

TELL IT TO THE CHURCH<sup>1</sup> -  
JUNE 26, 2011

*Matthew 18:17*

*If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;  
and if he refused to listen even to the church,  
let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

For over three decades, I have faithfully served my friend, C.J. Mahaney. This service has taken on many forms; all of which I count a great blessing to have provided. I consider it a genuine honor to have served C.J. and Sovereign Grace Ministries from its inception. My sincere love for him and the ministry continues to this day.

During the last decade, one form of service included the correction of my friend. In the account that follows, you will read about my attempts, and the attempts of others, to help C.J. grow in the grace of holiness. But before I do, let me hasten to say that C.J. is an extremely gifted and gracious man in many contexts. I have learned a lot from his example and his teaching. There is much to commend about him.

Nevertheless, the account you are about to read has to do with those aspects of his character needing conformity to the image of Christ. Like all of us, C.J. is a sinner saved by grace. But unlike us, C.J. is the leader of a large and influential movement. He is called to a higher standard of conduct (James 3:1), not the lower one by which he has too often lived. The sins of which I write are long standing. The most serious ones remain unacknowledged. What you are about to read is shocking and disillusioning. You should ask God to give you grace in order to process this material. And let me add, we are never without hope in Christ. The third step of Matthew 18:15-18 is redemptive in nature. It has in mind the repentance of the sinner so that restoration, reformation and restitution can follow.

Sovereign Grace Ministries and C.J. are experiencing a time of humbling. The once stellar reputation of the ministry exists no longer. There has been a decline. In recent years, hundreds of people have left churches in numerous cities due to a growing distrust of their leaders. These were good people and in many cases people who had been part of the movement for a long time. They were loyal. They were servants. They were followers of Jesus. Now they are gone.

Two separate blogs chronicle the faults of Sovereign Grace and the experiences of former members. I venture to say this opposition from the Lord will abate or cease

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<sup>1</sup> I planned to send this appeal to the my friends in Sovereign Grace Churches on Sunday, June 26 but did not do so. I present it now so people can understand the events as they unfolded and benefit from the content. On Saturday, June 25 at 2:02 pm, I made this document available to the SGM Board and CLC elders. I told them of my intentions to send it out in advance of doing so.

when C.J. decides to confess his sins and leads others in the organization to do the same. God has raised up the blogs, much like he did the Assyrians or Babylonians, for the chastisement of some leaders in the movement. I almost never look at the blogs and this assessment is not an endorsement of those statements that are slanderous. On the other hand, God has used the blogs to try and get the attention of C.J. and others in the movement. There are real problems which are not being dealt with in an open, honest and accountable manner. The blogs address some of these problems.

In November of 2007, I resigned from the Board of Directors (a.k.a. the apostolic or leadership team) for Sovereign Grace Ministries after 25 years of dedicated service. A few months later, I was sent out from CrossWay Community Church to plant a new church to the north of Charlotte in March of 2008. In July of 2009, I resigned as senior pastor of Grace Community Church having been declared unfit for ministry by Sovereign Grace Ministries.

Over the past two years, I have remained silent in public but not in private. I've produced three major documents for C.J. I am currently completing work on a fourth entitled, "The Untold Story." It chronicles the unbelievable events surrounding my resignation as senior pastor. Like my previous writings, I hoped this undertaking would be unnecessary. But men have chosen to remain silent about their sins and deceitfully cover up what actually transpired. As a result, the former members of Grace Community Church have only heard a deceptive tale and one that has been retold in many places. I hope to be done with "The Untold Story" by the end of August.

On Thursday of this past week, I sent the following questions to C.J.

**From:** Brent Detwiler  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 23, 2011 9:15 AM  
**To:** C. J. Mahaney  
**Subject:** Change of Heart?  
**Importance:** High

Dear C.J.,

I ask the following questions with grace and tenderness of heart. Have you had a change of heart and mind? If so, are you willing to provide me a complete and thorough response to RRF&D, AFA, and CR in preparation for a meeting between us? And are you willing to walk in the light by publicly confessing the sins I've addressed?

