

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Deep Doctrine and Passionate Proclamation:
How Understanding the Relationship Between God's Sovereignty
and Evangelism Increases Evangelistic Zeal.**

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Abstract
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The gospel must be accurately communicated to a lost man for that individual to have the opportunity to be saved. It is the responsibility of Christians to be ambassadors of Christ and proclaim this gospel to all men. All Christians can grow in their zeal for evangelism. Many Christians have very little zeal for evangelism due to several reasons. This lack of evangelistic zeal can be increased by a robust understanding of the doctrine of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism. In the Scripture, Christians are taught that doctrine directly affects behavior and action. The more a Christian understands and applies (by the strength of Holy Spirit) God's truth to their life, the greater zeal they will have. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is one that has been misunderstood and neglected for many Christians. This is especially true regarding the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism. Understanding how these two doctrines interlace will result in greater zeal for evangelism in the Christian's life and local churches. This study provided an opportunity for Christians to take a survey to determine their level of evangelistic zeal, then participate in five Bible studies on the doctrines of God's sovereignty and evangelism. Finally, the participants took the same survey after these Bible studies to determine whether the teaching altered their evangelistic zeal in the five-week period.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Romans 10 makes it abundantly clear that unless people hear an accurate gospel presentation, they cannot be saved. Since 10 out of 10 people die, and the Scriptures teach that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27),¹ it is clear that this topic is serious. If an individual does not respond to the gospel in saving faith, they will perish in hell (Matt 10:28). Also, the way in which the gospel message will be heard is through the means of Christians proclaiming it (Rom 10:14). Therefore, Christ’s church is responsible for the dissemination of the gospel (Mark 16:15).

Zeal directly affects the amount of work that gets accomplished. In this case, evangelistic zeal directly affects the amount of gospel infiltration that happens in a community. Three-fourths of Christians who attend church one or more times a month feel as if they are comfortable sharing their faith with unbelievers.² Eighty percent of those say it is their personal Christian responsibility to share the gospel with unbelievers.³ However, 48 percent of those believers had not even asked someone to attend a church service or event in the past six months.⁴ Thirty-three percent say they have done so once or twice in the past six months.⁵ If 80 percent of church-attending Christians believe it is their responsibility to share the gospel, but half will not even invite someone to a church event (much less share the gospel with them), while 75 percent

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version.

² Barna Group, “Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong,” February 5, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/>.

³ LifeWay Research, “Churchgoers Believe in Sharing Faith, Most Never Do,” LifeWay Christian Resources, January 2, 2014, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2014/01/02/study-churchgoers-believe-in-sharing-faith-most-never-do/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ LifeWay Research, “Churchgoers Believe in Sharing Faith, Most Never Do.”

believe they are well prepared to do so, where is the disconnect taking place? Why do they lack the evangelistic zeal to proclaim?

However, another study in 1993 shows that nine out of ten Christians who shared their faith agreed with the statement, “Every Christian has a responsibility to share their faith.”⁶ Today, just two-thirds say so (64%)—a 25-point drop.⁷ Another survey shows the generational difference in thinking about evangelism and evangelistic zeal as well.⁸ Almost half of committed Christians (according to the survey’s standards) in the millennial generation believe that sharing one’s faith with a member of another faith is morally wrong.⁹ If the Barna surveys are correct, then from 1993 until the present millennial generation, not only has evangelistic zeal significantly dropped, but now half of self-professing, committed Christians who attend church at least once a month say that evangelism is morally wrong!¹⁰

These alarming statistics show the state of the current visible church. Evangelistic zeal has decreased, and the reason for this is undoubtedly multi-faceted. For instance, the surveys covered a great variety of “Christian” beliefs. This may be indicative of the fact that many of those surveyed were not orthodox Christians. Also, truly born-again Christians who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will act very different than professing Christians who have no evidence of truly being born again (2 Cor 11:13-15). Christians have a strong desire to share the gospel with all others. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Have you no wish for others to be

⁶ Barna Group, “Sharing Faith Is Increasingly Optional to Christians,” May 15, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Barna Group, “Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!"¹¹ While there are a number of predicating issues with the data, there is also no doubt that evangelistic zeal still wavers among true Christians. There is also much biblical evidence that indicates understanding doctrinal truths has the capability to increase evangelistic zeal in Christians.¹² This last statement is most in line with New Life Baptist Church's situation. There are several professing Christians who have evidence of their salvation who need increased evangelistic zeal.

Ministry Context

The author's ministry context is a small Southern Baptist Church in Pryor, Oklahoma. The church had fifteen members when the pastor began working on his doctorate degree. The church's name is New Life Baptist Church. New Life was in Anadarko, Oklahoma when the pastor began his doctorate work. However, the church eventually decided to relocate to Pryor, Oklahoma. This section will start with the ministry context in Anadarko.

New Life had approximately sixty individuals in attendance when the pastor began pastoring this church. The decline in attendance took place in several waves. The first wave was due to a church split that was taking place since the founding pastor left suddenly. This left many people disillusioned with the current church's ability to continue the services and maintain the church culture that many of them had come to expect. This, of course, eventually led to many people misunderstanding the purpose of church attendance and church membership. This group left because of these reasons within the first two or three months of the new pastor's arrival. There had already been many individuals leave due to this same reason many months prior to the

¹¹ Charles Spurgeon, "Good Cheer from Grace Received," in *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 53: 1907*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons53.i.html>.

¹² Tim Challies, "Be a Zealous Christian!" *Challies*, October 31, 2013, <https://www.challies.com/readingclassicstogether/be-a-zealous-christian/>.

new pastor's arrival. Just a few months before this author became the pastor at New Life the attendance had been around one hundred individuals.

The second wave of people leaving was due to this pastor's different views theologically and, therefore, the differing philosophy of ministry. This inevitably led to a difference in methodology and ministry strategy. The second wave of individuals leaving was due to either a misunderstanding of one of these aspects or an honest disagreement with one of these aspects. One of the differing theological views that greatly impacted the other methodological and strategic aspects of the ministry was their view of soteriology, particularly, the impact of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in evangelism. The founding pastor's perspective on soteriology was much closer to Arminianism, while the author's soteriology would better be defined as Calvinistic. The theological perspective of Arminianism does not always lead to the result that it did at New Life, but in this situation, it led to an evangelistic approach that some call *Decisionism*.¹³ This approach caused many problems including the false conversions of many people. The new pastor began to speak very directly against this teaching. He began calling some of the gospel presentations of those advocating the Decisionism position "false gospels." This was confusing to many of the individuals and angered many others. Thus, this led to the second wave of people leaving.

The third wave of individuals leaving was based solely on preferences. This took place with only a small number of members over a year after this pastor began. These people left because many of the traditional trappings of church were no longer present or they felt that they were no longer valued in the same way. The church began looking at every practice that was taking place within the church and asked the question, "Is this biblical?" The church also began

¹³ R.L Hymers Jr. and Christopher Cagan, *Today's Apostasy: How "Decisionism" is Destroying Our Churches* (Oklahoma City, OK: Hearthstone Publishing, 2001), 1.

asking a second question, “Does this help us fulfill our mission?” These two questions allowed the church to increase its ministry opportunities greatly regarding necessary items. These questions also allowed them to hone their mission considerably. This caused only those members who were consistently engaged with the overall mission of the church to remain. It was a very difficult time. It was also a time of great blessing.

The result of this exodus was that New Life was very close, and they were able to begin building meaningful membership. They truly were a family. They were able to ask the question, “what does the Bible say?” They were all willing to implement whatever the Bible said to implement. If they could be persuaded that the Bible taught it, then they were willing to make that change. There were fifteen members at the time the author brought up the prospect of the classes about God’s sovereignty and its relationship with evangelism. This survey was interesting because most of the individuals in the church were already pursuing evangelism conversations. The church was filled with people who were serious about their faith at this point.

Before presenting these classes, the pastor had taught on God’s sovereignty and most of the people understood his position on the topic. The pastor also spoke considerably on the topic of evangelism. Since they were such a small group and closely knit together, evangelism was the primary focus of the mission at this time. They were constantly encouraging one another in this area. However, a deeper doctrinal understanding of the concept of God’s sovereignty had not yet been explored. Also, there was never any discussion of Calvinism and Arminianism until the classes. Therefore, this group of individuals never had an in-depth study of the relationship between God’s sovereignty and evangelism.

Ministry Context – Location

New Life Baptist Church was in Anadarko, Oklahoma. Anadarko has some unique

character traits about it. First, it is known as “Indian City, USA.”¹⁴ This of course refers to Native Americans. Several Native American plains tribes have their headquarters in Anadarko.¹⁵ Examples of some of these tribes are the Apache, Kiowa, and Wichita tribes.¹⁶ These tribes were historically poorer tribes after certain unfavorable treaties from the United States government during the Western Settlement after the Civil War.¹⁷ One famous example of this kind of unfavorable treaty is the Medicine Lodge Treaty.¹⁸ This treaty (and the US government breaking it) had negative effects for a number of plains Indians.¹⁹ Indian families have 50 percent less annual income than whites.²⁰ Native Americans have had struggles in suicides, drunkenness, and drug abuse.²¹ The city has a great deal of poverty and substance abuse.²² Most of the city is either Native or have family members who are Natives.²³ This is only true for the city of Anadarko and not for the surrounding cities. While there is certainly an Indian presence in these other cities,²⁴

¹⁴ Anadarko Chamber of Commerce, “About Us,” accessed April 6, 2020, <http://anadarkochamber.org/about/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lorraine Boissoneault, “How the 1867 Medicine Lodge Treaty Changed the Plains Indian Tribes Forever.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 23, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-1867-medicine-lodgetreaty-changed-plains-indian-tribes-forever-180965357/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Thurman Hester, *Political Principles and Indian Sovereignty* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 6.

²¹ Ibid, 5.

²² Mickey Noah, “Ministering to Native Americans in Kansas,” *SBC LIFE*, February 1, 2009, <http://www.sbclife.net/article/1761/ministering-to-native-americans-in-kansas>.

²³ United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Anadarko, OK,” Population Estimates, July 1, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/anadarkocityoklahoma>.

²⁴ United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Lawton, OK,” Population Estimates, July 1, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lawtoncityoklahoma>.

these cities cannot claim Native American as the majority ethnicity.²⁵ These factors created a unique ministry context for New Life Baptist Church. Native Americans have been a difficult people group to reach in the United States despite the tremendous missions effort that has been directed their way in the past.²⁶ This data of course is based on a definition of “missions” that may or may not be a biblical definition. This fact, many have said, comes from the historical connection between Christianity (and what has been perceived to be Christianity) and white European dominance over the native tribes. Daniel Goombi, a missionary to Indian reservations in Kansas said, “They believe God is still a white man's God because of the history Native Americans experienced with organized religion.”²⁷ This kind of thinking has been the pastor’s experience as well. Christianity was considered by many Natives to be the “white man’s religion.”²⁸ The author would point out the reality that, historically speaking, Christianity was a “brown man’s religion” that was brought to his white pagan ancestors, and now he was bringing the gospel to them. Some Native American tribal leaders eventually began attending the services although they never became members. Many of the members were either Native or had family who was Native. They were concerned with being a family in Christ and not so much in the details of cultural preference. However, the broader context of this community did have a great effect on the way they evangelized. Also, the culture of Anadarko greatly affected their membership in a variety of ways.

Directly before the research project portion of the doctorate degree, the pastor of New

²⁵ United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Chickasha, OK,” Population Estimates, July 1, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/chickashacityoklahoma>.

²⁶ David Roach, “Native American Evangelism: Past and Present Examined,” *Baptist Press*, August 1, 2017, <http://www.bpnews.net/49293/native-american-evangelism-past-and-present-examined>.

²⁷ Noah, “Ministering to Native Americans in Kansas.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Life Baptist Church had a business opportunity in a town in Northeast Oklahoma. The town was Pryor, Oklahoma. The Anadarko area was struggling economically, and the pastor had a young family. Since church attendance had dropped significantly there was not very much pay for the pastor and his family. After discussing this situation with the church family, they came to an interesting conclusion. The church decided to allow the pastor to replant New Life afresh in Pryor, Oklahoma. At this point, there was three families and two singles attending consistently. Everyone had another church to attend, and one single man has decided to join the work in Pryor. This unique opportunity allowed all members to continue in their spiritual growth as well as become a part of a mission to Pryor, Oklahoma.

The context of Pryor is very different than that of Anadarko. The ethnic makeup is very different. The following is a chart showing the ethnic diversity of Anadarko compared to Pryor²⁹

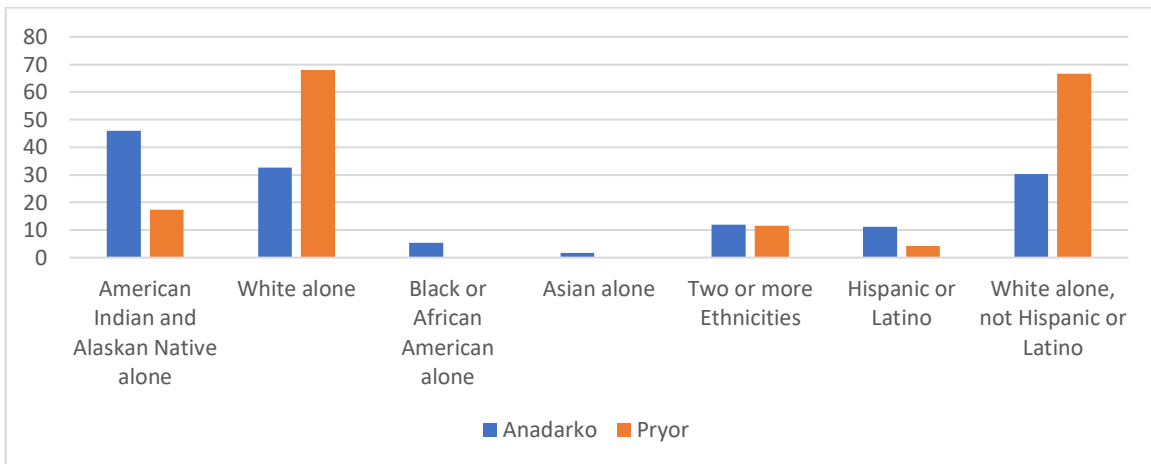


Figure 1. Ethnic Differences Between Anadarko, OK and Pryor, OK.

There are other differences as well. One difference is that the economic opportunity in the Pryor area is much greater than in Southwest Oklahoma. There are many factories and jobs

²⁹ United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Anadarko, OK”; United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Pryor Creek, OK,” Population Estimates, July 1, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/pryorcreekcityoklahoma>.

available. This creates a better economy all around. Google has a data center just outside of Pryor.³⁰ It is one of thirteen data centers that Google has throughout all North America.³¹ Since they have moved the church’s location, three families have joined the church plus the one single who is helping in the ministry work.

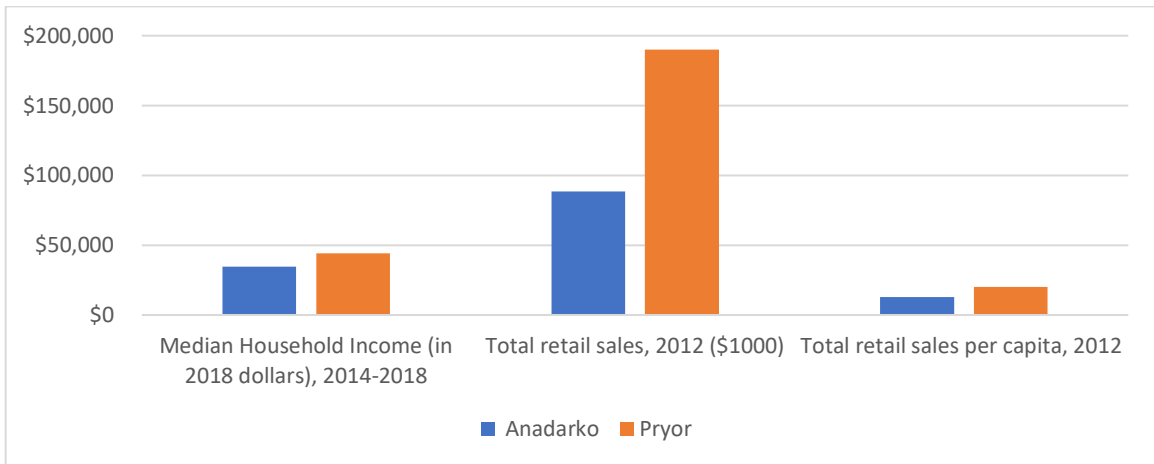


Figure 2. Economic Comparison of Anadarko, OK and Pryor, OK.

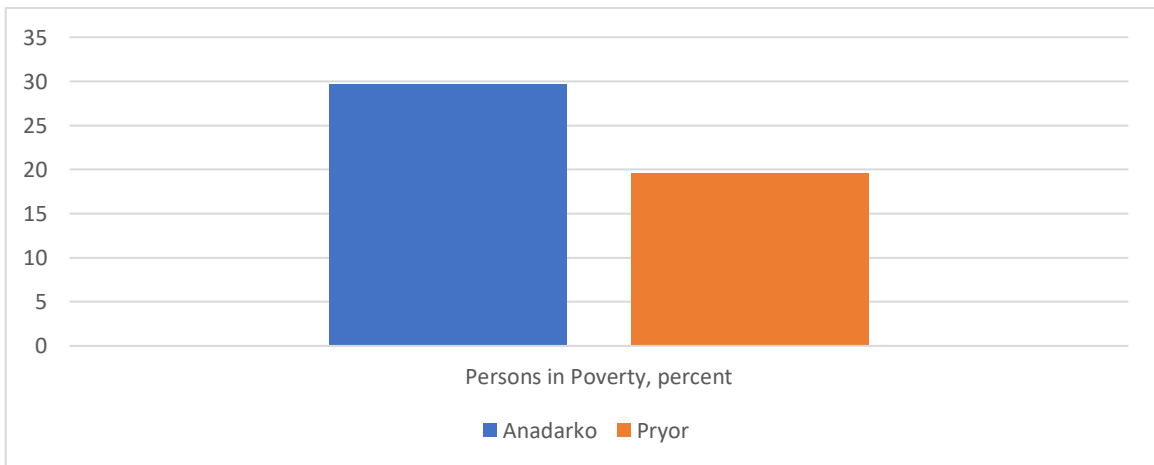


Figure 3. Poverty Comparison of Anadarko, OK and Pryor, OK.

