

November 21, 2007

## An Extraordinary Prison Ministry

Peter Ditzel

Something that makes me thankful, as well as amazing and humbling me, is the way God continues to use our website and literature to help people. We have received letters and emails from people who have left cults after reading our articles, from Christians who have used our website as a learning resource before confronting unbelieving relatives, from missionaries who use our booklets to teach people in far-flung regions of the world, among many others. But the correspondence that stunned and humbled me the most this past year was from a Baptist pastor who is also an inmate in a state prison. In these letters, he tells of his pre-prison life of hypocrisy and sin, his incarceration, his conversion, and how God has now used him, with our publications, to build a church (presently consisting of fifty baptized members and expanding rapidly) that teaches the doctrines of grace in the prison, and the persecution he and the other members face. I found his letters so inspiring that I want to share some excerpts with you. To protect this servant of the Lord's privacy, I have left out his name and edited out of the letters anything that might identify him, his specific crime, and the prison. I have also, for the sake of readability, made a very few grammatical changes and combined letters.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,

What can be said of how God has used your ministry to build Sovereign Grace Bible Church. In 2000 you sent me your TULIP series and shortly thereafter I was elected the pastor (by God's Providence) of a humble church on the yard here on "C" yard Pleasant Valley State Prison. We started with less than 10 men and have grown to over 50 men as God has called deacons and believers into His Kingdom.

We have been relentlessly attacked for our beliefs in God's Sovereignty, His Great Grace, our Total Depravity or Inability to come to Him and that man is powerless because he does not have free will. On Saturdays for 3 years we went through your series of booklets on the

Copyright © 2007-2009 wordofhisgrace.org

Permission is granted to reproduce this article only if reproduced in full with no alterations and keeping the copyright statement and this permission statement intact.

TULIP each year for 3 times to disciple our new elect brothers. We will be partaking in believer's baptism of 12 men after our baptism class in two weeks as this is an awesome step for men to openly profess Christ in front of their former gang members.... This is truly God's movement from gangs to Grace. Enclosed you will find a church covenant. This is your church also. We love you.

Thank you so much for the copies of the TULIP [series of booklets] and [Is Salvation for You?] [all available online here: [http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/wohg\\_010.htm](http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/wohg_010.htm)) however the Word of His Grace cover letter with the article on, "Dead to the Law" [available online at <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/deadtothelaw.htm>] was so awesome. I read it to the church. We sure love your ministry and the booklets you surrendered for our use will be used in our discipleship class that...a prospective deacon will be conducting. We use your booklets to take our new converts through to establish their doctrine.... We promote Christocentric doctrine.... It's all about the abiding life, it's all about yielding, not choosing. We emphasize the fact that you can't keep the law or we would not be in prison. We believe the Spirit teaches us to yield and we are being worked by God both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

We are so excited to report to you that we have baptized 8 men in the last two weeks. We are in a prison infested with gangs and when a man turns from gangs to grace in Jesus Christ we baptize the men on the yard in front of the yard so all the world and the church can see their open obedience to Jesus Christ in baptism. We first put men through baptism class so they know for sure why they are getting baptized. We explain that Spiritual baptism is when a man is rebirthed by the Holy Spirit to see Jesus Christ and his utter depravity knowing only Jesus can redeem his wretched soul. Then we teach water baptism as a symbolic outward profession of what Jesus did on the cross, buried and rose again, and that the believer is identifying with Christ to live a new life being dead to the flesh....

I want you to know that I am not worthy to pastor these men. I am in prison for my evil flesh...but I am cleansed by the blood of Jesus. I...was a pastor in Baptist churches

and I was an enemy of the cross because I did not teach the doctrines of grace. I was an open theist and a workaholic with self-righteous works full of pride and lust.... I was working and placing others in bondage. God had to place me in bondage for my sin to break my pride and fleshly sin. I am so thankful I'm in prison serving these men. I don't deserve this call. We have been attacked by so many professing Christians because of the doctrines of grace. I was thankful for my persecution because I deserve hell but God's grace only allows me worldly attacks so I can enjoy eternity with all of my brothers and sisters. I have a life sentence because of the laws in this state; however, God gave me my sentence Prov. 29:26.

I have such a heart of love because I have been forgiven much.... Tonight I taught the 30 men on the yard of Hebrews 9:14-19 why we are not under the law and why Christ had to die, along with why God had a plan such as God the Son having to come to die on a cross. Only those who are called receive an eternal inheritance and it's based on promise. The testament is not established until the testator dies. The will cannot be imposed until the death of the one who possessed the promised will. When Jesus died, the Old Testament died with [him], but when he rose again the new will and testament was in full force sealed by the Spirit of promise. The Lord assured not only our eternal life, but our eternal inheritance. It was based on Jesus, nothing I could do, and being called we are now in that will written before the world began. WOW! I love you servant of God!

P.S. I look forward to an awesome kinship with you. God bless! We prayed for you tonight.