I mean you no harm. These are redemptive requests designed to serve you and the movement you lead. Please provide me a response in the next day or two.

With sincere affection,  
Brent

On Friday of this past week, I sent the following message to all four men on the Sovereign Grace Board of Directors.

C.J., Dave, Joshua and Jeff,

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you in name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I've given more thought to the idea of involving an independent panel of mediators and one other condition comes to mind that must be agreed upon in advance by you, the SGM Board of Directors. As it stands, it appears I'll be facing the combined personalities of Sovereign Grace Ministries, Covenant Life Church and Peacemakers in array against me. Therefore, you must allow the panel to interview up to 25 people who share concerns and experiences which are similar to my own. I will be the one responsible for putting this list of people together for the panel.

Moreover, these individuals must be granted anonymity if they request it. Some of them are afraid to speak up. All their testimonies will remain confidential. This is similar to the procedure used when testimony is given before a Grand Jury in our court system. Their statements will not be accepted as fact by the panel but will help the independent mediators understand the widespread nature of my concerns. These interviews will aid the panel members in gaining a full and complete picture of representative stories and people's experiences with Sovereign Grace Ministries. This is extremely important. Otherwise, it is the one sided testimony of three large organizations against the testimony of a single individual - me.

As I've repeatedly said from the beginning, this isn't about C.J. and Brent. This is about deceit, hypocrisy, self-preservation, and the love of reputation in Sovereign Grace Ministries as exemplified by C.J., Dave, Bob, Gene, et al. Here's the way I've put it.

"Lastly and most importantly, I write because of my deep love for you and for Sovereign Grace Ministries. My greatest concern is for the increasing presence of deceit and hypocrisy rooted in self-preservation and love of reputation. I'd be overjoyed to see you acknowledge these things to the movement, whether or not you ask my forgiveness for anything specific. Comparatively speaking, the latter is unimportant. Ultimately, this isn't about us. It is about something much bigger.

Therefore, I provide the history that follows for your careful consideration.” (Response Regarding Friendship & Doctrine, p. 3)

I’ve provided 521 pages of historic testimony, all carefully documented, but it has produced no contrition, repentance, confession or restitution. Deceit, hypocrisy, self-preservation and the love of reputation remain unconfessed alongside a host of other serious sins.

“Primarily, I hope and desire to see a restoration of integrity, truth telling and justice in Sovereign Grace so there is no lying, spin, manipulation, lording, cover-up, or partiality. I am concerned for the movement. Some men have followed sinful aspects of your example and leadership – the kind referenced in this response. These men have acted deceitfully, judgmentally, unbiblically, and hypocritically. Their example in turn, has harmed others and been corrosive in its effect.” (Response Regarding Friendship & Doctrine, p. 128)

I inquired of C.J. on Thursday to see if he’s had a change of heart. I have not heard back from him.<sup>2</sup> I also asked the elders of Covenant Life Church to take immediately action on June 17. I’ve not heard from them either.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is time to tell the churches of Sovereign Grace Ministries about C.J.’s sins for their protection and his good. I hope brothers and sisters, Care Group leaders and deacons, administrators and pastors, will courageously appeal to C.J. and he will listen to their voices. To date, he has not listened to my voice, or the voice of others, on many critical matters.

I am confident; however, that the grace and mercy of God will prevail! I look forward to the day when I can once again commend C.J., the Board of Directors, and Sovereign Grace Ministries without reservation. As it stands, they cannot be trusted and anyone who does is acting foolishly or in ignorance.

In the bonds of Christ’s love,

Brent

I have also been told my appeal to the churches will result in great agony for me and my family. Who knows, that may be true but I cannot imagine any greater agony than what we have already experienced. And of course, my concerns transcend my little world. I am also concerned for the people who have experienced similar travails in Sovereign Grace Ministries.

