



M Grace Messenger

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

122 Walnut Street
Madison, AL 35758
256-837-8821

GBC HOMEPAGES

<http://www.gracemadison-al.com>
<http://sermonaudio.com/gbcmadisonal>

"Preaching the free grace of God which brings a change of lifestyles, masters and destinies."

DEAN OLIVE, Pastor

— February 2010 Issue —

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15).



NURSERY SCHEDULE

February

- 07 Bob & Faye Williams
- 14 Troy & Jessi Moseley
- 21 Jon & Tanya Amis
- 28 David & Mary Alice Olive

March

- 07 Vicki Johnson and Amber Solan
- 14 Linda Olive and Sonja Williams
- 21 Bob and Faye Williams
- 28 Jon and Tanya Amis

CHURCH CLEANING

(please see Jon Amis with questions)

February - Dean & Linda Olive

March - The Moseleys

April - The Moseleys

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF

FEBRUARY 1, 2010

Budgeted expenditures (ytd)	\$ 10,074.83
Actual on-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 9,742.00
Actual off-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 4,000.00
General Fund offerings (ytd)	\$ 13,041.90
Love offerings (ytd)	\$ 0.00
Total offerings (ytd)	\$
14,021.90	
January Love offerings	\$ 0.00
January General Fund offerings	\$ 13,041.90
January Designated Missions	\$ 1,080.00
Haiti Relief (ytd)	\$ 5,080.00
Building Fund balance	\$ 81,486.21
Missions Fund balance	\$ 11,265.95
General Fund balance	\$ 71,154.07

SPECIAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR 2010 AT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

March 18

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Pastor's Fellowship

Preachers: Darrell Lingerfelt,
Don Currin, Paul Washer

May 1-2

Spring Bible Conference with Dr. Michael Haykin

Teaching on our Baptist Heritage
and Preaching on the Trinity

September 17-19

Fall Bible Conference with Scott Aniol

A Conference on God-Glorifying Music

Mark these dates on your calendar and pray that God will be pleased to bless us as we gather for times of instruction, challenge, and mutual encouragement.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

NORMAL SUNDAY SERVICES

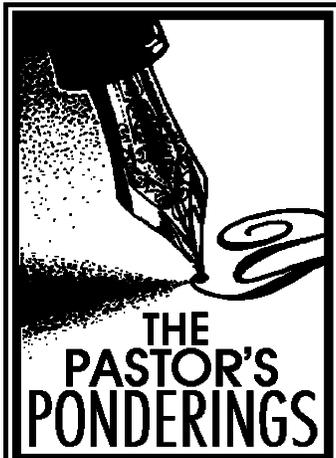
Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Bible Study and Prayer Meeting	7:00 PM
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FIRST SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Dinner at the Church	12:00 Noon
Afternoon Service	1:30 PM
(No Evening Service)	



“God’s Incomparable Love”

Familiarity, if it doesn’t breed contempt, makes us take things for granted. Familiarity with John 3:16 has caused many evangelicals to take it for granted. We memorized it when we were young and we have heard it quoted in hundreds of sermons, so it no longer makes an impression

on us. It has become so familiar that it doesn’t affect us with any degree of greatness and glory.

If we can read John 3:16 and no longer be dumbfounded, amazed, and wonder-struck, we need to rediscover this familiar verse and get a great sense of thanksgiving to God and refreshment for our souls. Its message is overwhelming. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16 is the most well-known verse in the entire Bible, and it deserves to be held in such high esteem. Its message is very simple yet it is deeply profound. John 3:16 is so well-known because it is, as one commentator says, “a confessional summary of the Gospel.”

Someone organized John 3:16 around a word most appropriate to it – greatest. *God* (the greatest Lover) *so loved* (the greatest degree) *the world* (the greatest company) *that he gave* (the greatest act) *his only begotten Son* (the greatest gift) *that whosoever* (the greatest opportunity) *believeth* (the greatest simplicity) *in him* (the greatest attraction) *should not perish* (the greatest promise) *but* (the greatest difference) *have* (the greatest certainty) *everlasting life* (the greatest possession).

The central theme of this text is God’s love. It gives “a masterly and moving summary of the gospel cast in terms of the love of God” (Milne). What God did, in order to bestow on sinful humanity the gift of eternal life, proceeds from his love. Other reasons, such as his justice, are stated elsewhere in Scripture, but here we learn that his love was the cause.

The love in view is divine in origin, not human. It isn’t that man came to his senses and began to love the God he despised. Sinners do not seek the Lord (Isa. 53:6); sinners do not by nature love the Lord (Rom. 5:10; 8:7). But God loves them! God is full of love; in fact, John says in his first epistle, “*God is love*” (4:8, 16). Love exists eternally in the heart of God. And because God is love by his very nature, then loving acts flow out from God to the undeserving.