³⁰ Google Data Centers, “Google is Proud to Call Oklahoma Home to One of our Data Centers,” accessed April 2, 2020. <https://www.google.com/about/datacenters/locations/mayes-county/>.

³¹ Ibid.

Ministry Context – Southern Baptist Convention

Another distinction about their church was that they were part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This played a significant role in their church's life, especially in the beginning of the pastor's time there. The significance of their association with the SBC also influenced greatly their understanding of God's sovereignty and their role in evangelism. During the pastor's time in this ministry, the Southern Baptist Convention was directly in the middle of a controversy that is still prevalent (although not as intense) today.³² This controversy was the controversy between Calvinists and what has commonly been called the "Traditionalists."³³ There have been two primary views in regard to the history of soteriology within the Southern Baptist Convention.³⁴ There are those who would say the majority of original Southern Baptists were General Baptists, and others would say that most churches were Particular Baptists.³⁵ This debate has arisen anew within the past decade due to the rise in Calvinistic soteriology within the Southern Baptist Convention during this time.³⁶ This conversation had a real impact upon their local church and especially in this conversation of God's sovereignty in relation to evangelism. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the history of the Southern Baptist Convention and to see the differing opinions of Soteriology throughout its history. This will help to clarify the ministry

³² Russ Rankin, "SBC Pastors Polled on Calvinism and Its Effect," Lifeway Christian Resources, June 19, 2012, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/research-sbc-pastors-polled-on-calvinism-affect-on-convention>.

³³ Eric Hankins, "A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation," <https://ncbchurch.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/A-Statement-of-Traditional-Southern-BaptistSoteriology-SBC-Today.pdf>.

³⁴ Jeff Robinson, "Are Southern Baptists Cousins to the Anabaptists?" Founders Ministries, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://founders.org/2016/12/14/are-southern-baptists-cousins-to-the-anabaptists/>.

³⁵ Steve W. Lemke, "History or Revisionist History? How Calvinistic Were the Overwhelming Majority of Baptists and Their Confessions in the South until the Twentieth Century?" *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 227-254. https://swbts.edu/sites/default/files/images/content/docs/journal/57_2/57.2%20History%20or%20Revionist%20History%20Lemke.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid.

setting of this specific local church.

Ministry Context – Southern Baptist Convention History

The Baptist movement was a movement that was born out of the Reformation.³⁷ The great majority of the early Baptists were Calvinistic.³⁸ They were called Particular Baptists. This name referred to the Baptist church's view on limited atonement.³⁹ Particular Baptists believed that Jesus died for particular individuals, in regard to the atonement. These individuals would be saved because God had predestined them to be saved. Thus, when Jesus died, He died (in an atoning manner) only for those who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.⁴⁰ The General Baptists believed that the atonement was for all men, throughout all time.⁴¹ This universal atonement was only applicable to those who would receive Jesus Christ by faith. Therefore, some would have their sins atoned for, reject it, and would not be forgiven.⁴² These were the two primary views in the early Baptist movement. The Southern Baptist Convention emerged from multiple churches joining in association.⁴³ The driving soteriology that led to the creation of the Southern Baptist Convention will be explored in the following paragraphs.

³⁷ Tom Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1986), 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1984), 115.

⁴⁰ Rick Phillips, "Did Jesus Die for Everyone?" Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, July 7, 2002, <https://www.tenth.org/resource-library/articles/did-jesus-die-for-everyone>.

⁴¹ Tom Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, vol. 1, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity* (Wiltshire, UK: Cromwell Press, 2005), 76.

⁴² Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 115.

⁴³ Tom Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, vol. 2, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity* (Wiltshire, UK: Cromwell Press, 2005), 250.

King Henry VIII of England broke away from the Roman Catholic church in 1533.⁴⁴ This led to the creation of the church of England or the Anglican church. While the Anglican church was Reformed regarding its soteriology, much of their practice needed reformation.⁴⁵ This was primarily in two places. First, the Anglican church had become relaxed morally.⁴⁶ Secondly, the surface-level trappings and religious garb was very similar to that of the Roman Catholic church.⁴⁷ Since these things were so, there were some in the Anglican church who recognized these problems, and they began to speak out and seek to reform the church. These people were called the Puritans.⁴⁸ They were seeking to purify the Anglican church from the inside. However, there was another group who felt that the Anglican church was too far gone. This group was called the Separatists because they wanted to separate themselves from the Anglican church.⁴⁹

Separating from the Anglican church was a minority position, but groups did this because their consciences were unable to participate in the practices of the state church.⁵⁰ By separating and holding their own worship services, they were committing a crime. One group that began separating themselves from the state church was the church led by John Smyth. John Smyth's congregants eventually left England due to increasing persecutions.⁵¹ They fled their homes in England and made their way to Holland. While in Holland, John Smyth contacted some

⁴⁴ Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 111.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁸ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 972.

⁴⁹ Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 59.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

evangelical Anabaptists, or Mennonites.⁵² He began slowly adopting many of the practices of these Mennonites.⁵³ He eventually led his congregants toward many of these practices.⁵⁴ He had already become convinced about believer's baptism, which is where their name came from in the first place.⁵⁵ Believer's baptism is the belief that baptism is only for those who have previously been saved. This is in contrast with the great majority of people who practiced infant baptism. Infant baptism was the belief that baptism was for the entire household, whether the young ones had believed yet or not. The Christians were to baptize their children as infants as a recognition that the children are participants in the covenant.⁵⁶ This is also why the Baptists were sometimes called Anabaptists like the Mennonites and other groups.⁵⁷ *Anabaptist* simply means re-baptizer. This name was given to these Anabaptists since basically everyone else within Christendom was baptized as an infant. While Baptists were sometimes lumped into the same Anabaptist title, the term Baptist was adopted and utilized very early on as a distinction between the Baptists and the Mennonites.⁵⁸ The other members of Smyth's church had been convinced of believer's baptism previously as well.⁵⁹ However, during this time he grew more and more radical in his doctrine. He grew distant in his doctrine due to his conforming views toward Mennonite doctrine, such as

⁵² Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 65.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁶ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 133.

⁵⁷ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010).

⁵⁸ Robinson, "Are Southern Baptists Cousins to the Anabaptists?"

⁵⁹ Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 53.

his changing views on Christology.⁶⁰ Then he began trying to get his church to become Mennonite. This eventually led to a church split. John Smyth and those who followed him in his doctrine stayed in Holland with the Mennonite church.⁶¹ Thomas Helwys, a close friend to John Smyth, was a prominent member of the church for a long time. However, rifts began to take place as John Smyth continued to grow in his similarities to the Mennonite congregations.⁶² Eventually, Thomas Helwys divided from John Smyth and they left Holland.⁶³ They decided to return to England under Helwys' leadership in 1612.⁶⁴ While there in England, they started a Baptist church in England.⁶⁵

These Baptists were known as General Baptists due to their departure from the dominant view of soteriology that can be defined as Calvinistic. Eventually, the General Baptists in England dramatically decreased in size and influence.⁶⁶ There were many reasons for this decline. The reasons for this decline were multifaceted. However, many General Baptist churches had succumbed to the Unitarian and Socinianism heresies that had long plagued the General Baptists.⁶⁷ The logic in the heretic's thinking was that since Jesus died for everyone, it was inevitable that everyone would one day become saved.⁶⁸ To some, this was the only logical

⁶⁰ Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 66-67.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

solution to the atonement issue. Since *atonement* speaks of a payment that has already been paid, it would seem reasonable to think that whoever has their sin paid for will also be forgiven. This combined with the teachings of Thomas Paine and Deism, as well as the general moral decline in England, eventually led to the great decline of the General Baptists.⁶⁹

The Particular Baptists did not evolve from John Smyth and the General Baptists as many have assumed in the past.⁷⁰ The Particular Baptists can trace their existence independently from the General Baptists or the Anabaptists. These individuals were from the Reformed tradition but differed from the typical reformers in a couple of significant places. The First London Baptist Confession is a very early confession that comes from the Particular Baptists in 1644.⁷¹ In it one can see that this group was very similar to the Reformed position that would be expressed in the later Westminster Confession of Faith.⁷² A completely independent group of Separatists gathered to form what was later called the JLJ church. This church was named after its first three pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lathrop, and Henry Jessey.⁷³ The church was formed by Separatists desiring to follow God's Word as it is written. Due to a variety of theological differences, many groups divided from the JLJ church over the next twenty years, including one that was led by a John Spilsbury. John Spilsbury was concerned about the church's view on baptism.⁷⁴ While Spilsbury's church was changing its understanding of baptism, another group from the JLJ

⁶⁹ Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 106.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁷¹ Elders and Brethren of London and the Country, "The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689," <https://www.monergism.com/london-baptist-confession-faith-1689-ebook>.

⁷² The Presbyterian Church in America, "The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms," 2007, <https://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/WCFPreface.pdf>.

⁷³ Gordon L. Belyea, "Origins of the Particular Baptists" *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007): 40-67. <https://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/origins-of-the-particular-baptists/>.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

church became convinced of the proper mode of baptism, namely immersion.⁷⁵ This led to yet another branching out from the JIJ church. It seems as if all these church divisions were friendly divides. There was no hostility nor hard feelings toward one another.⁷⁶ In the First London Baptist Confession there is, for the first time, a Baptist document that states the necessity of immersion in the practice of baptism.⁷⁷ The mode of baptism was never the primary focus of the Particular Baptists. It was the natural outworking of their biblical hermeneutic. These Particular Baptists were not hostile toward Presbyterians or the JIJ church from whence they came. In many regards, it seems as if they desired to be companions with them.⁷⁸ Eventually, seven Particular Baptist congregations were established in London. These seven churches then composed the very popular (among Reformed Baptists) First London Baptist Confession.⁷⁹ This confession addressed many doctrinal issues. One of the primary distinctions in this document was the desire to be distinguished as independent from the Anabaptists (this group was mostly Mennonites) as well as the General Baptists.⁸⁰ They seemed to have an understanding that the General Baptists were more hostile and radical in their relationship with the governing authorities, and they wanted to make sure the distinctions between the “re-baptizers” were clear.⁸¹

Charles Spurgeon and William Carey were two influential British Baptists. Their

⁷⁵ Belyea, “Origins of the Particular Baptists.”

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Elders and Brethren of London and the Country, “The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.”

⁷⁸ Belyea, “Origins of the Particular Baptists.”

⁷⁹ Elders and Brethren of London and the Country, “The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.”

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Shawn Wright, “Should You Use the 1689 London Confession in Your Church?” 9 Marks, March 1, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/should-you-use-1689-london-confession-your-church/>.

theology and how their theology affected their evangelism strategies is important to understand. These men influenced many and shaped Baptist life. They have had an impact on Baptist life all the way to current times. Spurgeon was a Particular Baptist. His theology pressed him to do evangelism. He was a zealous evangelist. He believed that a person needed to use all of his effort and resources to evangelize. Spurgeon says, "If you have saved a soul from death, you have introduced it into eternal life; by God's good grace, there will be another chorister amongst the white-robed host to sing Jehovah's praise, another hand to smite eternally the harpstrings of adoring gratitude, another sinner saved to reward the Redeemer for His passion. Oh, the happiness of having saved a soul from death"⁸² Spurgeon was zealous about evangelism while simultaneously zealous about the doctrines of grace. He said this about Calvinism:

[T]here is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation.⁸³

The Baptist churches today have been influenced greatly by Charles Spurgeon. Baptist churches are greatly influenced by Spurgeon's evangelism zeal. Also, the style of his preaching and his evangelism strategy seems to have great influence. Charles Spurgeon is a historic name that seems to impress and influence many men from various streams of Baptists.

William Carey believed in God electing certain individuals for salvation. He also

⁸² Charles Spurgeon, "The Soul Winner," The Spurgeon Archive, <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/misc/soulwinr.htm>.

⁸³ Charles Spurgeon, "A Defense of Calvinism," The Spurgeon Archive, <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/calvinis.htm>.

believed that only God has the ability to save a sinner. He wrote this in partnership with Joshua Marshman and William Ward for the Brethren of the Mission at Serampore in order to ensure that they were working within their shared convictions while working at the mission: “We are sure that only those who are ordained to eternal life will believe, and that God alone can add to the church such as shall be saved.”⁸⁴

He believed in the means of men’s salvation, which is Christian’s evangelizing. In his *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, Carey says, “This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation.”⁸⁵ Carey wrote *An Enquiry* to persuade the hyper-Calvinists in his midst that evangelism and missionary endeavors are the church’s current marching orders. William Carey’s passion for missions, insistence on the current application of the Great Commission, and the concept of a missionary society are all contributions that have significantly shaped Baptist life and evangelistic strategies.

We have now seen the origin of both the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. So how do these two groups affect the Southern Baptist Convention? In what ways were the Southern Baptists influenced by either the Particular or General Baptists? In colonial United States, Baptist churches were founded right around the same time period as the Baptist

⁸⁴ William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, “Form of Agreement,” *Serampore* (Calcutta: Brethren’s Press, 1805).

⁸⁵ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, England: Ann Ireland, 1792), 7.

congregations in England.⁸⁶ Roger Williams started a Baptist church in 1638 in Providence.⁸⁷ This was the first Baptist church on American soil.⁸⁸ William's understanding of soteriology was primarily Calvinistic in the beginning of his ministry.⁸⁹ However, as time passed, he eventually departed from the traditional Reformed understanding of Ecclesiology and began believing in a restitution-like church model.⁹⁰ There were several General Baptist churches in colonial America. However, they were disbursed in such a way that they had a significantly smaller impact on American Baptist life before the start of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁹¹

The Particular Baptists in America began being developed at the same time as the Particular Baptists in England. Eventually, the Particular Baptist churches in the Philadelphia area joined to form the first Baptist association in colonial America.⁹² This strategy of associational mission fellowships became a very popular way in which American Baptists conducted much of their missions' endeavors.⁹³ Associations connected to the Philadelphia Baptist Association began forming all over colonial America.⁹⁴ Also during the Great Awakening, Particular Baptist churches exploded with growth.⁹⁵ This led to associations starting

⁸⁶ Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, 37.

⁸⁷ First Baptist Church in America, "Who are the Members of the First Baptist Church in America?" <https://www.firstbaptistchurchinamerica.org/who-are-the-members-of-the-first-baptist-church-in-america/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, 37

⁹⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁹¹ Ibid., 130.

⁹² Ibid., 75.

⁹³ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 167.

and sending out men into the westward expansion. Throughout the West, Baptist churches were being planted and rapidly expanding in membership. Most of these churches were Particular Baptists. However, during this time General Baptists who were more conservative in their faith and practice began joining Baptist churches whose leadership were Particular Baptists. All these Baptist associations eventually understood the next step for them was to send out more missionaries into the field.⁹⁶ This zealous view of missions was met by stark opposition. The opposing side in this argument were those deemed as the *hyper-Calvinists*.⁹⁷ These hyper-Calvinists believed that missions and evangelism were not necessary since God has already preordained who would and who would not be saved.⁹⁸ It is critically important to remember that the ones opposing the hyper-Calvinists were the Calvinists,⁹⁹ most notably, the Particular Baptists.¹⁰⁰ This struggle for the acceptance of missions agencies and support for missionaries eventually led to many believing that the hyper-Calvinists were the true Calvinists and therefore many churches who were “pro missions” did not want to be identified with Particular Baptists.¹⁰¹ Therefore, over time the Particular Baptists became less popular. Most Baptists in and after the 1830s confirmed the 1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith.¹⁰² This confession is less explicitly Reformed.¹⁰³ Even though some Baptists during this time became less Reformed, there

⁹⁶ Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, 76.

⁹⁷ Phil Johnson, “A Primer of Hyper-Calvinism,” 1998, <http://www.romans45.org/articles/hypercal.htm>.

⁹⁸ Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, 290.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁰² J. Newton Brown, “The New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” 1833, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://baptiststudiesonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/the-new-hampshire-confession-of-faith.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Robinson, “Are Southern Baptists Cousins to the Anabaptists?”

was still a very strong group of Particular Baptists.

In 1845, a number of Baptist churches decided to create their own association distinct from the northern Baptists. This was due to the issue of slavery and the way that the northern Baptists were treating the southern church leaders since they owned slaves.¹⁰⁴ This split is what initially caused the Southern Baptist Convention to come into existence. During this time, the Southern Baptist Convention (and likewise, the northern Baptists) was heavily involved in missions.¹⁰⁵ Missions was the primary purpose of the convention to begin with. There were only Calvinists in the Southern Baptist Convention in the beginning. “All 293 delegates who assembled in Augusta, Georgia in 1845 to form the SBC, came from churches or associations that held to the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* or *Charleston Confession of Faith* (which is almost verbatim the *London Baptist Confession* of 1689). There was a clear, theological consensus among Southern Baptists at the inception of the convention.”¹⁰⁶ Calvinism was the perspective of the leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention. Those leaders who were prolific writing theologians had great influence among the other churches. “Writing theologians have influence,” Dockery explains, “and it was the denomination's Calvinist theologians that wrote, such men as James P. Boyce and John Dagg.”¹⁰⁷

Under these men’s leadership, the Southern Baptist Convention remained very Calvinistic and Reformed. However, going into the 20th century, the Southern Baptist

¹⁰⁴ Nettles, *Beginnings in America*, 249-250.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Aschol, “Why Stay in the SBC?” Founders Ministries, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://founders.org/2017/05/18/why-stay-in-the-sbc/>.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Ranger Walker, “Dockery: Calvinism has Roots in SBC History,” *Baptist Press*, August 6, 2012. <http://www.bpnews.net/38430/dockery-calvinism-has-roots-in-sbc-history>.

Convention began to focus less on the Reformed roots from which they emerged.¹⁰⁸ This exodus from Reformed thought became more and more clear as the years went by. The 19th Century stage of Reformed thinking in the Southern Baptist Convention can be described as the Calvinistic stage. Starting in 1899, with the election of E.Y. Mullins, the convention leaned heavily toward a revivalist church mentality, with a focus on personal experience and personal piety.¹⁰⁹ This second stage could be labeled the *Personal Experience Stage*. Then, during the middle of the 20th Century, a focus on events and programs became prevalent. This stage can be called the *Program Stage* of the Southern Baptist Convention. During this time, influential voices such as Herschel Hobbs¹¹⁰ and Adrian Rogers¹¹¹ promoted a view of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility that was neither a confessional Calvinist perspective nor a historic Armenian perspective. It was, in a sense, a middle way.¹¹² This stage led into the next phase of the SBC. This time could be described as a time of a decline in numbers.¹¹³

During the 1990s and early 2000s, two movements within the larger Christian movement began making headway. These were the *Seeker-Sensitive* movement and the *Emergent Church*

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, "Are Southern Baptists Cousins to the Anabaptists?"

