a “transfer” had occurred in which Jews who believed before Paul were brought into the newly forming body of Christ. Some Plymouth Brethren writers thought this happened at Acts 2, which for them was the origin of the church. Thus O’Hair had a pattern to follow set by Brethren thinking. In *The Dispensationalism of Three Groups of Premillennial ‘Grace’ Bible-Teachers*, while mostly dealing with conflicting arguments among the three groups of the title (Acts 2, Acts 28, and Acts 13 church-origin advocates), O’Hair answers the “transfer” question by citing the specific cases of Mark, Luke, Silas, Andronicus and Apollos. All were once part of the Israel-kingdom “church” and later were associated with Paul in the Gentile mission and its body-church.<sup>45</sup> O’Hair’s view of the “transfer” was similar to that of M. R. DeHaan who needed to take such a position after deciding that the “kingdom age” continued until the stoning of Stephen. C. F. Baker and C. R. Stam followed O’Hair in this view, although the founders of the Grace Gospel Fellowship in 1944-1945 thought it best to leave the question to individual opinion, and so took no official view; grace movement leaders after 1944-1945 followed suit;<sup>46</sup> the issue remains a point of discussion up to the present. As recently as 2014 a group of pastors in the Denver area under the leadership of Robert Hill, has sustained or revived interest in the precise time of the body-church’s origin in Acts and what happened to Jewish Christians once it began.

Up to the 1940s no one in the American dispensational-millennarian movement had written with this much close focus on biblical language and images of Israel and the church. The pre-O’Hair leaders of the dispensational theology movement tended to write simple populist pamphlets and booklets dealing in generalities and broad ideas about the dispensations, especially the premillennial return of Christ and to some extent the mystery church. The fullest of such simple popular treatments before O’Hair was Isaac Haldeman’s *How to Study the Bible*. No one had yet isolated the Pauline language for the mystery of the church with as much effort and energy as O’Hair. Scofield had commented on some details in his *Reference Bible* of 1909 and 1917. Harry Ironside had issued *The Mysteries of God* which was simple and general, and offered only one chapter on the mystery of the church. L. S. Chafer’s eight-volume systematic theology did not appear until 1947. E. W. Bullinger had issued a pamphlet on *The Mystery in Paul* in which he expressed belief that the body-church began about the middle of Acts (c 1895). O’Hair apparently did not read this pamphlet until after 1923 or even 1925, even though it embraced what came to be his view in the 1920s.<sup>47</sup> Nor had anyone before O’Hair drawn out this theology’s more radical suggestions and implications for the life and practice of the body of Christ. Though at times hard to read and repetitive, O’Hair’s contribution was unique and significant. □

To be continued:

**Editor’s note:** If possible, we will finish Dr. DeWitt’s and Ross’ article on O’Hair’s writings of the 1940s in our next issue. Should that not be tenable, we will publish directly to our website, along with appendices for the entire article.

<sup>44</sup> A. J. McClain, following some of O’Hair’s fundamentalist opponents, suggested a dual (before cross, after resurrection) offer of the kingdom in *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959; later reprint by Moody Press). I. M. Haldeman, *How to Study the Bible* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia College of Bible, 1904), p. 37, spoke of “the kingdom presented again” to the Jews in Acts. Was this O’Hair’s first acquaintance with this idea? O’Hair says he read this work of Haldeman soon after his conversion.

<sup>45</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *The Dispensationalism of Three Groups of Premillennial ‘Grace’ Bible Teachers* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1940s [date not precisely determined]), p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> O’Hair discusses the “transfer” idea in *Important Facts to Understand Acts*, p. 30, and in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 221. In *Import Facts...*, p. 30, he expresses the view that 1 Peter was written to [Jewish?] members of the body of Christ—an obvious logical outcome of the transfer concept. Its Jewishness can be easily drawn from the address of the book even though many modern scholars disagree with this reading. O’Hair may have first discussed this issue in “Much Ado about Something: Transfer from One Church to Another,” *Bible Study for Bereans*, Oct, 1936, pp. 49-52. But the article actually takes no firm view although it seems to favor the idea that the martyrs (John Baptist, Stephen, James) did become members of the body of Christ since they formerly belonged to the kingdom church which was “transferred” as a whole, that is, they were among those redeemed by Christ.