God is the author of love. He is the original spring or

fountain of love. He takes the initiative in loving us. John Gill said, “Our love is not the cause of his, but his is the cause of ours.” And love is always manifested in giving and God gave the greatest gift of all – his Son. He gave him to be born in Bethlehem’s manger and he gave him to die on Calvary’s cross.

That is how God demonstrated his love. He gave his Son. He didn’t bargain him out for the best price; he didn’t trade him for anything. He freely gave his Son. And by the way, Jesus was not merely passive in this. Jesus also “gave himself for our sins” (Gal. 1:4). Paul said, “He [Jesus] loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Out of love the Father gave him to us and out of love Jesus gave himself for us.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Think about that for a moment. Could you give your child like God gave his Son? Could you give your son up to a cruel death in order to save wretched sinners?

Abraham, more than any other man, knew something of what it was like to give his son (Genesis 22). He was called on by God to offer his son, and this he willingly did, but in the end, his son was spared. Isaac was not offered up but spared when God provided a substitute. But God’s Son was not spared. “He... spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32).

God gave his only Son, his precious Son to save sinners. Ponder that deeply. He gave his Son to be beaten, to be humiliated, and to be nailed to a cross. God poured out his wrath on Jesus in order to pour out his love on us. God placed our sins upon his Son and then imputed his righteousness to us. He punished his Son for our sins. Sinclair Ferguson says, “*We should almost think God loved us more than He loves His Son.*”

What incredible love this is! This was God’s plan of redemption and Christ fulfilled the will of his Father in order to save wicked sinners like you and me. “Learn hence,” the old Puritan, John Flavel said, “the exceeding preciousness of souls, and at what a high rate God values them that he will give his Son, his only Son out of his bosom, as a ransom for them.”

The greatness of God’s gift is in view in John 3:16. Let’s never lose sight of it. And what a great gift it is! “If the depth of love is measured by the value of its gift, then God’s love could not be greater, for his love-gift is his most precious possession—his only, eternally beloved Son. He could not love more” (Milne).

Look at the cross and you will see proof that God really loves sinners and how much he loves them! He gave his one and only Son to die on a cross in order to save us from our sins! Salvation is costly, not to us, but to God; it cost him his Son. O, the incomparable love of God!

BOOK REVIEW



THE UNDERCOVER REVOLUTION: HOW FICTION CHANGED BRITAIN

by Iain H. Murray

Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain saw a megachange in reading habits. For the first time fiction took the first place in book publishing, and the medium was taken up by brilliant and entertaining authors with an agenda for 'a brave new world'. Such men as Thomas Hardy, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw were the opinion-makers for coming generations; yet within their lifetimes the ambition turned to dust in their own experience. Even so, their programme for a secular society went forward, little hindered by the few who rightly foresaw the outcome. In the words of W. R. Inge, 'No God. No country. No family. Refusal to serve in war. Free love. More play. Less work. No punishments. Go as you please. It is difficult to imagine any programme which, if carried out, would be more utterly ruinous to a country situated as Great Britain is today.'



FEBRUARY 7 – The annual church business meeting will be held in the afternoon after the first Sunday meal.

FEBRUARY 18-21 – True Church Conference, Grace Life Church, Muscle Shoals, AL. The theme of the conference is The Quagmire of Hyper-Calvinism. For more information see <http://www.anchoredin-truth.org/tcc10/>

FEBRUARY 20 – Ladies of Grace meet at 9:00 AM.

MARCH 7 – Observance of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the afternoon service.

MARCH 18 – We will be hosting the meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Pastor's Fellowship. The first service begins at 10 AM. Preachers are Darrell Lingerfelt, Don Currin, and Paul Washer. We will provide lunch for the pastors and all who attend.

MAY 1-2 – 2010 Spring Bible Conference with Dr. Michael Haykin. Dr. Haykin will be teaching sessions on Saturday afternoon our Baptist heritage and will be preaching on the Lord's Day on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity.

SEPTEMBER 17-19 – Fall Bible Conference with Scott Aniol. The theme is, "God-Glorifying Music." On Friday evening and Sunday morning we will hear what God's Word says about music; on Saturday there will be sessions about what constitutes good music; and on Sunday evening there will be a sacred music concert. Scott's books and music are available through Amazon and iTunes.

We Believe

The 1689 Confession of Faith

CHAPTER 3 - GOD'S DECREES (paragraph 1)

FROM all eternity God decreed all that should happen in time, and this He did freely and unalterably, consulting only His own wise and holy will. Yet in so doing He does not become in any sense the author of sin, nor does He share responsibility for sin with sinners. Neither, by reason of His decree, is the will of any creature whom He has made violated; nor is the free working of second causes put aside; rather is it established. In all these matters the divine wisdom appears, as also does God's power and faithfulness in effecting that which He has purposed.