¹⁰⁹ Edgar Young Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (1908; repr., London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 9-10.

¹¹⁰ David S. Dockery, "The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907-1995)," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 62-78. https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2010/07/sbjt_071_spr03_dockery.pdf.

¹¹¹ Adrian Rogers, "Reformed Theology," accessed April 1, 2020. http://www.christianarsenal.com/Christian_Arsenal/Bible_Study_Lessons_files/ReformedTheology.pdf.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Carol Pipes, "Giving Increases for SBC in 2018, Baptisms, Attendance Continue Decline," *LifeWay Newsroom*, May 23, 2019, <https://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2019/05/23/giving-increases-for-sbc-in-2018-baptisms-attendance-continue-decline/>.

movement.¹¹⁴ This led many people to begin looking and asking where they can find a deeper, richer theological understanding of their faith. The community and authenticity within these kinds of gatherings seemed genuine; however, there was a lack of theological depth. Soon the emergent church turned into the same kind of the theological liberalism that was prevalent during the early 20th Century.¹¹⁵ These factors led many within evangelicalism (including the SBC) to search elsewhere for answers and theological meaning and purpose.

While these things were taking place, there was simultaneously multiple Reformed teachers and preachers who were gaining popularity. Some of these leaders were men such as John MacArthur, John Piper, and R.C. Sproul. These teachings gained great popularity due to new, popular means of communication that had become very accessible to nearly everyone in the developed world, namely the internet. These men brought with them another generation of pastors and teachers such as Albert Mohler, Mark Dever, and Ligon Duncan. Most importantly for this discussion is Albert Mohler. Mohler is the President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, the flagship seminary in the Southern Baptist Convention.¹¹⁶ As *New Calvinism*, as Time magazine termed the movement,¹¹⁷ grew in popularity, more Southern Baptist theology students were drawn toward Southern Seminary.¹¹⁸ This led to more and more Reformed Baptist pastors leading Southern Baptist churches around the world. As

¹¹⁴ Ernest C. Reisinger and D. Matthew Allen, *A Quiet Revolution: A Chronicle of Beginnings of Reformation in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Cape Coral, FL: FoundersPress, 2000).

¹¹⁵ Albert Mohler Jr., “We Have Seen All This Before: Rob Bell and the (Re)Emergence of Liberal Theology,” March 16, 2011, <https://albertmohler.com/2011/03/16/we-have-seen-all-this-before-rob-bell-and-the-reemergence-of-liberal-theology/>.

¹¹⁶ The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.sbts.edu/>.

¹¹⁷ David Van Biema, “The New Calvinism,” *Time*, March 12, 2009, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1884779_1884782_1884760,00.html.

¹¹⁸ James A. Smith Sr., “Southern Seminary Trustees Mark Record Student Enrollment,” *Southern News*, October 14, 2015, <https://news.sbts.edu/2015/10/14/southern-seminary-trustees-mark-record-student-enrollment/>.

Reformed Baptists became more and more influential among the Southern Baptists, conflict began to arise.¹¹⁹ There were serious concerns from non-Calvinists about the potential lack of evangelistic zeal and fervor in Calvinist leaders.¹²⁰ Also, they were concerned with the impact that Calvinism as a movement would have upon evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention.¹²¹ This concern about the relationship between one's belief about the sovereignty of God and evangelistic zeal has had direct impact upon our local church as well. This has taken place primarily within associational life.

Problem Presented

Two thousand years ago, directly before Jesus ascended into the sky, He gave His disciples their marching orders. The marching orders were very clear. He said to preach the gospel to every person on earth (Mark 16:15). We have had more than 2,000 years to accomplish the Great Commission. The concept of evangelism is foundational to everything else within the Christian life. If we do not preach (proclaim) the gospel to the lost, they will have absolutely no opportunity to be saved (Rom 10:14). Romans 10 is very clear. If someone does not hear the gospel message, then they have no way of believing the gospel; and if they do not believe, their sins cannot be forgiven and therefore they must pay the just punishment for their own sins (Rom 10:14; Rom 6:23).

Evangelism is not all that we are supposed to be doing in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-21). However, evangelism is the first step in disciple-making. Without evangelism, an

¹¹⁹ Rankin, "SBC Pastors Polled on Calvinism and Its Effect."

¹²⁰ Ernest Reisinger, "What Should We Think of Evangelism and Calvinism?" *Founders Journal* 19/20 (Winter/Spring 1995), <https://founders.org/1995/03/24/what-should-we-think-of-evangelism-and-calvinism/>.

¹²¹ Rankin, "SBC Pastors Polled on Calvinism and Its Effect."

individual will never be a disciple. Since the expansion of the kingdom of God and our obedience is dependent upon faithful evangelism, understanding why all members of New Life Baptist Church are not as zealous as they could be is a legitimate question. Also, there has historically been much debate about the relationship between a person's understanding of God's sovereignty and how that understanding affects their evangelistic zeal.¹²² Much of the time, this accusation has been leveled against Calvinists. A proper understanding of God's sovereignty is critically important for a variety of reasons. One of those reasons is that it directly affects our theological understanding of and motivation for evangelism. What part does man play in getting the gospel message to all men, and what is our motivation for doing this mission?

Purpose Statement

The problem that the research project addressed was the lack of evangelistic zeal by providing a robust understanding of God's sovereignty. This understanding of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism results in a greater level of evangelistic zeal. Church members participated in a five-week Bible study on the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism. Before and after the Bible study, they were given a survey to see whether a robust teaching on God's sovereignty and the relationship with evangelism would change the way in which individuals evangelized. The purpose is to increase evangelistic zeal within our local church's membership.

Basic Assumptions

The first basic assumption is that God is sovereign.

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the

¹²² Robert Cara, "Does Calvinism Discourage Evangelism?" Reformed Theological Seminary, January 11, 2017, <https://rts.edu/resources/calvinism-discourage-evangelism/>.

majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (1 Chr 29:11-12).

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps” (Prov 16:9).

Another basic assumption is that Christians are responsible before God for proclaiming the gospel to all creation. Different Christians are responsible for telling more individuals or perhaps telling more individuals at one time or in a specific geographical area. However, *all* are still responsible for preaching the gospel to all mankind.

“And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation’” (Mark 16:15).

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,” (Eph 4:11).

Also, a basic assumption is that theology directly affects practice. If your theology does not impact your behavior, then it is not truly *your* theology. There are numerous biblical examples of how believing a particular doctrine changes the way in which you act. (Jas 1:22-27; Col 2:6; etc.). This basic truth is compelling and constant in its application. Here is a Scriptural example of an indicative that inevitably leads to an imperative.

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6).

“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions” (Rom 6:11-12).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

First, the members of New Life Baptist Church may choose not to participate. There are enough participants already, however, that they may choose not to attend one or more of the Bible studies. This choice would be fully acceptable to the leadership and the other members. Another limitation is the degree of seriousness in which the participants choose to take these classes. If a member is not focused or is not convinced of the teaching on the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelistic zeal in Christians, then the effectiveness of the survey results may be more limited. Other limitations could include members not following through with attendance due to health-related or other emergency/family-related issues. There will be every possible effort made to effectively communicate the key biblical truths to every participating member. Also, there will be every effort made to get feedback from the surveys from every participating member.

Delimitations

A delimitation is that the Bible study will be in one location at one time. This could potentially cause members to miss due to scheduling conflicts. Also, there is only a small number of individuals taking part in this Bible study and survey. This is a choice that the pastor made which does limit it from a greater pool of participants. Another delimitation is that the pastor is teaching from a specific viewpoint that will inevitably influence the participants in one way or the other. This is something that the pastor imposed purposefully. The pastor did want to teach from a specific viewpoint and see what kind of an impact the teaching will make. Also, there is no guaranteed measuring device for zeal. The survey is designed for the purpose of measuring zeal as accurately as possible. However, there is a legitimate delimitation due to the

immaterial nature of “zeal.”

Thesis Statement

The relationship between understanding God’s sovereignty and evangelistic zeal is directly related to the amount of evangelistic zeal in a Christian’s life. The more that members of a given local assembly understand about God’s sovereignty, evangelism, and specifically the relationship between the two, the more likely it will be that those members will be more zealous in their evangelism. This reality is based on biblical principles as well as experiential knowledge based on a survey that was conducted at New Life Baptist Church. This survey included five Bible studies based on J. I. Packer’s book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Before the Bible studies, participating attendees of New Life Baptist Church filled out surveys indicating their level of evangelistic zeal. After the Bible studies, there was another survey in which the participants indicated the level of evangelistic zeal that was present in their lives after applying the biblical truths found in the Bible studies. These surveys combined with biblical principles and other pertinent materials on the subject cause this author to trust there is a direct link between a clear understanding of these doctrines and a consistent application thereof.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

The review of literature section describes various resources that are pertinent to this thesis project. They are resources that are related to, bring clarity to, and add substance to the thesis statement. These works will be arranged topically in four categories: Calvinism and Arminianism, Evangelism, Southern Baptist Convention Doctrine and History, and the Relationship between God's Sovereignty and Evangelism. The reader will notice that there are not significant resources on the direct relationship between a strong belief in the sovereignty of God and the amount of zeal in a believer. However, there is a great amount of information on the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism in general.

Calvinism and Arminianism

Examining the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism necessitates considering the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. There are many views on this relationship among orthodox Christians. However, three primary views will be examined in this paper. They are Calvinistic Soteriology, Classical Arminianism Soteriology, and what some within the SBC are calling the Traditionalist Soteriology. In *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin has many helpful things on this topic, specifically in relation to the soteriological position that bears his name.¹²³ For many individuals within Calvinism, John Calvin's *Institutes* is the primary reference point for soteriology. This text touches on many subjects and this includes those pertinent to our subject. He speaks about predestination, election, reprobation, as well as many other aspects of soteriology that are simultaneously glorious,

¹²³ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Robert White (1541; repr., Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014).

fascinating, and very controversial.

Martin Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* is directly dealing with the contention that would later be revealed very clearly between Armenians and Calvinists.¹²⁴ The question of whether or not man's will is free or in bondage is absolutely crucial to understand while evangelizing. Is the Christian to measure success in evangelism based on our ability to talk someone into making the right choice? Or is the Christian to understand, by faith, that the measure of success in evangelism is based on whether the accuracy of the message was faithfully delivered? The trust in the latter conclusion is placed upon God's Word that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). This sentiment was the conviction of Martin Luther in this work. Luther was convinced that man's will was in bondage to sin until God, and by His grace alone, would set the man free. This emphasis on God as the sole agent in salvation shapes the way an evangelist understands his role.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is a very famous confession.¹²⁵ It is currently used as the doctrinal statement for some denominations and has been greatly influential in shaping confessions for many others. An example of a couple of denominations who use this confession as a doctrinal statement would include Anglicans and the Presbyterian Church of America. The London Baptist Confession was very much influenced by the Westminster Confession of Faith. One way that it is helpful is because it represents most within the Reformed tradition, most notably the Presbyterian faith. It speaks of God's sovereignty clearly.

The Arminian Confession of 1621 gives the Remonstrance group an opportunity to show

¹²⁴ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will: Written in Answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus on Free-Will*, trans. Henry Cole (London: T. Bensley, 1823), https://www.google.com/books/edition/Martin_Luther_on_the_Bondage_of_the_Will/gKA1F4b8jUkC?en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover.

¹²⁵ The Presbyterian Church in America, "The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms."

their understanding of God’s sovereignty in soteriology.¹²⁶ This confession is from the Remonstrance and adds much value to this discussion. This document gives the clear opposition to the Calvinist position. The Remonstrants came out of the Reformed faith and would, no doubt, call themselves Calvinists. There was a belief among some that John Calvin would have agreed with Joseph Arminius in contrast to the traditional Reformed brothers.

The Five Arminian Articles¹²⁷ draw a clear line of demarcation between the Arminian position and the Calvinist position. This brings clarity to the two views and helps show the various positions, especially in regard to predestination, human will, and the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.

The Canons of Dort¹²⁸ denounce the five points of Arminianism. For the author’s purpose, they continue to bring much needed clarity between the Arminian position and the Calvinist position. This is a defense of the traditional Calvinistic position in contrast to the Arminian position clarified in The Five Arminian Articles. The Canons of Dort give a very direct, clear, and accurate understanding of traditional Calvinist theology.

The following four books are systematic theology textbooks. Each of the four bring their own specific and unique perspectives to the issues at hand. James Boice in *Foundations of the Christian Faith* is approaching this issue from a Reformed Presbyterian perspective.¹²⁹ His focus on God’s omniscience as an attribute of God’s sovereignty is uniquely helpful. He says, “The

¹²⁶ Mark A. Ellis, ed. and trans., *The Arminian Confession of 1621* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2005).

¹²⁷ Jan Uytenbogaert, “The Five Arminian Articles (1610),” Waukesha Bible Church, accessed April 7, 2020, <http://waukeshabile.org/Gloria/WorldReligions/10-Article-Five-Arminian-Articles.pdf>.

¹²⁸ National Synod of the Reformed Church, “The Canons of Dort,” Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, 1618-1619, <https://23eu5p6rifo1ukv6iilu8lo3-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Canons-of-Dort-with-Intro.pdf>.

¹²⁹ James Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

knowledge of God extends to the most intimate knowledge of the individual. ‘I know their works and their thoughts,’ said God to Isaiah.”¹³⁰

Wayne Grudem’s insights are always extremely helpful. He has the closest theological views to the author of this paper, out of all the systematic theology authors. Wayne Grudem is a Reformed Baptist theologian. Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* has several helpful definitions.¹³¹ These definitions bring unique clarity. Regarding the sovereignty of God, he says, “God’s exercise of power over his creation is also called God’s *sovereignty*. God’s sovereignty is his exercise of rule (as ‘sovereign’ or ‘king’) over his creation.”¹³² Adding the connection of kingship to the definition of *sovereign* brings needed insight and clarity to the subject.

Elmer Towns’ approach to systematic theology is very direct and refreshing. It is clearly stated and easy to follow. Elmer Towns in *Theology for Today* takes a more “traditional” Baptist perspective on some of these issues.¹³³ Towns has a unique ability to bring clarity to difficult passages. Here is what he has to say about God’s sovereignty, “(God’s sovereignty) includes all things seen and known, plus the spiritual world we do not see and experience. The sovereignty of God includes all people, all things and all potential situations.”¹³⁴ He also says that “If we would be biblical in our view of Soteriology, we will necessarily oppose the extremes of both Calvinism and Arminianism. The biblical teaching on this doctrine lies outside these two

¹³⁰ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 135.

¹³¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 217.

¹³³ Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today* (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2008).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

systems.”¹³⁵

In *Christian Theology*, Millard Erickson’s perspective on the sovereignty of God and how he relates that organizationally is interesting and unique.¹³⁶ Erickson believes and promotes the Specific Sovereignty view which “is that God ultimately decides even the details of his plan and ensures that they eventuate as he intends,”¹³⁷ and that “the specific sovereignty theologians appeal less to these narrative passages and more to didactic passages that seem to teach that God brings about all things.”¹³⁸

The next two texts are church history textbooks. They are helpful in this conversation due to the ancient debate and teachings on soteriology. *Church History* specifically brings to light the diversity of thought on this issue particularly during the time of Augustine and the Pelagians.¹³⁹ This is also true in the controversy with the semi-Pelagians. He says, “Around 396 Augustine moved to a predestination position: Faith too is given by God. God ‘is at work in you, enabling you to will and to work’ (cf. Philippians 2:13). This found expression in a statement in the *Confessions* to which Pelagius took such exception, ‘Give what you command, and command what you will’ (reported by Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 2.53).”¹⁴⁰

The important contribution that *The Story of Christianity* brings to this discussion is the historical context behind the Reformation.¹⁴¹ Therefore, he helps give the bigger picture to the

¹³⁵ Towns, *Theology for Today*, 440.

¹³⁶ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 1983).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹³⁹ Everett Ferguson, *Church History: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁴¹ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*.

debates that take place in the Christian world today, specifically, the historical context in the debate of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

Documents of the Christian Church, edited by Bettenson, is useful for a variety of reasons, not least of which are the documents during the Reformation and the generations following.¹⁴² They talk directly about various views of the atonement, God's sovereignty, evangelism, and Calvinism. This is an invaluable asset for research into the obvious connection between a deep understanding of doctrine, specifically the doctrine of God's sovereignty and evangelism.

Evangelism

The Willowbank Report gives a compelling argument that fits into the discussion by considering how the gospel is to be communicated based on cultural differences.¹⁴³ The culture does not change the gospel, and the evangelist should never change the gospel regardless of the cultural norms and practices, although, the culture does play an enormous role in conversation. Since conversation can be affected by culture, the evangelist should be aware of this dynamic. God is sovereign over culture.

George Patterson in *The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches* explains the significance of biblical churches in evangelism.¹⁴⁴ Evangelism is the first step in disciple making. Evangelism is also directly tied to the church. In this text, Patterson encourages

¹⁴² Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹⁴³ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, "The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture," 1978, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-2>.

¹⁴⁴ George Patterson, "The Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

evangelists and church planters to think of success not as getting “decisions” but instead call people to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Wee Hian Chua’s message in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* is relevant to this project.¹⁴⁵ He reminds the evangelist that one aspect of the mission is to evangelize entire families, not only individuals. “The apostolic pattern for teaching was in and through family units. (Acts 20:20)”¹⁴⁶ This evangelistic focus on families was sovereignly established centuries earlier in Joshua who pledged his allegiance to Yahweh in the context of family. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15).

The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization was composed of over 4,000 evangelists, missionaries, missions’ leaders, theologians, pastors, and national church leaders from over 150 nations. During this meeting, The Lausanne Covenant was adopted.¹⁴⁷ Some believe this is one of the most important evangelism documents to ever be penned in history. The purpose was to unite Christians in fulfilling the Great Commission task in this age. Section 4, “The Nature of Evangelism,” is especially helpful for this project’s purpose. In this section, the document explains the pertinent doctrinal truths of evangelism.

John R. W. Stott in *You Can Tell the World* states that the evangelism endeavor is based upon the character of God Himself.¹⁴⁸ God is a “missionary God.” He is One who desires to reach out to lost and sinful mankind. God’s promises (hence, the relation to God’s sovereignty)

¹⁴⁵ Wee Hian Chua, “Let the Earth Hear His Voice,” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

¹⁴⁶ Chua, “Let the Earth Hear His Voice,” 656.