<sup>47</sup> Recognition of Bullinger’s earlier mid-Acts view of the church’s origin was pointed out by Bryan Ross. This earlier view of Bullinger (1890s) is not well-known in the current Grace Movement.

# Learning Timeless Truths from a Different Perspective

by Jim Shemaria  
Pastor, Celebration Bible Church, Grandville, MI

Part Two in this look at Romans 9-11.

Like virtually everyone, throughout my life I have known about people diagnosed with cancer. I have met people who had cancer, prayed for people or family members of people who had cancer. But, if I'm really honest, my relationship with these people—and this diagnosis—was always as an outsider looking in. There was always enough of a separation, between myself and the patient, that I was able to go on with my life without being too deeply affected by it. But one evening, my mom called me; the doctors had found cancer in her body. Now cancer was not affecting my neighbor, or coworker, or friend—but my mom. In that moment my whole perspective changed. Before, when it didn't really involve me, it was easy keeping my distance, but now it was knocking at my door. I'm thankful I can write that the doctors were able to remove it and my mom is now cancer-free, but it serves as a great illustration for "Part Two" in our study of Romans 9-11, this time in our reading of chapter 11. Because much of this chapter focuses on the future of Israel—a people that many of us know about but remain distanced from—it can be easy to not invest too much time or energy here. However, when we allow ourselves to step into the passage we brush up against some timeless truths about the nature of God that should touch and impact us as much as anyone else.

## A missed opportunity... hooray!

In the last issue, we began working through some of the implications of Romans 11—specifically, the fact that God has not and will never reject Israel. While there have been some adjustments in their relationship, God’s offer of grace, forgiveness, and mercy is on the table for all people (regardless of race, gender, social status, past, etc). This means that Paul’s Jewish brothers and sisters—both during his lifetime and today—are acceptable and loved by God.

But as we read through this chapter, it’s clear that there is something else going on here. While Paul wants to make it known that his people can still enter into relationship with God, there has also been a seismic shift in how God and Israel’s relationship works itself out. In verse 11, Paul asks if Israel has “stumbled as to fall beyond recovery” (NIV), and while we’ve already answered this question (No!), the statement itself presents a noteworthy point—Israel has stumbled.

Paul is referring to the reality that the leadership of Israel had rejected the offer of their long-awaited Kingdom that was made to them in the days and weeks after the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1-7). But let’s back up a bit. Since the earliest days (Gen 12), God had graciously and freely promised to give Israel an inheritance (a Kingdom) that would result in them being His “influencers” in the world. They would have a land. They would have peace. They would have the very presence of God among them. Throughout their history, this promised Kingdom began to be shaped and detailed as God spoke to and through their prophets and leaders. Ultimately, Israel began to expect a chosen king—a Son of David—to come and usher in this Kingdom. But when Jesus traveled throughout Israel and claimed to be this very king (also known as Messiah), he was dismissed by the leaders as a delusional blasphemer. Even after his death and resurrection, as his disciples offered the leadership of Israel a chance to repent and accept Jesus as Messiah, they continued to reject him and his Kingdom. It is their rejection that Paul refers to as the “stumble” in Romans 11. These events shape a very significant period in human history, because it is this rejection that ushers in something new and unforeseen.

Since the time of Abraham, the relationship between God and all of humanity was funneled through the people of Israel. They alone were the connector, the tunnel, or the bridge that made it possible for humans to stay connected to their Creator and Sustainer. But now, things were changing. God was putting that plan aside and profoundly widening the access point. As a result of Israel’s stumble (Rom 11:11-12), the ethnic restrictions were no longer restrictions at all (Eph 2) and righteousness in view of God was available directly to all of humanity. So, Paul says, Israel has stumbled, but that stumble has resulted in something brilliant—a clear path to God for all people.

For most of us, this is where *we* enter the story (Eph 2:18), *both* (Jew and Gentile) having access to God simply through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Obviously this is great for

many, but could be disturbing for others. From the perspective of Israel, this “good news” for the nations would seem more like a demotion than reason for celebration. Moving from “unique” to “equal” was not the way Israel was told their story would end. But amazingly, that’s not the end of the story for the Israel. If it were, there would be some pretty serious questions to ask of God. If God were to graciously (without prompting) promise Israel a Kingdom and an inheritance only to take it away, it would be natural to wonder about this God’s character. If God were to change his stance on this promise, what else would be at stake? For many, it would be really hard to trust the faithfulness of a God like that. So I’m glad I don’t have to.