Num. 23:19; Isa. 46:10; John 19:11; Acts 4:27, 28; Rom. 9:15, 18; Eph. 1:3-5, 11; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:13; 1 John 1:5.



Ladies of Grace



The Ladies of Grace will hold their next meeting on Saturday, February 20th, at 9:00 AM. The Ladies will be holding a Baby Shower for Jennifer Hale and her baby boy, Isaac. If you have questions, please contact Vicki Johnson.



THE LORD — DISCIPLINES — HIS CHILDREN

Thus saith the Lord, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

See how he dealt with Ananias and Sapphira within the church, while many a liar outside of it grows grey in falsehood. Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord because they offered strange fire, while many another man has lived on in the blackest iniquities. For Achan's sin the whole nation of Israel was sorely troubled. What a solemn thing is iniquity in the church of God!

Stopping or Starting?

Jeremy Walker

Where do you start the process of filtering out the filth that is so prevalent in the media of our age (not that it was lacking in the media of any age, although the methods of delivery are certainly growing in sophistication and accessibility)?

Perhaps you extol the virtue of “the stop button.” This is more of a mental promise or function than a physical reality. You read the description on the back of the DVD, and you undertake to fast forward through the nudity or vulgarity or violence. The warning flashes up on the screen, “Some viewers may find the following scenes disturbing.” The guidance informs you that a film or program “Contains strong language and sexual content.” The blurb on the back of a book hints at passages that will contain descriptions of physical brutality or sexual activity, or the author has a certain reputation. The magazine will have a section dedicated to celebrities in various stages of recreational undress. The link from that image suggests more of the same. The video still offers so much more than that single image. But you will stop or skip those bits. If it is music, you won’t listen to “that track/those tracks” off the album you downloaded, or you will fast forward through the most offensive verse of the song, or will just switch off from those particular lyrics.

Whatever the medium in question, you undertake to resort to the stop button when the content crosses the line. Is that really the best approach?

At your best (and what a sad reality that is), you might draw the line in a healthy place. At your best, you might just follow through with your determination,

and press the stop button, or fast forward through the offensive section. But we are rarely at our best, and our best is often not good enough. Especially once the imagination is engaged, you get set up. Words and images are employed to draw you in. The hook is baited, tantalizing and titivating, raising your expectations and lowering your resistance. By the time “that scene” comes in, your appetite is whetted, your passions are aroused, your sensitivity has diminished, your conscience is seared, and your determination not to sin is fatally compromised.

That fact is that you may well have compromised your determination not to sin when you first laid hands on the stuff. The process may have begun when you read the warning, which acted more as a promise, and lured out remaining sin. As James said, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (1:14-15).

Even if you stop short of the worst excesses, the imagination can carry you places where the media itself would not have taken you. Your sinful heart will fill in the gaps for you. Even if you think you can handle it, there will be times and places when those words, images, and stirred-up reactions and desires will flood back in with a vividness and intensity that – apart from the power of God in Christ – will leave you utterly helpless. Temptation will come calling, and you will have armed him with a bazooka to blow away all your good intentions. You will find that you were not merely observing, you were learning, you were being trained to sin.

If we are believers, should be sailing so close to the wind? We might claim that we have liberty in these areas, but

surely that is the freedom to pursue godliness and not the freedom to flirt with unrighteousness? Are you free to get as close to the edge as possible or free to keep away from it? Those who consistently play on the edge of the cliff are the ones who tend to fall off. The promises of God’s sustaining grace are not given to those who test him by dancing on cliff edges, but to those who – in the way of duty or providence – find themselves walking a dangerous path that they could not avoid. You might say that we must not cut ourselves off from our society and culture, that we need to understand and appreciate the way that people live and think. Fine, but does the need to recognize poison require that you drink it?

Consider, then, that the best thing may be not to rely on the stop button, but not to touch the start button. Do not take the first step on the road, and you will be in no danger of reaching its end, and remember that the path of wickedness is increasingly slippery and steep. You start treading slowly and carefully, and soon find yourself careening and careening without any hope of stopping. Let us learn to flee from sin, and not even to pass the time of day with it. Sin presents itself as a smiling friend; an arm around your shoulder is the best facade for the moment when the assassin plunges the stiletto between your ribs.

Learn the signs, and take them as warnings to your soul and not as promises to your sinful appetites and desires. When the danger is real, forget the stop button. Don’t press start.

Jeremy Walker is pastor of the Maidenbower Baptist Church, Crawly, England. He is also the author of a very fine blog, *The Wanderer*, <http://eardstapa.wordpress.com/>.