¹⁴⁷ The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, “The Lausanne Covenant,” 1974, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

¹⁴⁸ John R. W. Stott, “You Can Tell the World,” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

is key to understanding our motivation for evangelizing the world.

George Barna's *Growing True Disciples* communicates many statistics revealing the degree in which our society is post-Christian.¹⁴⁹ Also, the motivation of the evangelist is discussed. The conclusions of Barna and this author are different; however, the discussion of motivation of the evangelist is explored. The motivation of the evangelist for Barna is not directly tied to any particular belief about soteriology. There is especially no mention of a connection between evangelistic zeal and Calvinistic or Arminian soteriology.

The Ninety-Five Thesis by Martin Luther is an extremely important work in the history of the world; however, it has specific significance to the topic at hand.¹⁵⁰ One of the ways that this work is useful is that it demonstrates how evangelists are to draw distinctions between the true gospel and a false gospel. It is also a helpful work because of the document's high view of God in the affairs of men.

Charles Spurgeon's "Harvest Men Wanted" is very motivating.¹⁵¹ The sermon inspires Christians to be evangelists. It inspires Christians to not only do the outward work of an evangelist but to also grow in evangelistic zeal. It is the kind of zeal that the pastor wants to see among the brethren at New Life Baptist Church. He is constantly calling Christians to take seriously the plight of mankind and to take seriously our task that is before us.

Once again Spurgeon reminds his listeners of the urgency of the mission in his sermon "Heaven and Hell."¹⁵² This Calvinist pastor zealously dedicated himself to awakening apathetic

¹⁴⁹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁰ Martin Luther, "The Ninety-Five Thesis" in Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 197-203.

¹⁵¹ Charles Spurgeon, "Harvest Men Wanted," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* 19, no. 1127 (August 17, 1873), <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/harvest-men-wanted/#flipbook/>.

¹⁵² Charles Spurgeon, "Heaven and Hell," *New Park Street Pulpit* 1, no. 39-40 (September 4, 1855), <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/heaven-and-hell/#flipbook/>.

Christians to their God-given task of evangelism. This sermon focuses on the eternal realities of Heaven and Hell. He explains in vivid detail the reality of God’s judgment to come and our responsibility to live, not for this world, but for the life to come.

Kent Hughes, in *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, breaks down evangelism, speaking about it in terms of a spiritual discipline.¹⁵³ He and Donald Whitney both speak on evangelism in terms of a necessary Christian discipline. Hughes dedicates a chapter to the practice of evangelism. It is critically important to think of evangelism in the way that God does. The Holy Spirit says that we are to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5). When a Christian considers evangelism, he must remember what the Lord says about evangelism, namely that it is work. Since evangelism is work, we must discipline ourselves to do this important work. If the discipline of evangelism is not present in our lives, we will not fulfill our mission here on the earth.

Donald S. Whitney’s *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* explains evangelism as a necessary discipline in a Christian’s life.¹⁵⁴ Donald Whitney approaches soteriology and evangelism from a Reformed perspective, so his approach is a little different than that of Kent Hughes. He first gives a definition of evangelism, “New Testament evangelism is communicating the gospel. Anyone who faithfully relates the essential elements of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ is evangelizing.”¹⁵⁵ Then he adds a little later, “a Christian like you must discipline yourself to do it.”¹⁵⁶ This reveals the tendency of Christians to dismiss evangelism as if it is a negotiable aspect of our Christianity. This is obviously not true. Whitney

¹⁵³ Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).

¹⁵⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

confronts this falsehood directly. Evangelism is an urgent aspect of Christianity and should be central to every Christian's life.

After *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, there are five more books that are practical guides on how to effectively share one's testimony (witness) and to preach the gospel. Each of these have helpful points in them. *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman does a fine job of identifying the reality of our responsibility to not only reach small groups but also the masses with the gospel.¹⁵⁷ In this text, Coleman explores many aspects of evangelism in the Christian's life. He makes a distinction between discipling a small group of people and sharing the gospel with as many people as possible. He shows that both are critically important and that we should not reject one to focus on the other.

The Art of Personal Evangelism is helpful in many ways.¹⁵⁸ One of these is the chapter on success in evangelism for the Christian. He summarizes by quoting Martin Lloyd Jones' five points of evangelism fundamental principles.¹⁵⁹ However, there is one concept that he says is troubling. He says this, "What then is success in personal evangelism? . . . It will include both faithfulness and fruitfulness."¹⁶⁰ There is definitely biblical precedence for having hope in God's saving power. There is also biblical precedence for having hope that fruit will be produced in an individual's ministry. However, from a biblical perspective, an evangelist could do everything right, and fruitfulness may not be presently visible. Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (2 Cor 3:6).

¹⁵⁷ Robert Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Publishing, 1993).

¹⁵⁸ Will McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2003).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 47.

Concentric Circles of Concern by Oscar Thompson Jr. is a lifestyle evangelism book.¹⁶¹

There are aspects of this book that are timeless, biblical truths that the Christian church needs. For example, Thompson says that much of the time Christians go to the strangers first because there are broken relationships with the people who are close to us. However, the major concept of the book is that evangelism works best when we share with people who are close in relationship with us. This is not a biblically justifiable position. Gospel presentations should be given to close friends and family while simultaneously being given to strangers on the streets.

William Fay's *Share Jesus Without Fear* is helpful in seeking to motivate the reader to share their faith.¹⁶² This is helpful for the task in understanding the motivation for zeal in evangelism. This book also teaches the evangelist to manipulate the lost. This is an approach that does not agree with the doctrine of God's sovereignty in evangelism.

Evangelism Is . . . is a helpful overview of evangelism in general.¹⁶³ There is much discussion about the motivation of the evangelist; however, the message that they are promoting evangelists to preach is lacking. It seems as if the authors are promoting an "easy believism" gospel message. A variety of aspects of evangelism are explored in this text. The concept of evangelism being tied directly to our level of joy is a very biblical concept. He quotes John Piper at the beginning of the chapter. Piper says, "There is no escape: if we, by God's grace, are successful in evangelism we will be happier. Our joy in God will be increased."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Oscar Thompson Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1981).

¹⁶² William Fay, *Share Jesus Without Fear* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 1999).

¹⁶³ Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is... How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 1999).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3

The Last Christian Generation is helpful primarily for the purpose of statistics.¹⁶⁵ The generation McDowell is speaking about in his book was rejecting the Christian message. These statistics are even more obvious when looking at our world today. However, the overall purpose of the book is to motivate Christians to evangelize amid a generation that has rejected Christ as their Savior.

N.T. Wright, in *Surprised by Hope*, encourages Christians to have the correct view of God's Kingdom.¹⁶⁶ God's Kingdom is both now and in the future. We are to work diligently here on this earth because there is a sense in which we can labor and bring great change to society. We are also to strive for the kingdom of God that will be fulfilled in the future. This is done by "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58). What is the motivation for continuing to work in the Lord? Paul tells us what it is, "knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58). This work is helpful for the study due to its exploration of the relationship between the kingdom of God and the evangelist's labor.

Arthur Glasser, in *Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelization*, speaks about the missionary endeavor, specifically, the ministry of the Apostle Paul and his band of missionaries.¹⁶⁷ They displayed tremendous zeal, and Glasser highlights some of this zeal and some of the motivation behind it. This is directly related to the thesis statement due to the examination of evangelistic zeal and the motivation for such zeal.

¹⁶⁵ Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006).

¹⁶⁶ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008).

¹⁶⁷ Arthur Glasser, *Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Publishers, 1976), 19.

Southern Baptist Doctrine

The next three references that the author will be examining are all statements or creeds of confession. Although, the author does not agree with all the statements, it would be safe to say that they each represent an orthodox position within the Christian community. A revision of the London Baptist Confession clearly portrays the early Particular Baptist theological understanding of God's sovereignty.¹⁶⁸ The Particular Baptists' view of God's sovereignty and the relationship with soteriology was the primary distinguishing factor between the Particular Baptists and other Baptists.

The New Hampshire Baptist Confession was written in 1833.¹⁶⁹ It represents a less-explicitly Reformed Baptist faith. This confession was written in a time when Particular Baptists and General Baptists were doing some missions work together, and therefore the distinctions between the two are not as sharp and clear as other confessions. It does, however, speak to the issue of evangelism very clearly. It is also still in the heritage of other Calvinistic confessions.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is an important document to consider in this paper due to the pastor's ministry context.¹⁷⁰ New Life Baptist Church was a Southern Baptist church and The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 was the church's doctrinal statement. This document gives its statement on God's sovereignty, "God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise."¹⁷¹ Here in regard to the

¹⁶⁸ Elders and Brethren of London and the Country, "The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689."

¹⁶⁹ Brown, "The New Hampshire Confession of Faith."

¹⁷⁰ The Southern Baptist Convention, "The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message," June 14, 2000, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

salvation of man, “Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.”¹⁷² It speaks on the necessity of evangelism here, “It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.”¹⁷³ Its statement on evangelism is here, “The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.”¹⁷⁴

We have seen the distinctions between the Calvinist position and the classical Arminian position in the previous confessions. However, in this case a clear distinction is being drawn between the Calvinist position and the “traditional Southern Baptist understanding” of soteriology. In *A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation*¹⁷⁵ the authors make one truth abundantly clear. That is, the authors are not Calvinists, nor do they believe that Reformed theology has been foundational in the Southern Baptist Convention's life. This was their statement on God's sovereignty, “Article Seven: The Sovereignty of God: We affirm God's eternal knowledge of and sovereignty over every person's salvation or condemnation. We deny that God's sovereignty and knowledge require Him to cause

¹⁷² The Southern Baptist Convention, “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.”

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Hankins, “A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation.”

a person's acceptance or rejection of faith in Christ."¹⁷⁶

Douglas Moo's work on the Epistle of Romans, *The NIV Application Commentary (Romans)*, is a very helpful tool for the church in general and specifically for this thesis project.¹⁷⁷ The primary use of this commentary is looking at the view that "Traditionalists" within the SBC hold in interpreting Romans 9. Romans 9 is a key passage in the Calvinism and Arminianism or "Traditionalist" debate. Douglas Moo says at one point, "The phrase at the beginning of verse 12, 'not by works but by him who calls,' can express the purpose of election or more likely. . . it is clear that Jacob's status was based not on works but on the God who calls."¹⁷⁸

The Relationship Between God's Sovereignty and Evangelism

Another of Martin Luther's works is his *Table Talks*.¹⁷⁹ These are very interesting and many of them have to do with evangelism and the relationship between knowing doctrine and living in light of the truths that we understand. These conversations were many times with younger brothers, and Martin Luther's wisdom and practical experience is seen in these talks.

There are several times in the *Lecture to My Students* that Spurgeon gives direct commands on the duty of the Christian to evangelize and evangelism's relationship to sovereignty.¹⁸⁰ One example of clear dependence upon God in evangelism is this quote, "Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Douglas Moo, *Romans*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 301.

¹⁷⁹ Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (1566; repr., New York: John B. Alden, 1885). https://www.google.com/books/edition/Luther_s_Table_talk/XZrYAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=routcover.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954).

and look to Him for power over men’s minds. . . . His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises He must be first, midst, and end: we are instruments in His hand, and nothing more.”¹⁸¹

Charles Spurgeon, in this work directly communicates a Calvinist Baptist’s position on the seemingly paradoxical truth claims of the two concepts of divine ordination and human ordination.¹⁸² He shows that they are no paradox, but that God’s Word gives the answer to how these twin truths complement one another, rather than oppose one another.

In the article, *Religion in Everyday Life*, it is shown that “highly religious Americans are happier and more involved with family but are no more likely to exercise, recycle or make socially conscious consumer choices.”¹⁸³ This article is helpful for this conversation because in it the author shows that there is a significant difference in the lives of religious people versus non-religious people. In other words, this article is helpful in this paper because it shows a general connection between doctrine and behavior.

The Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies edited by Daniel Diffey and Ryan A. Brandt shows a direct connection between doctrine and behavior.¹⁸⁴ This journal is useful to this discussion because the conversation about indicatives and imperatives is directly related to the way we are called to do evangelism. There are ways to understand how to interpret Scripture based on the indicatives versus imperative language.

¹⁸¹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 1:337.

¹⁸² Charles Spurgeon, “Divine and Human Ordination,” in *The Autobiography of C.H. Spurgeon*, vol. 1 (1897), <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/books/xxxi-divine-and-human-ordination#flipbook/>.

¹⁸³ Pew Research Center, “Religion in Everyday Life,” *Religion in Public Life*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.pewforum.org/2016/04/12/religion-in-everyday-life/>.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Diffey and Ryan A. Brandt, eds., *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2016).

In the article “Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism,” J. I. Packer does a great job of speaking about the relationship between God’s sovereignty and evangelism.¹⁸⁵ Here is J. I.

Packer giving some truth statements about both divine sovereignty and evangelism:

The God of the Bible is both Lord and Lawgiver in His world; He is both man’s King and man’s Judge. Consequently, if we would be biblical in our outlook, we must make room in our minds for the thoughts of divine sovereignty and of human responsibility to stand side by side. Man is indubitably responsible to God, for God is the Lawgiver who fixes his duty, and the Judge who takes account of him as to whether or not he has done it. And God is indubitably sovereign over man.¹⁸⁶

J. I. Packer, in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, unfolds the glorious connection between God’s sovereignty and evangelism.¹⁸⁷ The impact of this little book in the author’s personal life and for the formation of this entire project cannot be expressed enough. The Bible studies that formed the basis of the survey analysis were based on this text. The entire fourth chapter details the perfectly harmonious relationship that God has between God’s sovereignty and evangelism.

In the book *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, Johannes Verkuyl gives a compelling argument that fits into the discussion when he speaks about God’s election of Israel.¹⁸⁸ He explains the connection between election (in this situation, election of a nation) and God’s purpose of using those He elects to evangelize the nations. This desire was in the Old Testament, but it is also in the New Testament as well. God has chosen His church to be a light to the Gentiles and the nations all around the world.

¹⁸⁵ J. I. Packer, “Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism,” Monergism, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.monergism.com/divine-sovereignty-and-evangelism>.

¹⁸⁶ Packer, “Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism.”

¹⁸⁷ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ Johannes Verkuyl, “Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction,” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

One of John Piper's most famous phrases is found in the book, *Let the Nations be Glad*.¹⁸⁹ He says, "Missions is not the goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."¹⁹⁰ He also says, "When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."¹⁹¹ This focus on love for God and for God's glory as the fuel of motivation for evangelism and missions contributes to the thesis project by explaining the foundational aspects of evangelism. These foundational structures are based on biblical doctrine.

Beyond Duty explains that missions and evangelism are not only a Christian's duty, but a Christian's joy.¹⁹² This emphasis on missions as only the fulfillment of a duty creates exhausted servants. However, if we add to the very real responsibility of missions the realization that what we are proclaiming in the gospel is the coming Kingdom of God, then our focus begins to shift. We have faith, confidence, and patience in our evangelistic efforts. God's sovereignty plays a significant role in our evangelism efforts because it creates a simple joy and reliance upon God.

On Mission with God reminds the reader of our place in the redemptive plan of God.¹⁹³ God uses means to accomplish His purposes. This includes His purpose of missions. "God has initiated every part of His work throughout history. Instead of carrying out His mission on His own, God chooses to accomplish His mission in a very personal way. He chooses to involve His

¹⁸⁹ John Piper, "Let the Nations be Glad," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Tim Dearborn, "Beyond Duty," in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

¹⁹³ Henry Blackaby and Avery Willis Jr., "On Mission with God" in in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

people with him, working through them to accomplish His purposes.”¹⁹⁴ God always uses means. This does not mean that the means that God uses (in this case men) are not truly choosing to work. God does the work, and He chooses to do that work through the Christian.

Patrick Johnstone, in *Expecting a Harvest*, explores the biblical, historical, and practical importance of expecting fruit in our evangelistic endeavors.¹⁹⁵ This work applies to the attitude in which Christian evangelism should take place. The attitude that Johnstone is promoting is a victorious attitude and one that expects fruit to be produced. It is the natural result of gospel proclamation. Since God is sovereignly victorious, then this should directly affect our evangelism for the good. Since the evangelist knows that he will be successful, there is much greater zeal to go out in the field and evangelize.

From Western Christianity to Global Christianity by Todd Johnston and Sandra Lee documents the spread of Christianity to the world.¹⁹⁶ It shows how God’s sovereign plan is being worked out by the actions of missionaries and evangelists who usually do not see how all the pieces are being put together in God’s master plan. Rather, they know the “big picture” mission, and they know what God has called them to do.

Theological Foundations

Introduction

The theological underpinnings of this thesis project are five biblical principles. These five principles are as follows: God is sovereign over all things, man has the obligation to preach the

¹⁹⁴ Blackaby and Willis, “On Mission with God,” 75.

¹⁹⁵ Patrick Johnstone, “Expecting a Harvest,” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

¹⁹⁶ Todd Johnston and Sandra Lee, “From Western Christianity to Global Christianity,” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

gospel message to all men, the direct effect that an understanding of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility has on an individual's evangelistic zeal, the role of Holy Spirit in Evangelism, and evangelistic zeal comes from knowing Jesus. These five areas are central in understanding the thesis question and are worthy to explore.

God is Sovereign Over All Things

Sovereignty in the Law

The first principle to consider is God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty is mentioned throughout the Bible. Starting in the book of Genesis, the sovereignty of God is assumed as one of the most fundamental presuppositions that one can conceive (Col 1). The Creation account is rich with omnipotence, omniscience, and God's complete rule over all of creation. God simply speaks, and all things are brought forth (Gen 1). *Ex Nihilo* is on full display in Genesis 1 and 2. Throughout Genesis, the concept of God's absolute sovereign reign over all things is a constant theme. A few examples would be appropriate at this point. First, in the case of the serpent in Genesis 3, God has complete authority over His creation including the serpent (Gen 3:14-15). This creeping devil was under the authority of the King of kings. Also, Adam and Eve both were directly responsible to God for their lives (Gen 2:7; 2:22). John continues this sentiment when he explains the presence of Christ Jesus in the beginning with God the Father during creation (John 1). In this passage of Scripture, Jesus is said to have made all things and that without Him nothing was made that had been made (John 1:3). There is literally nothing that exists that without the foreknowledge of God and within the control of God. This is a wonderful truth that the Word of God has shown us.