## OK...wait for it.

Paul eases any tension that may exist between God and his faithfulness by talking about the very real hope that Israel can hold onto when looking to its future. He sums it up when he elegantly states, “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (11:29). It’s how he gets there, however, that instills hope and awe. Paul first borrows imagery from the world of agriculture (11:16-24). Speaking directly to the non-Jewish contingent in his audience Paul calls for humility. Rather than feeling “holier-than-thou” about the fact that Israel’s stumble has led to their own inclusion, Paul challenges them to remember that God is still the one calling the shots. It was the decision of Israel’s leadership to ignore God that caused them to stumble—so the nations should learn from their mistake! And here is where things get interesting. In 11:25-26, Paul reveals that the hardening of Israel is not their final chapter. In fact, from God’s perspective, there is a set closing point to this period in time. When the “full number of Gentiles has come in,” Israel will regain its unique status. And while there are a few different theories about what Paul actually has in mind when he writes about “full number of Gentiles,” this is really not the main focus of this section. What Paul is striving to communicate is the truth that Israel’s role in things has not come to an end. They will be restored and with that restoration comes a whole new world.

## Listen up.

Paul’s world was vastly different from ours. One of the ways this is most evident is in the fluency his audience would have with previously preserved Scriptures and traditions. If you were a Christian (or Jew) living in a culture that was predominantly oral (some could read, but most didn’t) it would be natural to develop a keen knowledge of the Scriptures. No one came to church with their pocket sized Torah scroll, but many could recite and identify key passages and themes from memory. Because of this, Paul could launch into a reference to the Old Testament prophets with the confidence that his audience would know exactly what he was getting at.

*See Perspective, continued on page 17*



**Pastor Gary Hansen writes:** In 2010, in conjunction with the Family Bible Conference theme, “Grace in Action,” the GGF formed a team to encourage churches to respond to God’s grace in our own lives, with the understanding we are “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us” (Eph 2:10). The needs of every community differ, as do the gifts of each member of the Body of Christ. Therefore, the way each church finds to love and serve their neighbors will be different.

Last year, Jeff Rachoy of Mountain View Bible Church in Post Falls, ID, shared Family Promise’s ministry in *Truth magazine*. I asked Liz Gass of Berean Bible Church in Spokane, WA, to write about their work with Broadway Elementary School. It is my hope that Berean’s work in Spokane will encourage your congregation as you pray about ways that your church might serve in your area. If your congregation has ways that you are putting “Grace in Action” in your community, and would like to share your experience as an encouragement to others, please contact me—gary@berean-shoreline.org.

I am a teacher in Central Valley School District and I am constantly hearing about the needs at Broadway Elementary School, which is in one of the hardest socio-economic areas of the Spokane valley. The school has many children who often times do not have both parents present—one’s in jail or one has left the family. Broadway is located just a few blocks from Berean Bible Church, a church I have grown up in.

The past few years God was placing on my heart a burden to make a difference in our church’s surrounding neighborhood. I didn’t know for what, only that I just felt this desire for something. After joining our church’s outreach team I was able to better focus what might be a need our church could help with in the neighborhood, and last January after lots of prayer, I ended up meeting with the principal at Broadway Elementary School.

She was floored that I was sitting in her office asking how to help, no strings attached! She shared that Broadway at the time had *zero* volunteers serving in their school. She said families were either working and couldn’t help, or weren’t motivated to come in and help. She said volunteers are very valuable to a school full of kids with extra needs.

I asked her if she would be willing to allow Bereans to come and volunteer in the school. The door was wide open she replied. She’d take anyone and she would help them get placed wherever they felt most comfortable. As a teacher, I know that this wasn’t how it usually worked. I was very encouraged after meeting with her, no obstacles, just open doors.

Now came time to pray for God’s guidance in helping Bereans who felt called to help, step up and take action. This was going to take the right kind of people who were passionate and also available during the day to help. I shared the opportunity with the congregation and had an immediate response! We ended the school year with eight people volunteering and we started back in the fall with ten. Bereans are volunteering in all areas of the school an hour to four hours weekly, from helping in the office, reading with kids, to just hanging out with kids who need extra attention at lunch. The volunteers say that *they* have been blessed by serving. Many relationships with kids and teachers are being made and God’s love is being shared.

This summer we made contact with Broadway’s PTSA, a small group of parents, all working full-time jobs. They struggle to get help at the school for events. We have offered that Berean might be another avenue of support for PTSA events and they are interested.

A big challenge with this ministry is the time at which it happens, during the workweek and midday, making it hard for just anyone to serve. It takes a person who is available in the middle of the day during the week, just right for a lot of retired folks looking to serve. That’s great, but I’d love to see more community focused events in which a broader group of people could participate. Another challenge, is serving in a public school on school grounds. We can’t speak quite as openly as we might if we had an event at church. This ministry is a wonderful start for connecting with the community, but I am looking forward to some “next steps.”

Our people have definitely been blessed through this ministry. One retired schoolteacher who is volunteering says that it blesses her every time she walks into the school and gets to help these little kids learn to read. Watching their faces light up when they see her makes her day. Another volunteer shared that she feels blessed just to get the chance to be a part of these kids’ and teachers’ lives, getting to know them and interact with them. It’s also nice to feel needed and to feel like someone is looking forward to seeing me each week. Not only are the volunteers sharing God’s love with these kids but they are also receiving love from these kids themselves.

A final note, the Lord really surprised me with the immediate response when I announced the opportunity we had to the congregation. People I would have never expected came up to me and felt like God wanted them to serve in this way. It has been awesome to see God working in the hearts of others. □

*Perspective, continued from page 15*

As he seeks to explain the future of Israel, Paul references Isaiah 29, a key Scripture that shaped what the Jewish people in Jesus' time were expecting. In other words, when Paul writes about a deliverer (the Messiah) coming from Jerusalem to take away sins, it was an idea that would have resonated with many in the audience. This is a very real and literal hope of Israel—one that some may have thought was in vain. When they stumbled, did their Deliverer stumble along with them?

No! It is still happening! The covenant will still be honored! Sins will still be forgiven! God has neither forgotten nor discarded their hope. A lot of details can be examined and reexamined in this passage, but the main focus is clear—Israel has stumbled and God has opened himself to all people, but Israel will one day be reinstated.

### What's the connection?

But the question still remains: How does it effect me? Since the reestablishing of Israel is a future event that will effect a future people, why should I care? Here is where we begin to extrapolate the truth about God that goes beyond any people or place. In the unfolding of this plan we see a God who is ultimately gracious and unwaveringly faithful.

When God first called Abram and established his family (which would become the nation of Israel), he did so out of pure grace—Abram had done nothing to earn this favor, yet God chose to give him more than he could ever hope to imagine. This is important to note because it affirms that God is, always has been and always will be, gracious. While he establishes a framework for living within his blessing, his ultimate gift of righteousness and salvation is rooted in his grace. In one of his most famous passages, Paul claims that today, thousands of years after Abram, it is this same essence of grace that saves us—a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9).

But graciousness is only as good as the commitment behind it. Salvation would be worthless if it could be simply taken away. This is where the faithfulness of God becomes essential. In the outworking of his plan for Israel (that we read about in Romans 11) God once again proves that he is a God that is worth trusting. Perhaps it could be argued that God had the right to permanently revoke, or even reshape, his covenant with Israel after the leadership rejected, killed, and then again rejected his Son, but he didn't. He temporarily shifted gears, but never abandoned nor fully removed his promises. As we reflected earlier—the promises of God are irrevocable because the faithfulness of God is unwavering.

So here are two eternal elements of who God is, but let's not leave it here. In Genesis, we see that humans are created in the image of God. In many ways, we are replicas of God himself. The purpose of a replica is to replicate the Original. If the Original is unfathomably gracious, shouldn't we be as well? If the Original has grace and giving embedded in who he is, shouldn't we as well? God's graciousness is on full display in his choosing of Israel to

be his people. In what ways is it on full display in your life? In the same way, if the Original is unwaveringly faithful, shouldn't we be as well? In his commitment to Israel, God shows himself to go the distance. His promises are irrevocable, so shouldn't ours be as well? Is this same faithfulness on display in your marriage, business, finances, and friendships? If we are truly his image, is he shining through?