Another very early book in the Bible, Exodus, teaches us some sobering and awesome truths about God's sovereignty. When Moses speaks of Pharaoh's heart, he first talks of Pharaoh

hardening his own heart (Exod 8:15). This hardening of the heart is also attributed to God hardening Pharaoh's heart (Exod 9:12). This passage reveals that God can do what He will with any man. John Gill comments this way,

He having often, and so long hardened his own heart, God gave him up to judicial hardness of heart, to his own corruptions, the temptations of Satan, and the lying magicians about him, to make an ill use of everything that offered to him, and put a wrong construction on all that befell him, so that whatever was said to him, or inflicted on him, made no impression to any purpose: and he hearkened not unto them; to Moses and Aaron, and to the Lord by them: as the Lord had spoken to Moses; both that he would harden his heart, and he should not hearken to them; all this was no other than what the Lord had said should be.¹⁹⁷

Sovereignty in the Historical Books

The historical books are full of language revealing the hand of God in all areas of life.

God is shown to cause leaders to make certain decisions by employing a variety of means. The Scripture shows God's sovereignty over kings,

Abimelech ruled over Israel three years. And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers (Josh 9:22-24).

The commentator John W. Ritenbaugh says, "In these verses, God balances the scales of justice a bit by using a demon to requite Abimelech for killing the seventy sons of Gideon, thus implying that even evil spirits are forced to submit to God, too."¹⁹⁸

God also is seen using nature to accomplish His purposes. Often in our generation, people do not understand that nature is acting in accordance with God's sovereign plan. In 2 Chronicles 7:13, God is renewing and reminding the people of Israel about His covenant promises to them.

¹⁹⁷ John Gill, "Exodus 9:12," *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/exodus-9-12.html>.

¹⁹⁸ John W Ritenbaugh, "Judges 9:22-24," in *Forerunner Commentary*, accessed on April 6, 2020, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/bible.show/sVerseID/6777/eVerseID/6779>.

The blessings of God will flow to Israel in the form of good crops and a happy life with good circumstances if the people will obey God and keep His commandments. However, if the people of Israel forsake their God, He reminds them of the covenant promises that He gave to them in the Law (Deut 7:11). They will receive a curse from God in the form of natural disasters such as a drought and famine. “Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people” (2 Chr 7:13).

Natural disasters are seen in the historical books not only as within God’s control, but in submission to God’s sovereign will and plan. Benson’s Commentary states, “That is, use my authority and power over them to cause them to do so. A metaphor elsewhere used in reference to irrational animals, as 1 Kings 17:4, Amos 9:3, which are not properly capable of receiving a command, or of paying obedience to it. Other national judgments are here supposed, such as famine, war, and the ravages of savage beasts” (Job 1:6-11).

God’s Sovereignty in the Poetical Books

Job is an early book in the Bible (perhaps the oldest book in the Bible) that focuses heavily upon the sovereignty of God. The absolute sovereignty of God is a central theme to the book of Job. Similar to the scenario with the serpent in Genesis, we see that Satan is unable to do anything without God allowing him to do so. Joseph Franks, a Presbyterian Minister says this about God’s sovereignty revealed in Job:

The book of Job is uncomfortably informative, for in this account we see that God is great, God is good, and God is sovereignly in control of Satan, sinners, storms, and God is responsible for suffering. God is neither delighting in evil, nor authoring evil, but he is planning it and providentially using it for his glory and his children’s good. Like Noah,

Job is not sinless. He is not inherently righteous, but he is declared such by God, and he is making progress in becoming holy.¹⁹⁹

Proverbs says, “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord” (Prov 16:1). The Geneva Study Bible, when speaking about this verse, says, “He derides the presumption of man, who dares to attribute anything to himself, as to prepare his heart or such like, seeing that he is not able to speak a word unless God gives it to him.”²⁰⁰

The commentary on this verse is clearly seen to be coming from a Reformed perspective regarding the sovereignty of God. The verse makes it abundantly clear that regardless of what we may plan, God’s plan will succeed.

The Psalms are full of God’s sovereignty. The plethora of verses relating to God’s sovereignty is overwhelming. In Psalms, the study of God’s sovereignty always leads His people to lift up His name in awestruck praise. The Psalmist says, “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps” (Ps 135:6). This Scripture clearly teaches God’s sovereignty. One question that many have in reading this text is, “In what way does God do whatever He pleases?” Charles Spurgeon’s *Treasury of David* is helpful here. He says,

Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. His will is carried out throughout all space. The king's warrant runs in every portion of the universe. The heathen divided the great domain; but Jupiter does not rule in heaven, nor Neptune on the sea, nor Pluto in the lower regions; Jehovah rules over all. His decree is not defeated, his purpose is not frustrated: in no one point is his good pleasure set aside. The word "whatsoever" is of the widest range and includes all things, and the four words of place which are mentioned comprehend all space; therefore the declaration of the text knows neither limit nor exception. Jehovah works his will: he pleases to do, and he performs the deed. None can stay his hand. How different this from the gods whom the heathen fabled to be subject to all the disappointments, failures, and passions of men! How contrary even to those so called Christian conceptions of God

¹⁹⁹ Joseph Franks, “Job 1-5: God is Great; God is Good; God is Sovereign; There is Sin; and I am Suffering,” Monergism, April 6, 2020, <https://www.monergism.com/job-1-5-god-great-god-good-god-sovereign-there-sin-and-i-am-suffering-joseph-franks>.

²⁰⁰ Geneva Study Bible, “Proverbs 16:1,” Bible Hub, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/proverbs/16-1.htm>.

which subordinate him to the will of man, and make his eternal purposes the football of human caprice. Our theology teaches us no such degrading notions of the Eternal as that he can be baffled by man. "His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." No region is too high, no abyss too deep, no land too distant, no sea too wide for his omnipotence: his divine pleasure travels post over all the realm of nature, and his behests are obeyed.²⁰¹

God's Sovereignty in the Prophets

God's sovereignty is seen throughout the Prophets. A few examples will be helpful in seeing God's sovereignty in specific ways. First, in the book of Daniel, prophetic visions reveal the sovereignty of the God of Israel in a unique way. The concept of prophecy in general presupposes the sovereign nature of God.²⁰² If God knows the future and reveals that future to sinful man, then He must reign over all things in such a way that He has the absolute ability to bring that prophecy about. God's sovereign reign is also seen in prophetic phrases such as, "the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened" (Dan 7:10b). This verse indicates that God knows the deeds of mankind, and He has been taking notes. However, the books that were opened were being prophesied about before it happened! Another place that shows the awesome sovereignty of God in the same passage says, "And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time" (Dan 7:11b-12). The place that is of interest is the phrase, "a season and a time" (Dan 7:12). This is prophecy about the end of the Age. He is giving a specific period of time in which the beasts are to be alive. This shows that God is sovereign over every detail of our lives and history.

The narrative portion of the book of Daniel is also full of examples of God's sovereign

²⁰¹ Charles Spurgeon, "Psalm 135:6," *Treasury of David*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/treasury-of-david/psalms-135-6.html>.

²⁰² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 348.

hand fulfilling His plan through the actions of man. The beloved stories of Daniel in the lion's den and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego all show the unwavering faithfulness and rule of God. This rule not only extends to His children, but it also extends to foreign kings who were formerly pagans and enemies of God. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. He was the enemy of the people of Judah and brought them into bondage (2 Kgs 24:15). However, God had control over this man's heart and entire being as well (Dan 4). In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar was driven from among men and began acting like an ox. God showed in this that He was the one who had absolute authority over the actions, desires, and thoughts of man.

At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws (Dan 4:29-33).

After Nebuchadnezzar had tasted and realized the absolute sovereignty of God, he repented and made this statement, "he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Dan 4:35b). In this response, Nebuchadnezzar reveals that God does whatever He pleases and that no man has the right to irreverently question God. This is a similar truth that has been seen in Job and will be seen again in Romans (Job 33:12; Rom 9:20).

God's sovereignty is expressed in Him using enemy nations to punish his children. God has no evil in Himself; He uses wicked men and nations to carry out His sovereign decrees. This is seen in Isaiah:

Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind; his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations (Isa 10:5-7).

Matthew Henry said about this passage,

How mean the character of the Assyrian was, though he appeared very great. He was but the rod of God's anger, an instrument God was pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus chastened of the Lord, they might not be condemned with the world. Note, the tyrants of the world are but the tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay²⁰³

Sovereignty in the New Testament

The New Testament is full of examples of God's sovereignty. First, let us examine the sovereignty of God in the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of prophecy about Jesus as the promised Messiah is the greatest fulfilled prophecy in history. To more fully appreciate the concept and history of Israel's Messiah, one must understand the Messianic prophecies that have been in existence for a very long time. God sovereignly produced prophets to write some of these Messianic prophecies that Jesus miraculously fulfilled perfectly.²⁰⁴

In Romans 9, Paul reminds his readers that God told Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" (Rom 9:15). This truth is followed by the hypothetical rebuttal, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" (Rom 9:19). The correct biblical answer to this question is, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'"

²⁰³ Matthew Henry, "Isaiah 10," *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible*, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/isaiah/10.html>.

²⁰⁴ Ligonier Ministries, "The Fulfillment of Prophecy" Accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/fulfillment-prophecy/>.

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?" (Rom 9:20-21).

The answer Paul gives for this rebuttal is similar to the answers found in other biblical texts. Specifically, the answer is very close to the response that God gives Job in Job 38. The answer in both passages (and others like it) is that God is sovereign; His understanding is infinite. Also, man's mind and understanding are finite and therefore cannot fully comprehend the ways of God. We often think too highly of ourselves.

Summary on God's Sovereignty

Regarding the question of God's sovereignty, the Bible very clearly indicates at least three things. First, God is indeed sovereign over all things, including the most minute details of life (Matt 6:25-34). Secondly, God is not responsible for any evil done (Ps 18:2; 92:15). He does not tempt anyone with or toward evil (Jas 1:13). He is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). Lastly, the Bible indicates that how God works all things out according to His sovereign and perfect will is a mystery to our finite minds and understanding (Job 38:2).

The Necessity of Evangelism

The necessity of evangelism in the life of the believer used to be normative in all evangelicalism.²⁰⁵ However, the present generation does not understand or simply disagrees with the Scriptures' teaching on the necessity of all believers evangelizing.²⁰⁶

There are various reasons that people believe Christians do not have to evangelize. Most of the individuals in these surveys believe Christians do not have to evangelize because they do

²⁰⁵ Barna Group, "Sharing Faith Is Increasingly Optional to Christians."

²⁰⁶ Barna Group, "Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong."

not *feel* like evangelizing. In the postmodern world, feelings dictate facts.²⁰⁷ Most of this generation does not like to evangelize, and they can undoubtedly tell that the individual they are witnessing to does not like being evangelized.²⁰⁸ Since feelings have such a priority in our secular society, they dictate one's theology, which inevitably effects one's behavior.

Besides a postmodern worldview, what arguments are given to justify the belief that Christians are not required to evangelize? Typically, the arguments fall into one of the following general areas: 1. Universalism, 2. the belief that "I'm not called to that," and 3. hyper-Calvinism. Defending the necessity of evangelism for every believer from these main points of attack will simultaneously provide a solid positive argument for the proposal.

Defending the necessity of evangelism for every believer must start with a biblical defense for the necessity of evangelism in general. A biblical passage that does just that is Romans 10. Discussion on Romans 10 brings us to the clear realization that without hearing an accurate gospel message, no man can be saved (Rom 10:13-17). The passage continues, "And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Rom 10:14b). Also, Paul says to the Corinthians, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). The Scripture is abundantly clear that God uses people to preach the gospel accurately to those who are lost and through that message people either believe and are saved or they reject that message and are damned (Mark 16:16).

Universalists believe that all men will eventually be saved.²⁰⁹ Here are a few passages

²⁰⁷ Everett Piper, *Not a Daycare: The Devastating Consequences of Abandoning Truth* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Faith, 2017).

²⁰⁸ Barna Group, "Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong."

²⁰⁹ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1232.

that they use in order to promote this concept: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22).

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit (1 Pet 3:18). “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Tim 2:3-6).

These Scripture passages are used by universalists to teach that at some point (universalists are not monolithic; they believe this happens at different times) all men will be saved.²¹⁰ The logic that typically follows from a universalist claiming to be a Christian is that since all men will be saved, urgent evangelism is not necessary.²¹¹ The definition of evangelism for a universalist is very different than an evangelical’s definition. For instance, Chuck Queen says this, “So, as a hopeful universalist, do I believe in evangelism? Most definitely, but clearly not in the traditional sense as taught and practiced in evangelical churches.”²¹² He adds a little more clarification by his description of salvation. He says, “To be ‘saved’ basically means to be healed and liberated from some oppressive power, which can be from without (systemic injustice) or from within (our own self-serving, sinful attitudes and actions).”²¹³ When salvation is described in that way, it is obvious that evangelism does not mean proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ which brings freedom from eternal damnation.

The verses mentioned above as proof texts for universalists, are taken out of context and used to fit the universalist’s agenda. Each of the three verses are representative of three distinct

²¹⁰ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1233.

²¹¹ Chuck Queen, “Do Universalists Evangelize?” *Baptist News Global*, October 4, 2016, <https://baptistnews.com/article/do-universalists-evangelize/#.XnF6X6hKiM8>.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

arguments. The first argument is that verses like 1 Corinthians 15:22 seem to be referring to everyone being finally restored in the end. However, this verse and other verses like it refer to the time when all things will be fully restored in the Kingdom to come. The next argument would include verses such as 1 Peter 3:18. The argument is that verses like this one prove that people who have rejected God's grace in this life will eventually choose Jesus. They will get a second and third, etc. chance until they eventually decide to follow Jesus Christ. However, verses like 1 Peter 3:18 is not speaking about the lost people having another chance after this life, it is rather speaking about our sin nature being put to death by the death of Christ and our spirits being brought to life. This life is not in the afterlife, but rather it is this life currently. Lastly, there are the verses like 1 Timothy 2:3-6. Universalists seek to exegete out of verses like these the idea of universal redemption.²¹⁴ John Piper responds to this third argument in this way:

The first is, that universal statements in the first category of texts invariable and demonstrably have in view an antithesis different from the antithesis 'some men will be saved vs. all men will be saved.' And frequently, but not necessarily always, that antithesis is that Christ saves not only Jews who are of the seed of Abraham, but Christ breaks down the ethnic boundaries of God's ancient people and saves men and women—praise his name—from every tribe and tongue and people and nation under the sun.²¹⁵

Another issue is the distinctions in the definitions of various terms used for various places in the afterlife. "Gehenna and Hell are most often used within the context of an eternal dwelling place with clear descriptions of suffering and punishment."²¹⁶ These different definitions are important when determining the biblical understanding of death and hell. For we are saved from

²¹⁴ Sinclair Ferguson, "Universalism and The Reality of Eternal Punishment: The Biblical Basis of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment," *Desiring God 1990 Conference for Pastors*. January 29, 1990. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/universalism-and-the-reality-of-eternal-punishment-the-biblical-basis-of-the-doctrine-of-eternal-punishment>.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Seth Pryor, "An Examination of the Doctrine of Death and the Afterlife from a Biblical and Historical Theology Perspective Compared to the Level of Sophistication Among the Laity" (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 104-105.

a variety of things, but undoubtedly one of the things that we are saved from is death and hell (Matt 25:41). The reality of hell causes us to seek hope of salvation from hell. Since hell is the just punishment for sinners, we need One who can justify us from the punishment that we deserve. This is the good news of Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus came to save sinners (I Tim 1:15). This message must be correctly communicated to the lost, so they can respond in repentance and faith and be saved.

Another theological justification for rejecting the necessity of evangelism for every believer is the idea that evangelism is a spiritual gift and therefore only certain Christians should be evangelizing. This concept of certain Christians having the gift of evangelism comes from the New Testament, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12). This passage is actually speaking about evangelists being one of the five gifts Christ gave to the church. Even if someone believed that this verse is speaking about evangelism as a gift, it should not follow that only those with the gift should be evangelizing. God says through Paul,

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:7-10).

An evangelist may not have the spiritual gift to “distinguish between spirits” (1 Cor 12:10), but does this mean that as an evangelist is preaching the gospel, he is to be undiscerning? An evangelist may not have the spiritual gift of “faith” (1 Cor 12:9), but does this mean that an evangelist should not have faith? Of course not. In the same way, all Christians are given a manifestation of the Spirit that we should emphasize in the ministry. While we seek to fulfill the

mission that God has specifically mandated to us, we are simultaneously to fulfill all our Christian duties. Our ultimate duty as Christians is to obey Christ (Matt 22:27). What is the greatest commandment? “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt 22:27). “And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39). The greatest way you can show love to your neighbor is by asking yourself the question, “What would I want a Christian to do for me if I was lost?” The greatest thing any Christian could do for a lost person out of love would be to share the gospel message with them before they died and went to hell. Also, it is important to point out that the specific command to go and share the gospel is given to all Christians in other places in the Bible. Therefore, the rejection of the necessity of evangelism for all believers is not justifiable based on the “I’m not called to be an evangelist” concept.

Lastly, some have bought the lie of “hyper-Calvinism,” a term that most Calvinists hate since “Calvinism” is connected to a group of individuals who deny the responsibility of man in the area of evangelism.²¹⁷ However, this has been the historic designation for a few distinct doctrinal beliefs. There are some identified who would be on the extreme side of hyper-Calvinism, such as John Ryland, who famously told William Carey to “Sit down, young man. When God decides to save the heathen, He will do it without your help.”²¹⁸ Phil Johnson defines Hyper-Calvinism as someone who fits into one of these five descriptions:

1. Denies that the gospel call applies to all who hear, OR
2. Denies that faith is the duty of every sinner, OR
3. Denies that the gospel makes any "offer" of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the non-elect (or denies that the offer of divine mercy is free and universal), OR
4. Denies that there is such a thing as "common grace," OR

²¹⁷ Tim Challies, “Hyper-Calvinism: A Brief Definition,” *Challies*, June 28, 2007, <https://www.challies.com/articles/hyper-calvinism-a-brief-definition/>.

²¹⁸ Madeline Pena, “William Carey: Pioneer to India and Father of Modern Missions,” Bethany Global University, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://bethanygu.edu/blog/stories/william-carey/>.