This section of Romans presents us with a lot to think about. It, like the rest of the letter, is full of encouragement and challenge. As we strive to be a people who take the Scriptures seriously, it is important that we engage with this passage. God's plan for all people is one of promise, mercy, and grace—all of which we see on display in Romans 9-11. May we never tire of engaging with the Word of God in a way that shapes our lives by the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ. □

*Looking Back, continued from page 3*

which would take another three to four days. I'm sure some of our readers got a few pages out of order, or doubles, or were missing pages altogether in their copies. That personal touch came at no extra charge. Worth noting is that in sixteen years, with four major software upgrades, having added high resolution graphics and, having sought out competitive pricing from printers, GGF is still delivering an exceptional quality product, four times a year, at about the same price we suggested in our original proposal.

It has been my great joy as a representative and editor, first of all, to have worked closely with so many gifted men and women of God over the years as part of the National Council, and secondly, to have collaborated with the GGF and its affiliated organizations—their pastors, missionaries, and lay people contributing material for *Truth*, into which they poured their time and hearts. In the case of the former, I have witnessed amazing loyalty, graciousness, and sacrifice. In the case of the latter, they made my task all the easier by their dedication and commitment to you, the readers of *Truth*. I will miss our exchanges as we labored together to bring to fruition each edition.

I am excited just thinking about the future of *Truth* in the capable hands of our new co-editors, Pastor Tim and Sharon McGarvey. They bring to *Truth* their deeply rooted connections to so many of our Grace organizations and affiliates. In addition, each is currently working closely with GGF administrative assistant Cindy Carmichael who—believe me—is the lifeblood and muscle operating behind the scenes to make all the parts function and bring you your copy of *Truth* in your mailbox and now online in digital “pdf” and “epub” formats. I am confident that *Truth* will continue, as it has for sixty-five years, to stand firm in defense of the gospel of the grace of God entrusted—for us—to the Apostle Paul, in accordance with 2 Timothy 1:8-11; a pledge that has appeared on every *Truth* ever published. And that is worthy of noting. □

Consider, continued from page 7

him and left him for dead (Acts 14:19). Undeterred, he continued to preach the gospel in Derbe and Lystra (Acts 14:20-21), where he planted churches and appointed elders to lead them (Acts 14:23). These churches were founded in the middle of persecution; unlike the church at Antioch, established when persecution elsewhere forced converts to seek refuge there. They were pressed between their godless culture and the wrath of the Jews who hated Paul's message of grace—a mystery kept secret until now (Eph 3:1-7; Col 1:24-29), which taught that through Jesus Christ is “the forgiveness of sins; and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). These are not quite the circumstances most of us would hope for in which to grow a church and attract new people—*let alone youth*.

In spite of this, as Paul passed through the region again—in part to clarify that the Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised nor keep the law to be saved (Acts 16:4)—he came across Timothy (Acts 16:1). About fifteen years later, Paul wrote Timothy exhorting him to not let anyone “despise your youth” (1 Tim 4:12). If Timothy was young when Paul wrote him, he was younger still when Paul recruited him. Not only was he young, but he had a good reputation among the believers in Iconium and Lystra (Acts 16:2). Finding that combination in a young believer is a commodity most churches desire to have and are jealous to protect.

Timothy's church was new and planted in the midst of turmoil and strife. There is little doubt he would have directly and positively impacted its ministry in the region for several years to come. We do not know his church's reaction when he left with Paul to begin his missionary service. However, we do know something about Timothy's legacy. As he and Paul began visiting churches, their impact was immediate. Luke records that as a result of their visits “churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5). At the end of Paul's ministry, he could count on Timothy. Though so many others had forsaken Paul in his chains, he could still rely upon Timothy, charging him “be diligent to come to me quickly” (2 Tim 4:9). There might have been some in Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium wondering what might have been if Timothy had remained close to home. On the other hand, the churches at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and in other cities were glad he chose a life in missions. They were beneficiaries of Timothy's ministry as Paul's right arm of encouragement as they ministered God's grace to the world together.

Your local church may look like the one at Antioch, on the move, with its deep bench of leaders. It might look like a church battling through struggles as were the believers in Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. In either case—or if your church finds itself somewhere in between—there will always be that natural reaction and pull to hold on to those who have significantly touched the life of your church, who have set it on a course to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ. Remember, however, that the Church, the Body of Christ, is an organism; it is dynamic, growing, changing, and

maturing. The practical implication is that the quantity of men and women in our local churches, being nurtured, prepared, and desirous for service unto the Lord is not by definition static, but it increases when godly men and women encourage others to “walk worthy of God who calls [them] into His own kingdom and glory” (2 Thessalonians 2:12); it will only grow! In fact, growing the number of God's servants will mean that there will be even more pastors and missionaries growing the Body for generations to come.