5. Denies that God has any sort of love for the non-elect”²¹⁹

One of the common beliefs of those who hold this position is that the Great Commission was only for the apostles during that time period.²²⁰ The first point to make is that the Great Commission was directly applicable to the apostles of Jesus at that time and in that context. This is certainly true. The question is not was the Great Commission directly applicable to the apostles at that time, but rather does the Great Commission extend past that one group of people in that one period of time? D. A. Carson uses an ironic presuppositional approach to this subject by examining the Great Commission itself. He states that the Great Commission does not say, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, except for this commandment to make disciples. Keep their grubby hands off that one, since it belongs only to you, my dear apostles.”²²¹

There is no evidence that the command was only to the apostles. Furthermore, there is both biblical evidence and early church history evidence that the early church spread largely due to all believers sharing their faith. In Acts 8 following the stoning of Stephen, biblical evidence of all believers sharing their faith and not only the “called to the ministry” is provided.

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ (Acts 8:1-5).

The Christians response to persecution was going about “preaching the Word.” This was

²¹⁹ Johnson, “A Primer of Hyper-Calvinism.”

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ D. A. Carson, “Ongoing Imperative for World Mission,” in Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 179.

undoubtedly a natural response to being born again. There was also likely a motivation from the command of Jesus Christ. Kenneth Latourette said, “The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion.”²²²

The Bible gives all Christians the command to preach the gospel in other passages as well. Peter says, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (I Pet 3:15). In this verse, Peter is stating that as we go along in our daily lives, we should be ready and willing to share Christ as people ask us about Christ. This is a direct command for all believers to share the gospel. The type of evangelism that is being spoken of here is a response to someone asking the Christian a question. In other words, this evangelism is the kind of evangelism that is dependent upon the lost initiating the spiritual conversation. There is also a positive command to proclaim in 1 Peter which says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Pet 2:9). This passage makes it clear that it is addressing all Christians by the descriptions he uses. We are a “chosen race,” “royal priesthood,” “holy nation,” and “a people for His own possession” (I Pet 2:9). This is clearly speaking about Christians and the passage says the natural result of Christians is that they will not be like the unbelieving who stumble over Christ, but that they will “proclaim the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness”(I Pet 2:9). This is the natural result of those who trust in Christ as Savior. They will proclaim the gospel message. Charles

²²² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 1:116. <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalmust-every-christian-evangelize/>.

Spurgeon once said, “It is a very material point in salvation to be saved from hardness of heart and carelessness about others. Do you want to go to Heaven alone? I fear you will never go there. Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that.”²²³

Relationship Between Understanding Right Doctrine and Evangelistic Zeal

There is a direct relation between our beliefs and our actions. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy are very closely related. If one claims to believe in something, but that faith does not result in a change of behavior or action, then that faith is worthless. This is what James is speaking about when he compares saving faith with demonic faith (Jas 2). The Christian faith is one that directly affects a Christian’s day to day life. For instance, nearly half of “more-religious people” visit extended family according to a 2016 poll.²²⁴ In comparison, roughly 30 percent of less-religious people visit extended family as often. One of the conclusions from the Pew Research team was this, “The survey shows a clear link between what people see as essential to their faith and their self-reported day-to-day behavior. Simply put, those who *believe* that behaving in a particular way or performing certain actions are key elements of their faith are much more likely to say they actually *perform* those actions on a regular basis.”²²⁵

The distinction between indicatives and imperatives in the Bible is crucial. Typically, this distinction is identified most clearly in Paul’s letters. In these letters, Paul gives commands or imperatives, but these imperatives are always based on doctrines or factual statements. The

²²³ C. J. Scott, *Secret Places: The Biblical Theology of Place, Exploring Its Central Importance in God’s Creation and Mission*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2017.

²²⁴ Pew Research Center, “Religion in Everyday Life.”

²²⁵ Ibid.

relationship between indicatives and imperatives can instruct the church in how we are to view the relationship between right doctrinal understanding and evangelism.

When Christians rightly understand how God's sovereignty is directly applicable to evangelism and in what ways God's sovereignty effects our evangelistic zeal, it will cause them to rejoice in true doctrine, as well as cause their hearts to burn with a desire to reach the nations, no matter the cost. This author's view of God's sovereignty is that God is sovereign in His predestination, election, and justification of sinners. The typical question that is raised when thinking about God's sovereign choice in election is, if God has predestined the elect, why do Christians need to evangelize? Does not a belief in a sovereign God nullify the zeal for evangelism in Christians? This, of course, is a false assumption based on a variety of unfounded presuppositions. For instance, all Christians believe God is sovereign in the creation of a child, but every Christian also understands that God intends intimacy within marriage to be the means by which that creation is to take place. God uses means to accomplish His purposes. In this case, He uses His people to be the ambassadors who bring the message of the gospel to the lost and ultimately the elect. A right belief in the sovereignty of God in salvation will contribute to Christians being better evangelists.

Christians will be better evangelists because Christians will have a wonderful motivation.²²⁶ When Christians have the hope of great success, we will go out victorious. Christians have already won the war in the heavenly Zion. This is the indicative we find to be true in the Scripture. The imperative of Scripture is to live like this is true. On earth, Christians can go out victoriously because our gospel message will accomplish what God has foreordained that it will accomplish! However, the contrast is also true. If we do not have the promise of

²²⁶ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

God's sovereign grace in salvation, then evangelism is utterly useless. J. I. Packer says, "Regarded as a human enterprise, evangelism is a hopeless task."²²⁷ The reason for this is due to man's sinful state. Outside of God's sovereignly saving him, man is dead in his own sins and blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:4). How can a dead man come to life? Can a dead man raise himself? No! Only God can do that, and He has promised that He would after the elect hear His gospel.

The absolute sovereignty of God over the salvation of man will make Christians zealous for evangelism. It will make Christians evangelize without fear. When lost people reject the gospel, it will not be surprising to Christians because we know that man is utterly depraved (Eph 5:8a). Christians will understand that our hearts were once hardened to God due to sin and slavery to Satan (2 Cor 4:4). This is to be expected when the light comes into contact with the darkness, however, the zealous nature comes from the understanding that even though sin is great, our God is greater still. His grace can break through all barriers to save the most hardened sinner (Zeph 3:17). This causes the Christian to persevere knowing that God will save those whom He has called and elected.

The Christian evangelist will become patient in their evangelism.²²⁸ Urgency will undoubtedly increase but so will patience. An absolute reliance on God and a trust in His perfect will will guide the evangelist's mind and actions. There will be perseverance amid trials and difficulties.²²⁹ This is because God is in control when the lost person is not repentant. There is no need to grow apathetic in fruitless seasons (however long that fruitless season may be) because the Christian's duty is faithfulness. There is also no need to add to the proclamation of the gospel

²²⁷ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 107.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

since not enough people are responding positively to the gospel (Rom 1:16). The straightforward approach of gospel proclamation will be the means by which God will save men (Rom 1:16).

The Role of Holy Spirit in Evangelism

The Holy Spirit is critical in evangelism that is often neglected. To neglect the work of the Holy Spirit in this study of evangelism would cause a great void. The role of God the Holy Spirit in regeneration is important to consider. When an evangelist has the proper understanding of the role of Holy Spirit and the role of the individual in salvation, it allows the evangelist to understand his responsibility. This keeps the evangelist from seeking to do the work that is designated to the Holy Spirit. It also allows him to pour himself out in fulfilling the specific God-given task that God has designated to him. The Holy Spirit is the One who causes a man to become born again (John 3:5). The rebirth is solely a job of God, and man has absolutely no part in it.²³⁰ This is the first great role of Holy Spirit in evangelism. Also, the Holy Spirit is instrumental in the evangelist's life. The Holy Spirit leads and guides the evangelist. Throughout the book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit guiding believers as they seek to fulfill their evangelistic mission. We see the Holy Spirit leading Peter to go with the three men to Cornelius' house (Acts 10:19), the Spirit leading Philip to speak with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29), and Paul being bound by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). No doubt when Paul is speaking of being compelled to preach the gospel (1 Cor 9:16), he is speaking of the Holy Spirit binding him to preach the gospel.

Evangelistic Zeal Comes from Knowing Jesus

In Mark 3:13, Jesus summoned the disciples He wanted, and they came to Him. In verse

²³⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 699-700.

14, God says they would be with Him. Immediately after the passage declares that they are to be with Him, it gives the reason they are to be with Him. The reason that the Twelve were to be with Jesus was to be sent out to preach. In other words, the prerequisite to Jesus sending them out to preach was that they be with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus is the only way disciples will be properly equipped to preach. Zeal, spiritual power, and confidence comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As disciples walk with Jesus, they become more like Him. They pick up on His habits and His love. This transformation of personality from becoming a dedicated follower of Jesus is abundantly evident to those in the world. This was true for the Apostles. The religious leaders noticed Peter and John's confidence and the fact that they were uneducated. They began to recognize the fact that they had been with Jesus. This recognition is evidence that the Apostles acted like Jesus, specifically regarding their confidence. Their sure faith and bold actions were due to the time they spent with Jesus Himself.

Jesus taught this principle during His time on earth. Jesus said,

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (John 15:1-7).

If disciples are not in fellowship with Jesus Christ, we will not have biblical and authentic evangelistic zeal. Doctrinal knowledge void of a regenerated heart does not produce evangelistic zeal.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The intervention design will address the reason intervention is needed and exactly how that intervention will be implemented. It explores the way in which the problem is being addressed. This section will describe the way the author confronted the problem and the specific way the author sought to provide a simple answer to one aspect of this problem. The problem is that members of local churches have less evangelistic zeal than they could have if doctrinal instructions in two areas would increase. The two areas of doctrinal instruction are God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism. The author has decided to implement a strategy that is measurable and directly addresses the problem. It also examines various ethical considerations related to participants of the study. Analytical tools will be examined and their corresponding protocols and the procedures in which methods are employed.

Intervention Design

Rationale for the Purpose of the Research

New Life Baptist Church has faithful members. These members are dedicated Christians wanting to fulfill their purpose in God's Kingdom. They are willing to do difficult things in their pursuit of pleasing God. There are greater heights that all the members of New Life can take in Kingdom pursuits. There is one specific area in which significant growth can take place. This area is the area of evangelistic zeal. The author's desire is that this local church can grow in zeal for evangelism. The suggested solution to this dilemma is an increased doctrinal understanding in two primary areas. First, the area of God's sovereignty needs to be understood in a deeper

way. Secondly, the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelize, properly understood, should increase evangelistic zeal in the member's lives.

The church is currently in a wonderful place of spiritual growth. The life of the church is dependent always on fulfilling the Great Commission. In their local church, the area of the Great Commission that needs to be focused on at this time is the area of evangelism. The pastor of New Life has led the church into changing a variety of unbiblical practices which has led to a very close family atmosphere among the members. There has not been very much doctrinal emphasis on the doctrine of God's sovereignty and especially little emphasis on the direct connection between the relationship of God's sovereignty and evangelism. Based on several principles in the Bible, this researcher believes that correct understanding in these doctrines will likely cause a growth in evangelistic zeal in Christians. This, no doubt, will help New Life Baptist Church fulfill its mission in a deeper way.

Currently, there is one corporate or organized opportunity to share the gospel. This opportunity is typically on Sunday afternoons. During this time, street evangelism is the most common way evangelism takes place. However, they also meet one Sunday afternoon a month to corporately do a good deed for someone in need. This gives us an opportunity to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Phil 1:27) and to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16b). This gave us a good opportunity to share the gospel with those the church was helping. The response to these corporate evangelism opportunities was mixed. Most of the time there was participation, especially in the times where they were engaging in doing good deeds. The reasons for the mixed results was most likely due to fear of outward and bold evangelism. This fear seemed to drown out evangelistic zeal at times. This conclusion must be tempered by

other realities. First, different people have various spiritual gifts and strengths. Therefore, this kind of evangelism may not be a strong area for many people. Another consideration is the lack of experience in evangelism. There were a handful of members who truly stepped out of their comfort zone and evangelized corporately several times.

The church's primary focus in evangelism is not corporate evangelism opportunities. This pastor's emphasis is on daily opportunities to share the gospel "as you go." "Go therefore" evangelism is in accordance with the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). As the members go out into the world and take the gospel with them, the opportunity to reach the region for Christ is great. This is the primary area that evangelistic zeal should increase. As individuals share the gospel with their family, friends, co-workers, etc., the gospel will reach places that would be difficult to go otherwise. It causes the members of the church to constantly be on mission, thus causing great growth in their spiritual lives. The hope of this project is that through deep doctrinal understanding, evangelistic zeal will increase. Thus, New Life Baptist Church's mission can continue to be fulfilled and New Life's members will grow in their spiritual lives.

Setting for the Research Project

The setting of the research project was New Life Baptist Church. During the pastor's doctorate class, he was simultaneously contemplating how to increase evangelistic zeal in the congregants. The desire to choose a topic for the pastor's doctorate degree thesis project and the desire to see New Life Baptist Church fulfill its God-given mission met together in the concept of "Deep Doctrine and Passionate Preaching." Zealous proclamation should be based on the foundation of authentic belief in biblical doctrine. With greater depth of doctrinal understanding, there should be a correlation of greater evangelistic zeal. This took place in Pryor, Oklahoma over the course of five weeks. These Bible studies were based on J. I. Packer's book *Evangelism*

and the Sovereignty of God. Regular attendees of New Life Baptist Church were asked if they would be interested in participating in this study. They were told that the study would contribute to the author's field by determining the degree that doctrinal knowledge in specific areas affects evangelistic efforts. Five attendees who were present agreed to participate. They were given a consent form to sign. The consent form is attached in Appendix A. The church decided to have Bible studies on Sunday afternoons. Before the Bible studies, a survey was taken to determine evangelistic zeal. These surveys were provided for each of the participants on sheets of paper. After the surveys were completed, they began their first Bible study. This first Bible study was an introduction to the next four weeks. It was also an introduction to each of the topics that would be covered. During these Bible studies, the pastor taught on each subject that Packer brought up topically. These topics are divided up in four chapters in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. The pastor taught for approximately 30 minutes once a week. After the Bible studies were completed, a second survey was taken to determine how much, if any, evangelistic zeal had increased. The names and surveys that were taken are in a locked file in the pastor's home in Pryor, OK. The survey is attached in Appendix B. This information was not seen by anyone beside the pastor and the individual survey participant.

Purpose of Bible Studies

The Bible studies were an integral part of the thesis project. The research question is "What is the correlation between an individual doctrinal understanding of God's Sovereignty and evangelism and the same individual's evangelistic zeal?" Providing the Bible studies on these specific doctrines allowed the researcher to put in place a survey to determine whether learning these doctrines changed their zeal and their behavior. Adding this survey to biblical, theological, and historic principles brings clarity to the researcher.

The goal of the Bible studies was to give clear and accurate Bible-based lessons on the topics at hand. The goal of the instructor was to bring as much biblical clarity as possible. The lessons sought to develop the congregants understanding of four main areas. The Scripture says, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity” (Titus 2:7). In this verse, God is reminding believers that doctrinal belief and behavior must reflect one another in “everything you do.” Also, Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy,

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted (I Tim 1:8-11).

First, he gives a long list of specific types of sins, demonstrating examples of “the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane” (I Tim 1:9). Then he says that the list of sinners represents that which is “contrary to sound doctrine” (I Tim 1:10). The key point of this passage is that these types of sinners are the opposite of “sound doctrine” (I Tim 1:10). Doctrine directly affects behavior. If someone says that they believe a doctrine, but it does not direct the way that they are behaving, then it is not actually *their* belief. This was the pastor’s desire in implementing the Bible studies. If people change their beliefs, then behavior is going to change eventually.

Another area that will be beneficial through these Bible studies is the mentoring relationships that will be developed. Discipleship and mentoring in doctrine are an important aspect of Christian maturity. One of the benefits of these small group Bible studies is the life-on-life discipleship that inevitably takes place during the sessions. The pastor is an example of someone who has experience in doing the work of an evangelist, and he is actively engaged in doing the work of an evangelist. This example is one of the greatest teaching tools available. The

individuals in the class will be able to glean zeal from catching zeal from the one teaching the class. This type of learning environment is biblical and can have a great impact.

Ethical Issues Related to the Research

Upon consideration, the researcher found no ethical issues related to the research project whether with the researcher or those who participated in the study.

Types of Data Collected

Written data was collected from the survey participants. Paper surveys were distributed to the participating congregants to fill out. The only people who saw or read the individual surveys were the attendees who participated or the researcher. There was a survey before the Bible studies, and there was the same survey after the Bible study. The two written surveys were collected by the pastor/researcher. The pastor examined the two surveys, comparing them to conclude the results. Then the pastor took the surveys and put them into a locked file for confidentiality.

Researcher's Relationship to the Participants

The relationship of the researcher to the participants is a pastor/congregant relationship. The pastor had been a pastor for three years prior to the research project. The church had become a close-knit family by the time of the research project. New Life had gone through many changes and trials together. This led to a very strong core group. The church grew in love one for another during this time. Based on this compassion and concern there was bias on the part of the researcher to see a change in evangelistic zeal due to doctrinal instruction and growth. There were no other known bias or interference based on the researcher's relationship to the participants.

Implementation of Intervention Design

Introduction

Implementing the intervention design involves a step-by-step explanation of the process taken in the research study. In this chapter, it is imperative to understand the schedule of events that the researcher took in order to understand the results. The implementation will give a narrative of each step the researcher took, including the surveys and the Bible studies. A clear explanation of each Bible study lesson will be available in this section. There will also be an explanation of the rationale behind the questions in the surveys.

Schedule of Research Project

Step 1: The researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board. A copy of the IRB approval letter is available in Appendix C.

Step 2: An invitation to participate in this study was given to all attendees of New Life Baptist Church. Five attendees agreed after the pastor explained the process and the purpose. Soon after this, consent forms were given to all who had agreed. After these attendees filled out the consent forms, the pastor collected all the consent forms and put them in a secured and locked filing cabinet.

Step 3: The next step was giving the participants the pre-Bible study survey. The questions were seeking to determine their level of evangelistic zeal.

Step 4: Bible studies were given to all the attendees for the next five weeks. These Bible studies were based on J. I. Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. The first week was an introduction to the whole series. Next, each chapter's topic was summarized. These topics altogether involved five weeks of Bible studies. These Bible studies were introduced by summarizing the topics. The pastor of New Life Baptist Church taught these lessons. The pastor

did not summarize the book, but rather used the book as a guideline to each of the topics. Some of J. I. Packer's arguments were used, as were arguments from other sources. However, the most often utilized resource were Bible verses that directly speak to God's sovereignty, evangelism, and how the two are in relationship together. An outline of the biblical topics taught in the Bible studies are in Appendix D.