## The Challenge for Local Churches

Those on the broad path leading to destruction (Mt 7:13), the world's teeming masses, those who need to know Jesus Christ as Savior, their numbers continue to increase. Would you challenge your church to send one missionary (or even one more missionary) from your local congregation to serve on the mission field? Set a goal to see this happen in one, two, or even five years.

Here are some practical steps you can take to make this happen: 1). Promote missions in your church. Unless folks develop an understanding of missions they probably will not develop a desire to serve on the mission field either. 2). Take mission trips. 3). Disciple others in their faith so they can mature and serve as they grow in their understanding of the Lord and his Word. 4). Identify persons who might be interested in missions and talk to them about the possibility of serving on the field. 5). Educate yourself about the needs. For example Grace Ministries International has a page on its website ([www.gracem.org](http://www.gracem.org)) dedicated to missionary opportunities.

Losing leaders is hard and losing future leaders can feel deflating. On the other hand, if the perspective changes from *losing* leaders to *sending* God's servants, think about the impact a church can have on the world's lost—which most church members may never meet—by sending them the message of life (Rom 10:14,15). The churches that sent Paul and Timothy, even without the hindsight we have of 2,000 years of church history, were able in their day, during their generation, to see an immediate and profound effect their missionaries had upon the world. Not only were these *sending* churches able to see the difference these men were making, but at Thessalonica, an unbelieving opposition rose up against Paul and Timothy and the truth they came and preached, complaining before the authorities “these who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6). Where will your church send missionaries to turn the world upside down? □

*Clear Sailing, continued from page 5*

motivate others. They often did not have his vision due to their lack of faith, carnality, or simply their self-centeredness. This also may be true of us today in our busy and hurried world. It takes a certain sensitivity and stillness to be able to hear and believe the voice of God as he seeks to direct his people to do his work.

### Modern Example of Vision

In 2011, Grace Bible College's leadership team crafted (what seemed at the time) an extremely ambitious vision. Their vision came out of some long discussions and prayer about God's desires for the College's future. What resulted was a five-year vision which articulated "Grace Bible College, by the year 2016, by God's grace and divine enabling, would be an excellent Biblical university of 1000 or more diverse students (ethnically, age-wise, geographically, and levels of education) who were prepared to dramatically change their respective world." Each word was defined to have clear meaning. The Board of Directors accepted and endorsed the vision in October, 2011, and leadership began to work in all areas of the College, aggressively pursuing the vision.

It is the guiding agenda of all planning meetings, and is reaffirmed yearly as the College works to complete its vision within the remaining months. The college has grown from 200 students to over 800. Academic programs have expanded, reaching a wide diversity of students geographically, ethnically, by age, and now at different levels of education (high school, undergraduate, and graduate studies later this year). At the same time, the leaders of the College are prayerfully seeking the Lord for what his will is for the coming years, and what our destination will be in the year 2020.

May God give clear guidance and faith to humble hearts which seek, perceive, and work with others to discern the Holy Spirit's leading to articulate a vision for your organization! □

#### References:

Malphurs, Aubrey and Gordon E. Penfold. *Re: VISION: The key to transforming your church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014.

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# Leah

FROM BEREAN



## NEWS from GRACE GOSPEL AROUND FELLOWSHIP



Region 2: Southwest  
Chuck Williams

**Grace Bible Church** Anaheim, CA welcomed Tim and Judy Heath at a Saturday breakfast when they arrived for him to serve as Interim Pastor for the month of June. Pastor Tim challenged the people attending with the exciting plans he had for the month. He taught the adult Sunday School class and the Tuesday night Bible study in addition to the Sunday sermons. He and Judy will be missed. □



Region 3: West  
Steve Blackwell

**Harvest Fellowship** (Brighton, CO; Pastors Steve Blackwell & Bob Hill):

Eight college boys and 4 adult men went to Honduras at the end of May to an orphanage to assist in re-roofing, painting, and repairing dorms for the children. They did a great job and were able to evangelize the neighboring areas as well. It was very impactful for them, especially when they heard machine gun fire about a mile away! Our VBS this year was filled with almost 90 kids learning about Jesus. We are also beginning a 2-year evangelism and

spiritual grounding campaign starting this fall. Our Outreach Team goal is to have 500 adults in services by March of 2017. Also with that goal, our Christian maturity goal is to ground and bring to maturity as many as will attend our beginning Christian classes, Bible studies, discipleship classes, and GSOM (our Bible college). May God have his way with us.