First Bible Study – This was a time of introducing the topics and various issues related to the topics. This included an introduction to different views of God's sovereignty and what many would call the “tension” between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelize. The pastor introduced the concept of motivation for evangelism. The question that many have asked historically has been, “If God is sovereign over man's salvation, then Christians would lose all motivation for evangelism.” This question was explored in the first Bible study. The primary argument of the first Bible study was that a robust belief in Divine Sovereignty increases the Christian's motivation to evangelize.

Second Bible Study – The second Bible study was on the topic of God's sovereignty. During this Bible study, they looked at multiple passages of Scripture and discussed the meaning and extent of God's sovereignty. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Ps 115:3). This was the first verse discussed. This verse says that God does *all* that He pleases. God has absolute sovereignty over all things. Next, the pastor defined sovereignty using Wayne Grudem's definition in his *Systematic Theology*, “God's sovereignty is his exercise of rule (as “sovereign” or “king”) over his creation.”²³¹ God is King over all of the universe, but in what way exactly does He rule over all things? This was the next question that they explored.

There are, of course, a great variety of viewpoints on exactly how God enacts his

²³¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 217.

sovereignty; however, the pastor pointed out two truths that every Christian automatically knows. First, God is sovereign over every area of life. Second, His sovereignty includes the salvation of man. The proof that every Christian ultimately believes that God is sovereign was taken from Packer's book. He says,

If you are a Christian, you pray; and the recognition of God's sovereignty is the basis of your prayers. In prayer, you ask for things and give thanks for things. Why? Because you recognize that God is the author and source of all the good that you have had already, and all the good that you hope for in the future. This is the fundamental philosophy of Christian prayer.²³²

He then summarizes, "In effect, therefore, what we do every time we pray is to confess our own impotence and God's sovereignty."²³³ The pastor then used Packer's proof that every Christian actually knows that God is sovereign in salvation. He said that the evidence of this is,

"As you look back, you take to yourself the blame for your past blindness and indifference and obstinacy and evasiveness in face of the gospel message; but you do not pat yourself on the back for having been at length mastered by the insistent Christ. . . . Thus, in the way that you think of your conversion and give thanks for you conversion, you acknowledge the sovereignty of divine grace."²³⁴

The pastor ended this lesson with a story that John Wesley recorded in his personal journal from a conversation he had with Charles Simeon. Simeon was a Calvinist and Wesley was Arminian. Simeon said this to Wesley:

Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. . . . Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?" "Yes," says the veteran, "I do indeed." "And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely thought the blood and righteousness of Christ?" "Yes, solely thought Christ. "But, Sir supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?" "No, I must be

²³² Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 15.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

saved by Christ from first to last. “Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?” “No.” “What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother’s arms?” “Yes, altogether.” “And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?” “Yes, I have no hope but in him.” “Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.”²³⁵

Third Bible Study: The third Bible study focused on the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. The pastor started this Bible study by explaining that Christians must affirm what the Bible affirms. Though there may be mystery in many areas of life and in the Bible, Christians should think about the relationship between truths. Also, Christians must ultimately affirm two truths that may seem at odds with one another. The pastor brought up J. I. Packer’s helpful explanation about the definitions of a paradox and an antinomy.²³⁶ Applying the correct term to the issue is critical. It changes the way we think about the issue altogether. He defines antinomy as, “an appearance of contradiction between conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable or necessary.”²³⁷ This appearance of contradiction is up against the accusation of some who would say that the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is a paradox or a contradiction. The pastor agreed with Jonathan Edwards and John Piper on one point of disagreement with J. I. Packer, that was that the relationship between the two was not an antimony either. Rather, it is perfectly

²³⁵ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 18-19.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

explicable.²³⁸ The issue that is an antinomy would be how the first sin happened.²³⁹ John Piper believes that the issue of the first sin is a mystery that is beyond our mind's comprehension. Packer believes that the issue of God's sovereignty and human responsibility is a mystery and "To our finite minds this is inexplicable."²⁴⁰

There are two temptations that one could fall towards. The first is the temptation is to hold the view that concerns itself too heavily upon human responsibility (in this case, in evangelism). The second temptation may be to hold the view that has an exclusive concern for divine sovereignty at the expense of man's responsibility in evangelism. Both views cause great harm to the message of the Cross and the mission that Christ has called us to.²⁴¹ The pastor called the congregation to think correctly and biblically about both doctrines and affirm the truth in each, thereby giving God all the glory for His complete sovereignty, while simultaneously understanding the church's responsibility for their actions. These truths are twin truths and not diametrically opposed truths.

Fourth Bible Study: The fourth Bible study emphasized evangelism. Again, the pastor followed J. I. Packer's organization of topics. This lesson considered what role evangelism should play in the Christian's life, the definition of evangelism and the implementation of evangelism into every Christian's life. During this study the definition of evangelism was explored. The basic definition of evangelism that the pastor gave was simply "to share the gospel message with unbelievers." This is not all that there is to evangelism, but evangelism is certainly

²³⁸ John Piper, "A Response to J. I. Packer on the So-Called Antinomy Between the Sovereignty of God and Human Responsibility," *Desiring God*, March 1, 1976, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-response-to-j-i-packer-on-the-so-called-antinomy-between-the-sovereignty-of-god-and-human-responsibility>.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 23.

²⁴¹ Johnson, "A Primer of Hyper-Calvinism."

not less than this.

Another topic that was discussed was the distinction between proclaiming the gospel message and appealing for decisions. Christians do not have the ability to make men repent and believe in the gospel; however, Christians should preach with a goal of repentance and faith in mind.²⁴² This is one of the applications of having a biblical understanding of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in evangelism. We preach having confidence that God will save His elect. We can rest in that truth. Evangelists have no need to create false converts by utilizing their own power and man-made techniques. We also preach zealously and do our very best to persuade men to believe in Christ Jesus. We do this because of the biblical truth that we are responsible before God. This includes the amount of love we have for our lost neighbors. It also includes the zeal we have in our hearts for Jesus and His gospel.

Since evangelism was defined as “to share the gospel message with unbelievers,” the next logical question is, what is the definition of the gospel? The gospel can be narrowed down in a variety of ways. In the end, the pastor of New Life Baptist Church chose to summarize it by using the Bible. In 1 Timothy, the Bible says, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Tim 1:15). In this verse, the fulness of the gospel can be expounded. The pastor did expound it: “Christ Jesus” – from these words the pastor explained that *Christ* was the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah*. He explained the importance and the great impact that concept held to the Jewish mind. He explained the prophecies and that Jesus Christ was the One who could finally defeat death for all mankind. “Came into the world” – This phrase describes the incarnation of Jesus. This was used to explain the humanity of Jesus. “To save sinners” – This

²⁴² Fay, *Share Jesus Without Fear*, 57.

gives the purpose of Jesus. Jesus said in another place, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). The pastor explained the cross of Jesus Christ and the burial and the resurrection. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians,

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Cor 15:3-8).

In this passage Paul is explaining what is of “first importance,” which is Jesus Christ and His work. Lastly, from the verse 1 Timothy 1:15, the pastor explained that calling a person to repentance and faith was an essential part of the gospel message. This is how a sinner is to respond to Christ Jesus to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life (Luke 15:10; Acts 3:19).

After an explanation of the gospel, the pastor began to speak about the biblical motivation for evangelism. A Christian’s greatest motivation is the glory of God and the second great motivation is the love of man. These two concepts are like the two motivations for evangelism that Packer includes in his book. The important realization about evangelism motivation is that love for God and concern for His glory of God must be our greatest concern. This concern is even more important than our love for our fellow man.

Fifth Bible Study- This fifth Bible Study was the last one. The pastor focused specifically on the relationship between God’s sovereignty in salvation and man’s responsibility to evangelize. The pastor followed the basic structure that J. I. Packer set up in chapter 4 of *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. First, he looked at how the sovereignty of God does not change any of the commands or truths about evangelism that the church learned in the last Bible study. We are called to love our neighbor, not only the elect. Furthermore, we do not know which people are elect. The truthfulness of our call to repentance and faith remains authentic

amid the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Some have the tendency to question the authenticity of the gospel call to the non-elect. This researcher could have spent many weeks on this issue but decided it would be sufficient for the purposes of this class to simply state the biblical truth that the gospel call to the non-elect is still authentic because God has said that it was in His Word.

Secondly, the pastor examined how believing in the sovereignty of God in man's salvation gives us our only hope for successful evangelism.²⁴³ It is impossible to have any success in our evangelism without God's sovereignty in salvation. This is because we do not have any power to cause men to be saved. Men are dead in sins and trespasses (Eph 2:1). Men do not have the power to raise other men from the dead. Only Jesus Christ can raise a dead man from the grave. This means a firm belief in the sovereignty of God in salvation gives us great confidence and boldness in our evangelism. It not only increases confidence and boldness in our evangelism, but it should also make us more patient in our evangelism.²⁴⁴ Patience is increased because our goal is their genuine conversion. This desire for an authentic conversion coupled with an understanding that only God can bring about the desired change in their lives causes the evangelist to understand that God alone can do the work and that God will do His work in His own time. We are to urgently, but patiently, fulfill our responsibility in evangelism and let God "give the growth" (I Cor 3:6). Also, the sovereignty of God in salvation causes the evangelist to be much more prayerful.²⁴⁵ If God is the one who brings the increase, then we should go to Him with our prayers to change men's hearts. These positive characteristics of a faithful evangelist are only consistently possible with the foundational belief in the doctrine of divine sovereignty.

²⁴³ Packer, "Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism."

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 118.

Step 5: After the Bible studies were completed, the pastor gave the participants the same survey to fill out. The survey is meant to indicate whether the doctrinal knowledge and instruction on the sovereignty of God and the relationship between the sovereignty of God and evangelism would produce a higher level of zeal in the Christian's life.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The problem presented is that the local church needs to grow in evangelistic zeal. The solution that has been proposed is an increase in doctrinal knowledge of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism. To test this in the researcher's own context, he asked regular attendees of New Life Baptist Church if they would like to participate in this study. Five of them agreed to participate. The researcher first gave these participants an initial survey to determine their evangelistic zeal at the current time. After the survey, the researcher taught five classes based on J. I. Packer's classic book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. These classes followed the basic outline that Packer developed.

The first class was an introduction to the subject matter. The second class examined the topic of Packer's chapter 1; the subject was God's sovereignty. The third class examined the topic in chapter 2; the subject was God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. The fourth class examined the topic in chapter 3; the subject was evangelism. The fifth class examined the topic in chapter 4; the subject was God's sovereignty and evangelism. These classes were taught by the pastor, and while they followed the basic outline of J. I. Packer's book, the classes were not merely an outline of this book. The classes were primarily an examination of relevant Scripture passages.

After five weeks of classes were complete, the researcher gave the second survey to the participants. The participants filled out the surveys and returned the paper surveys to the pastor. The pastor kept these in a safe locked file in his house. The survey consisted of one page and ten questions. This concluded the study.

The Survey

The first question of the survey was “Is sharing the gospel a normal part of your daily experience?” This question was for the purpose of determining whether evangelism was an integral part of the Christian’s life or if the participants saw evangelism more like an event. Three out of five participants said, “No” to this question on the pre-Bible study survey. After the Bible study all the participants answered “Yes” to this question. This ended up being a 100% “Yes” to question one in the post-Bible study survey.

The second question was “Do you feel undue stress when contemplating witnessing?” The purpose of this question was to determine how comfortable a Christian is in sharing their faith. While there will usually be stress associated with witnessing, regardless of how regularly one shares their faith, the addition of the term “undue” sought to reveal an anxiety that was unfounded. For instance, if sharing your faith with a boss at work would endanger your employment, the stress would have wider implications than simply social awkwardness. If the idea of sharing the gospel with someone without having the serious threat of physical, economic, or social consequences brings an individual great stress then the person should mark “Yes.” Four out of the five marked “Yes” on the pre-Bible study survey. After the Bible studies, one individual changed their answer on this question. The result was three out of five marked “Yes” on the post-Bible study survey.

The third question on the survey was “How many times have you shared your faith in your lifetime?” This question sought to see how the Christian had lived out the mission in relation to their entire lives. The answers to this question ranged from approximately 10 to approximately 200. The other three answers were, approximately 15, approximately 20, and exactly 12.

The fourth question was “How many times have you shared your faith this past month?” This question’s purpose was to determine if evangelism had been a significant part in the Christian’s life in the relatively recent past. The results from this question in the pre-Bible study survey were three 0s, one 2, and one 3. The post-Bible study survey increased in all surveys except one. They were 0, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10. The greatest increase on this question was from 2 in the pre-Bible study survey increasing to a 10 in the post-Bible study survey.

The fifth question was “How many times have you shared your faith this past week?” The purpose of this question was to determine the individual Christian’s current view on evangelism. The answers on this question on the pre-Bible study survey were 0, 0, 0, 1, and 2. There was a significant increase on the post-Bible study survey. The answers were 0, 1, 1, 2, 2. The greatest increase on this question was an increase from 0 to 2.

The sixth question was “How zealous do you feel about evangelism?” The options were “Very,” “Somewhat,” and “None.” The purpose of this question was to seek and determine the level of zeal in a Christian’s life based on how much the Christian felt about their zeal. This question was focused more on the subjective feelings of the Christian rather than the objective facts. Zeal is something that is difficult to measure since there is an element of zeal that is based on feelings. This question was created to consider this element of zeal in order to measure it as much as possible. The results to the pre-Bible study survey were “Very,” “Very,” “Very,” “Somewhat,” and “Somewhat.” There was one “Somewhat” that increased to a “Very” response on the post-Bible study survey. One stayed at “Somewhat” after the Bible studies. The other three “Very” answers remained the same.

The seventh question was “Do you feel confident in your God gospel proclamation?” The selections were “Very,” “Somewhat,” or “No.” The purpose of this question was to determine if

the Christians were well prepared to share the gospel. The results of this question to the pre-Bible study survey was “Very,” “Very,” “Very,” “Somewhat,” and “Somewhat.” These results all stayed the same on the post-Bible study survey. There was not a specified time given to instruction on practical evangelism training during the Bible study times.

The eighth question was “‘God is Sovereign over all things.’ Do you agree with this statement?” The selections were “Very Much,” “Somewhat,” or “No.” The purpose of this question was to determine whether the Christians had a biblical understanding of God’s sovereignty. The specific focus of the question was on the reign of God over “all things.” Therefore, the deliberate language was chosen. The results were all “Very Much” on the pre-Bible study survey. This response remained the same on the post-Bible study survey.

The ninth question was “Where is evangelism at in regard to your priorities?” The selections were “High,” “Medium,” “Low,” and “Not a priority.” The purpose of this question was to determine how important evangelism was in the life of the Christians who participated. The results on the pre-Bible study survey was “Low,” “Medium,” “High,” “High,” and “High.” These results changed slightly on the post-Bible study survey. The “Medium” response changed to “High” on the post-Bible study survey. The other responses remained the same.

The tenth and last question on the survey was “What is the relationship between God’s sovereignty and a Christian’s evangelism?” The responses were written in by the participants. Some participants wrote a short sentence while others wrote multiple sentences. The responses were all very similar in content. The responses did not change in substance from the Pre-Bible study survey to the post-Bible study survey. The purpose of this question was to determine the level of understanding that the participants had about this very specific issue of theology. The responses were as follows.

- “The relationship between them is high.”
- “God has pre-ordained good works for me to do. This includes evangelism.”
- “God equally uses man and is in charge of saving men. It is a mystery how exactly it works.”
- “God chooses who is saved. God chooses to use means to accomplish this. We are His means to do this evangelism.”
- “In Luke (I think), Jesus tells his disciples to trust the Spirit to give the words needed in each situation. Yet, Paul asks how people will come to Christ if they never hear the gospel. So, how these 2 seemingly opposite realities happen at the same time does not make sense in my mind. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 touched on both when we are told to go but that Jesus will be with us in our movement.”

The substance of these statements stayed the same on the post-Bible study survey.

However, one change that one participant added was a quote that was significant in bringing clarity to the subject. He said, “Charles Spurgeon said that there was no need to reconcile friends. We have responsibility, but God saves.” This addition brought clarity to the participants response in the pre-Bible study survey.

Summation of Results

The results of the survey exceeded the researcher’s expectation. The results of the survey after a five-week intentional and focused Bible study resulted in a change in behavior. There was a noticeable difference between the participants initial evangelistic outreach in comparison to their evangelism endeavors afterwards. For instance, the participants increased in evangelism in the week and month categories significantly. There was a very strong change in response to the first question. The question was “Is sharing the gospel part of your normal daily experience?”

This question encapsulated the most important aspect of evangelistic zeal that the pastor wanted to focus on. The idea was focused on incorporating evangelism into a Christian’s everyday lifestyle. The response to question one went from 3 “No” responses to 0 “No” responses. This change was the most encouraging overall result.

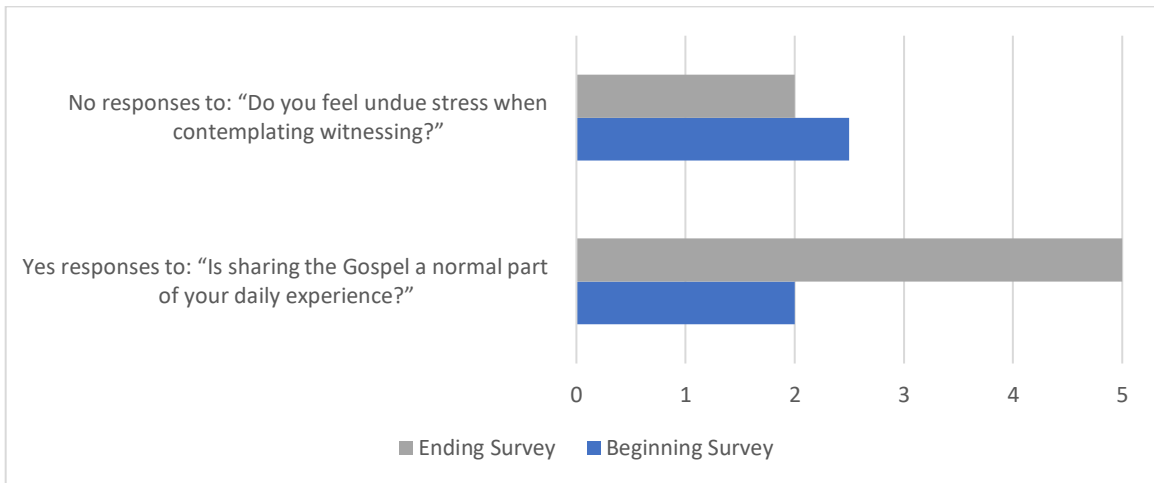


Figure 4. Comparative Survey Results for Questions 1 and 2.