**The Point Bible Church** (Westminster, CO; Pastor Jesse Vaught):

We have decided to provide Pastor Jesse with a much needed sabbatical over the summer. In his absence, the work of the ministry will be performed by members of the church, and we will welcome outside guest speakers, too. If you have a desire to minister in Colorado in July, August, or September, please notify Cale Bergh at (303) 464-9327. Feel free to stop in just for a visit, too. This is a season where additional prayer, encouragement, and visits are very much appreciated! [www.point.life](http://www.point.life). □



Region 4: Upper Midwest  
Mark Matychuk & Les Takkinen

Pastor Les Takkinen reporting on summer happenings for **Grace Bible Church** of West Allis, WI, writes that God has given Pastor Randy and him opportunities to share Christ and the gospel of salvation with many—sadly through funerals and with great joy by way of weddings. “God is at work in a number of hearts and lives of our people,” Pastor Les says, “drawing them closer to our great God.” A couple coming to Grace Bible for nearly a year or more have placed their faith in Christ and are thrilled about serving their Lord and Savior!

During the summer months they have introduced an every-other Sunday, VBS program for the kids in the sixth grade and down. It is a time to allow the kids to come to church and be ministered to by our people on their level of understanding. It is a way of sharing God’s truths along with physical activity. His prayer is that many of the kids will invite their friends and the church can share Christ and the gospel with them as well.

We have purchased the rights to show the movie “Do You Believe.” It has been shown in the movie theaters and they will be showing it for the first time Saturday, August 29. Please pray with them as they will have an evangelistic team target an area within the community for the two Saturdays prior. May God be glorified and souls be saved! □



Region 5: Lower Midwest  
Ed Jeude

Ben Anderson of TCM has coordinated the region 5 quarterly meetings. Ben is moving overseas this fall as part of his ministry so his sister Valerie is now office manager of TCM and will continue coordinating the quarterly meetings. Last meeting was in Effingham, IL on May 21 with fifteen participants, eight absent with apology. Next meeting will be 10:45 AM, 8/20/15 at Ryans in Effingham, IL. If you have anything to share, call Valerie at TCM (317 783-0300). We have an assigned room. Come for the fellowship.

Prison Mission Association is celebrating 60 years of ministry during the entire year of 2015. Steve McFarland is GGF region 5 rep for PMA and is setting up presentations in many churches in the region. Please contact Steve, [lakeshiresteve@hotmail.com](mailto:lakeshiresteve@hotmail.com), if you would like a presentation, or more information about their ministries, or Bible correspondence courses.

Approximately eighty young people are gathering regularly at the [Faith Bible Church](#) in Olney, IL.

[St Louis Bible Fellowship](#) is experiencing good growth with new families. Tuesday evening Bible study sees 20-30 regularly. Thursday evening studies address relevant topics, giving Christians a strong basis upon which to formulate strong Biblical answers to questions on current events. The well-known Christian singing group, *The Lesters*, recently performed an evening of excellent Christ-honoring songs.

As part of an ongoing effort to plant new churches in GGF region 5, Don Hosfeld was ordained by St Louis Bible Fellowship. He will be the pastor of an existing Quincy, IL church whose congregation has dwindled to a few and agreed to transfer the entire facility to St Louis Bible Fellowship. The new congregation is [Quincy Bible Fellowship](#) and will have a constitution based upon GGF's Doctrinal Statement.

[St Louis Theological Seminary](#) can provide documentation of needed credentials for those seeking service in furthering the Lord's work. □



Region 6: Southeast  
Phil Cereghino

As most know by now, Phil is stepping down from his editor position with *Truth Magazine*, a role he has filled for sixteen years starting in late 1999. His time on the National Council is also coming to a close, having served as a lay rep since 1996 (he became the Southeast lay rep because Bill Yates stepped down, both men were from [Grace Bible Fellowship](#) in Pinellas Park, FL). As part of the National Council, Phil was also responsible for chairing the Multi-media Committee, which is now vacant at time of printing, and he was also on the Executive Committee for several years. He will continue to be the point of contact for anybody from the Southeast region who wishes to post news in this column, at least until another interested volunteer expresses their desire to coordinate this function. Send your region 6 news to Phil at [ceregpj@comcast.net](mailto:ceregpj@comcast.net). □



Region 10: Central MI  
John Lowder

Great news from Byron Center, MI, where a number of area churches (including [Rush Creek Bible Church](#) and [Frontline Bible Church](#)) just wrapped up their weeklong kids program called "Kids Games!" This year saw over 450 kids in attendance with over twenty of those children making decisions for Christ! What a blessing to be able to build relationships with so many children and families within our community, and having the opportunity to introduce them to the glorious gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord! Thank you to all the churches and volunteers who so generously gave of their time and talents in what was yet another incredible year of ministry through "Kids Games!"

At [Frontline Bible Church](#), we are very excited for the July 31 grand opening of a Tanger Outlet Mall across the street from our church. While this will definitely make our area more congested, we are SO excited that God is bringing many more people around us. How will we impact them for Christ? That has been a huge matter of prayer for us. Being a church in a commercial area is way different from a residential area, and we don't want to waste any opportunities.

Greetings from [Grace Community Church](#) in Belmont, MI. With all the special holidays and events this time of the year, we have been starting and stopping in our new series of messages from Paul's letter to Titus. Our focus in this series is upon Paul's emphasis on encouragement in godliness that comes from correct doctrine, order in ministry, and living the Word of God in our life.

Our congratulations to all the graduates from our churches and Grace Bible College as they begin a new "phase" in life. May God bless these graduates with His love, grace and truth by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. □

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## PRISON MISSION ASSOCIATION Celebrating 60 Years 1955-2015

### "10 Year Vision: Planting Prison Churches"

As PMA celebrates the past 60 years of what God has done, it's a great time to reflect on what God would have us do for the future! We want to uphold the heartbeat of our founder, Joe Mason's vision to "Reach Prisoners for Christ."

With prisons being "the most fertile spiritual harvest field on this planet" we believe the time has come to develop our Bible Correspondence courses with Biblical Leadership and church ministry training to equip them to "Reach Prisoners for Christ" and plant churches in prisons!

To fulfill our mission more effectively this grass roots approach will mobilize the inmates to be part of our ministry to inmates! So in effect, we would be "Helping Inmates Reach Inmates for Christ". Which we feel is the Pauline Biblical model set out in 2 Tim. 2:2. This will help us multiply our outreach to bring the Gospel of the Grace of God to those who need to hear it, are most receptive, and are looking for purpose and meaning to life!

PO Box 2300  
Port Orchard, WA 98366  
[www.prisonmission.org](http://www.prisonmission.org)



Phase 1 (Completed) - We Doubled our lessons we send out now! We are thankful for how God has helped us reach this goal to win more inmates to Christ!

Phase 2 - Establish Regional Hubs for correcting lessons and raise full-time support for the PMA Director. We have started a Midwest hub in Minnesota now to help handle our increased volume of lessons to process. We have had 17 instructors come forward. This phase helps us reach our mission utilizing qualified inmates who have plenty of time to correct lessons! They can distribute lessons saving us postage and faster delivery times as we continue to see our volume explode over the next few years. Pray for many people to invest in God's Vision for PMA!

Phase 3 - Develop Biblical Leadership & Church Planting Ministry Curriculum. There is potential for us to develop a leadership movement that could be huge.

Phase 4 - Training Prison Pastors with Local Church Pastors mentoring help. Finding a local church pastor and church that would adopt this prison Pastor in training and mentor them.

Phase 5 - Celebrate a Multiplication of Prison Churches. Each fully trained PMA pastor in the prison will have their own elders and local leadership for that ministry. When we have our first church planted in a prison, we can duplicate this in all 50 states for the glory of God!

Please pray, give, and volunteer! We need YOUR help to develop this model of evangelism and church planting that will be reproducible and encourage many new churches to be planted across this nation!

For more information contact Pastor Dwight Anderson,  
612-423-3457