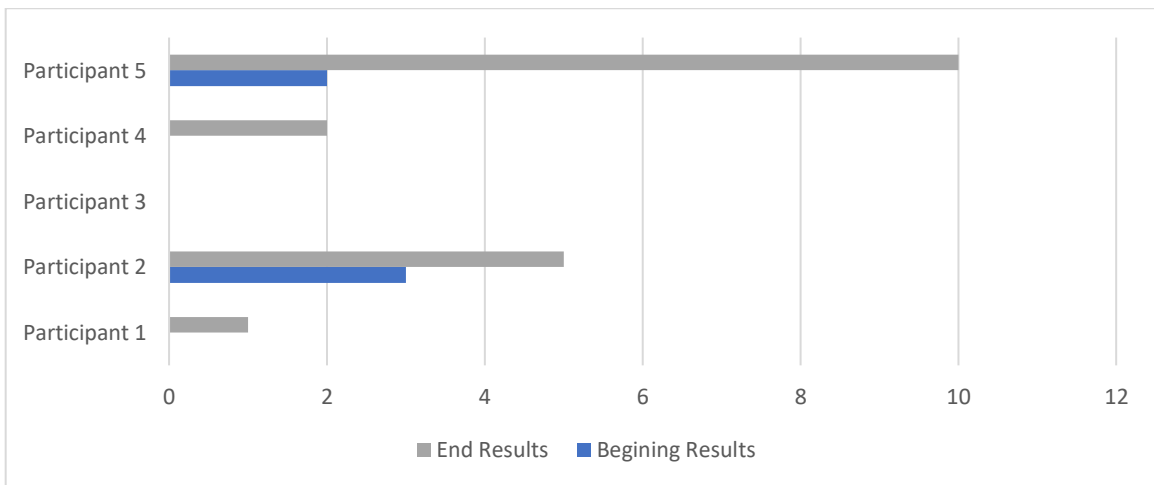


Figure 5. Survey Question 4: “How many times have you shared your faith this past month?”

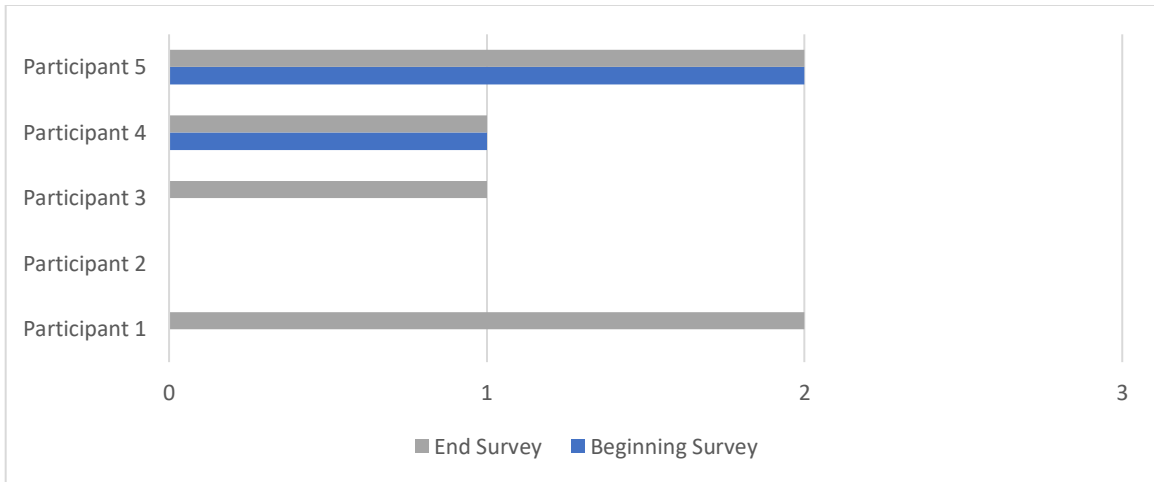


Figure 6. Survey Question 5: “How many times have you shared your faith this past week?”

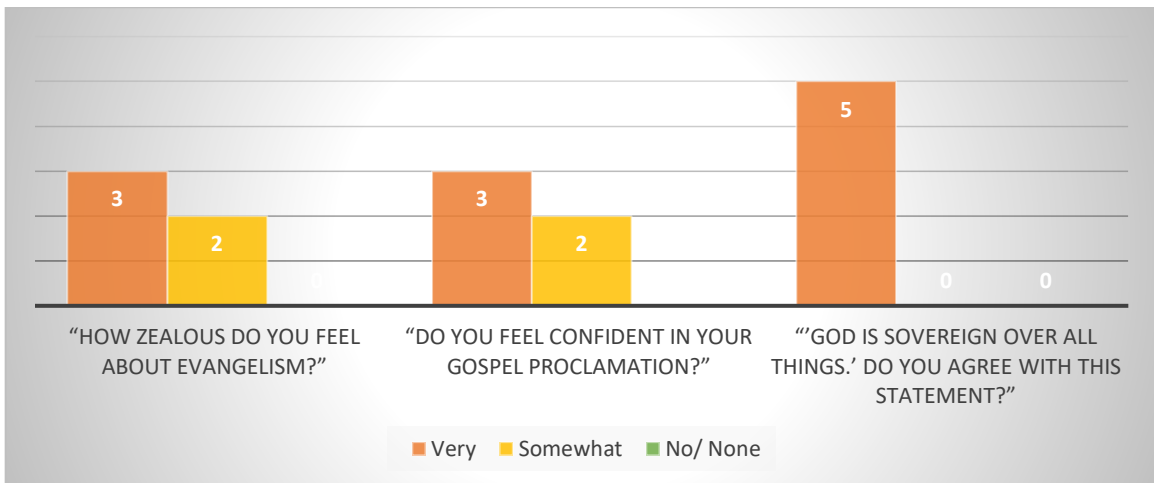


Figure 7. Results for Questions 6, 7, 8 Beginning Survey

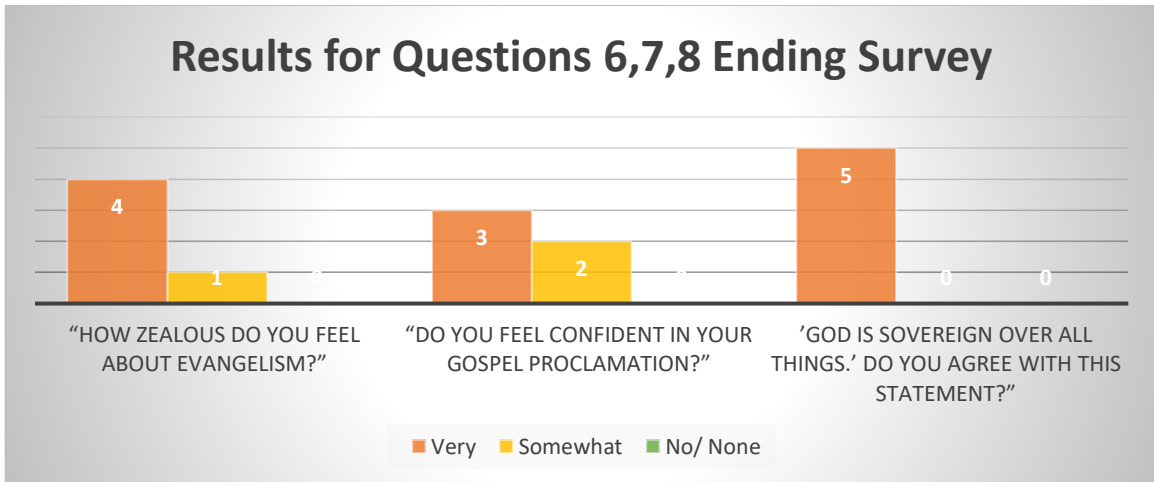


Figure 8. Results for Questions 6, 7, 8 Ending Survey.

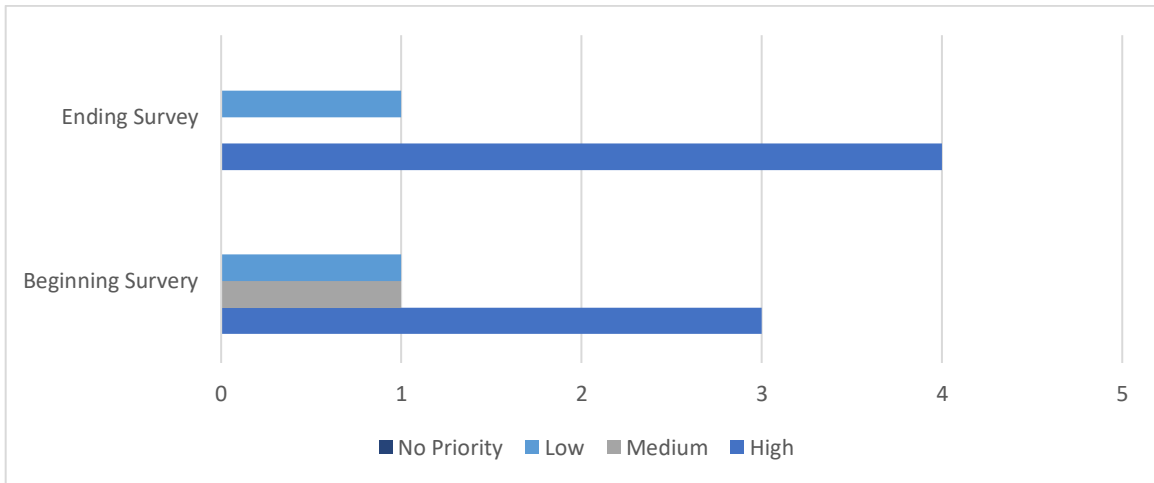


Figure 9. Where is evangelism at in regard to your priorities?

The positive results could be based on a variety of things. The pastor emphasized the intentionality of evangelism and encouraged the participants to think about the mission throughout the day, every day. This was strongly reiterated. The positive results could be based primarily on the clear understanding of the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and the relationship between God’s sovereignty and evangelism. The true test will be the test of time. Will these changes be long lasting or based on a short-term evangelism emphasis? The pastor’s focus on

creating mission-minded Christians and implementing evangelism into the Christian's daily life would result in long-lasting changes by creating evangelism habits. This would be true if the participants apply the biblical principles into their lives. Currently, the increase in doctrinal understanding of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism seems to have influenced greatly the evangelistic zeal of the Christians involved in this study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The results of this study have shown the short-term effects of robust doctrinal understanding. When the individuals who are learning doctrine are Christians, then the results are spiritual growth, practical application of truth, and a deeper love for Christ. Specifically, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God has been seen by some to be a hindrance to evangelistic zeal. However, an individual's belief in the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God can and should increase evangelistic zeal.

New Life Baptist Church's participants in this project had an obvious increase in evangelism intentionality. Evangelism zeal has increased in the short term. This study contributes to the truth that God's Word does not return to Him void but accomplishes all that God has sent it out to accomplish (Isa 55:11). Evangelism is not a common trait among Christians today.²⁴⁶ Also, Christianity is in decline in America.²⁴⁷ Developing doctrinal depth in a church's teaching, specifically in the area of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and evangelism, will very likely increase evangelistic zeal in Christians within the congregation.

Comparative Studies

There is significant scholarly work addressing the idea that a belief in the sovereignty of God over man's salvation should cause Christians to evangelize less. However, there is a lack of resources proving the correlation between a deep understanding of God's sovereignty and the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelize and that

²⁴⁶ LifeWay Research, "Churchgoers Believe in Sharing Faith, Most Never Do."

²⁴⁷ McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation*, 13.

individual growing in evangelistic zeal. The decline in the American church's membership numbers is undeniable. Many churches and leaders alike have sought to change this trend. Their solutions are many. However, doctrinal depth and knowledge resulting in a changed lifestyle is not typically the recommended solution.

Recommendations for Future Research

If more Christian pastors and leaders understood the connection between right doctrinal belief and behavior, then perhaps robust doctrinal depth would be preached throughout local churches and hearts would change resulting in greater evangelistic zeal. This, in turn, would result in behaviors changing and the Great Commission being fulfilled. There is more research that needs to be done between true belief and action.

Another area of further study is the role of mentoring in doctrinal depth. A practical examination of the merits of evangelists within a local church leading other future evangelists would be valuable. Discipleship groups focused on promoting doctrinal truths which are directly applicable to evangelistic encounters is a concept that should be carefully considered and studied. The combination of doctrinal studies and practically "doing the work of an evangelist" is what local churches should be about in the first place. Adding to doctrinal studies and "doing the work" would be the benefit of having more mature disciples leading these groups of men. A study examining the potential impact of such groups on the resurgence of evangelists within the local church would be a helpful analysis.

Application of Results to Other Settings

The basic premise that right belief will radically change people's behavior has a wide range of possible application. This could be used in churches where rampant immorality is

common. Churches that are publicly teaching about the doctrine of sin and God's judgment will still have many problems with sin in their membership. However, if belief in right doctrine truly does directly affect behavior, then there will undoubtedly be a change in the church's direction. These churches should implement an attitude that understanding biblical fidelity and deep doctrinal commitments are essential ingredients to successfully living the Christian life.

Further Study

God's sovereignty is one aspect that greatly affects evangelism in the Christian's life. There are also many other doctrines that the typical American Christian may know very little about. It would be interesting to take the concept of deep doctrinal commitments that effect evangelism practices and apply it to other doctrines. For instance, if a pastor of a congregation who was struggling with low evangelistic zeal taught an intentional, biblical, and theologically robust Bible study series on the relationship between family life and evangelism, would that significantly increase the evangelistic zeal of that particular local church?

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CONSENT FORM

Deep Doctrine and Passionate Proclamation: How Understanding the Relationship Between
God's Sovereignty and Evangelism Increases Evangelistic Zeal

Christopher Verser
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on the correlation between the understanding of God's Sovereignty and evangelism and evangelistic zeal. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years or older and are attending New Life Baptist Church. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Christopher Verser, a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand the correlation between an individual's knowledge of the relationship of God's Sovereignty and evangelism and that same individual's evangelistic zeal.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Take a preliminary survey. (10 minutes.)
2. Attend 5 classes on Sunday afternoons directly following Sunday Morning service (30 minutes each class). This will take place over a span of 5 weeks, one class per week. The content of the classes will be focused on God's sovereignty, specifically in regard to evangelism.
3. Take a post-class survey (10 minutes). It will be the same survey both before and after the classes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym.

- Data will be stored on in a locked cabinet that only I will be able to access and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all records will be deleted.

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 2/18/2019 to 2/17/2020 Protocol # 3641.021819

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or New Life Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Christopher Verser. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at clverser@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair Dr. Rod Earls, at rdearls@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Investigator Date

Survey

1. Is sharing the Gospel a normal part of you daily experience? Yes No
2. Do you feel undue stress when contemplating witnessing? Yes No
3. How many times have you shared your faith in your lifetime? _____
4. How many times have you shared your faith this past month? _____
5. How many times have you shared your faith this past week? _____
6. How zealous do you feel about evangelism? Very Somewhat None
7. Do you feel confident in your Gospel proclamation? Very Somewhat None
8. God is Sovereign over all things. Do you agree with this statement? Very Much Somewhat None
9. Where is evangelism at in regards to your priorities? High Med Low None
10. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty and a Christian's evangelism? _____

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 18, 2019

Christopher Verser

IRB Approval 3641.021819: Deep Doctrine and Passionate Proclamation: How Understanding the Relationship Between God's Sovereignty and Evangelism Increases Evangelistic Zeal

Dear Christopher Verser,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God Bible Study Outline

- I. Bible Study 1- Introduction
 - A. Introduction to various interpretations of key Sovereignty/Evangelism passages.
 - 1. Romans 9:1-24
 - 2. Eph. 2:8-10
 - 3. Titus 3:4-5

- II. Bible Study 2- God's Sovereignty
 - A. God does whatever He wants
 - 1. Psalm 115:3
 - B. God is in complete control:
 - 1. Over decisions that men make
 - a. Proverbs 16:33
 - 2. Over nations
 - a. Job 12:23
 - 3. Provision
 - a. Matthew 6:11
 - C. Everything comes to pass based according to God's plan:
 - 1. Genesis 50:20
 - D. God preserves all things
 - 1. Hebrews 1:3
 - Application- We must depend on God for absolutely everything. Everything comes from God.

- III. Bible Study 3- Biblical evidence that the Scripture teaches man's responsibility very clearly. Specifically, the affirmation of man's responsibility in relationship to God's sovereignty.
 - A. Man is responsible for his actions even though God is sovereign over man's actions.
 - 1. Pharaoh
 - a. "I will harden his heart"
 - i. Exodus 4:21
 - b. Pharaoh hardening his own heart
 - ii. Exodus 8:32
 - 2. Joseph
 - a. Joseph's brothers were wrong for being jealous of him and wanting to kill him

- i. Gen. 37:20,
- b. God was sovereign over it all
- ii. Gen. 50:20

3. Canaanites

- a. God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites to fight Israel in battle in order that they should be utterly destroyed.
 - i. Josh. 11:20
- b. However, they were responsible for their actions of fighting against God's anointed people.
 - i. Josh. 11:20

4. Babylonians

- a. God said that He would bring the Babylonians against this land and its inhabitants
 - i. Jer. 25:9
- b. the Babylonians are were guilty and the Lord will punish them for their evil
 - i. Jer. 25:12.

- Application- We are responsible for our own actions and God will bring every action to light during the judgment.

IV. Bible Study 4- Evangelism: Our Responsibility

A. We are commissioned to do evangelism:

- 1. Mark 16:15
- 2. Matthew 28:18-20,

B. Without evangelism men will perish:

- 1. Romans 10:13-15

C. God does not want anyone to perish:

- 1. 1 Timothy 2:4

- Application – God commands evangelism, men will perish without evangelism – Therefore, we are to obey and do evangelism.

V. Bible Study 5- References to the elect in the Bible.

- A. What is evangelism success? Specifically, how does evangelism success depend upon belief in God's sovereignty?

1. Evangelism success is dependent upon God because He elects men unto salvation.
 - a. Election Passages:
 - i. John 6:37
 - ii. Romans 9
 - iii. Ephesians 1:4-11
 - iv. Matthew 22:14
 2. How does evangelism success depend on God's sovereignty?
- B. We must understand that we have no power to cause someone to be saved:
 1. Eph. 2:1
 2. Corinthians 3:6-9
- Application- Trust that the salvation of man is in God's hand and obey Him; this is the whole duty of man.