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<sup>2</sup> In anticipation that I might not hear from C.J. since the Board forbid all email interaction with me.

<sup>3</sup> Also in anticipation that the CLC pastors may follow C.J.’s example or provide me an unsatisfactory response that necessitated sending out “Tell It to the Church.”

**From:** Ken Sande  
**Sent:** Monday, June 13, 2011 9:17 AM  
**To:** Brent Detwiler  
**Subject:** RE: Preconditions Unmet

Dear Brent,

I agree that this situation has reached a critical crossroads. In your recent "Concluding Remarks" memo, you wrote, "Well, we have reached the end of the road. It is now time for me to share my concerns with the Sovereign Grace pastors ... and a small group of former Sovereign Grace pastors or employees."

This statement among many others seemed to send a clear and unequivocal signal that there was no openness or desire on your part for any kind of personal engagement with CJ or the SGM Board. I fear your taking this step will move everyone much farther away from a process that might get to the heart of the issues you've raised.<sup>4</sup> This makes me incredibly sad, Brent, because I think it will mean you and your family will live with great agony of soul for years and years to come...

This third step is a sober step and one that has been in the works for the past 11 years. There is nothing "funny" about it but Ken needed to be chided for his pronouncement of doom.

**From:** Brent Detwiler  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 19, 2011 10:20 AM  
**To:** Ken Sande  
**Subject:** Purgatory

Hey Ken,

I think your calculations are off a little. We've already lived in "great agony of soul" for the last seven years. Our purgatorial existence began August 20, 2004 but I'll be sure to let my entire family know it will continue "for years and years to come." So thanks for your prophetic word! Well, I need to run...Mass begins soon. I've got to start reducing the years of temporal punishment. ☺

Breathing grace,  
Brent

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<sup>4</sup> I responded to this assertion on Monday, June 13, 2011 10:48 AM. The email is found on pages 4-6 in "In Need of a Public Rebuke."

P.S. Seriously, I don't mind your warning...given your perspective it's perfectly understandable.

On Sunday morning, March 17, 2002, C.J. wrote the following to all the pastors in Sovereign Grace Ministries regarding the senior pastor in our Philadelphia church and his need to step down. It is one of many examples that could be put forth.

"I type this e-mail with great sadness for I must inform you that it has become necessary for Bill to step down from pastoral ministry.... An announcement of this nature should sober and provoke each of us as we travel to the Leaders Conference. May we arrive at this year's conference more attentive and responsive to God's word, more humble and teachable. Bill rightly states in his confession that this day was avoidable not inevitable. Recognizing that the seed of every known sin resides in our heart let us purpose to identify and mortify all known sin. Let there be no secret sin in our lives. Let us be specific with those we are accountable to about our sin and current temptations so that we will not one day have to stand before the church and make a similar confession as Bill will make today."

This day was also avoidable but C.J. repeatedly chose not to follow his own counsel over many years. This will be evident as you read "In Need of a Public Rebuke," "Response Regarding Friendship and Doctrine," "A Final Appeal," and "Concluding Remarks." I did not write these documents with the churches of Sovereign Grace in mind. I never hoped or planned to send out these documents to all the churches. They were my private appeals. But those appeals have largely gone unheeded.

And if it was true that Bill must step down, that Brent must step down, that a host of other men must step down; is it not true that C.J. should step down? Absolutely, if you apply the same standards to him that he has applied to everyone else. This is an obvious conclusion. But I am not recommending that C.J. step down from ministry.<sup>5</sup> I am exhorting him to start over, come clean, and be genuinely accountable.

Finally, I have no doubt C.J. and the men around him love the Lord Jesus Christ. They are doing many things that glorify God. That is why I look forward to commending C.J. and the ministry again when repentance, reformation, and restitution have occurred. Trust lost can also be regained.

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<sup>5</sup> The next day I changed my mind and wrote Joshua. "I've changed my thinking regarding C.J. You must be ready to replace him the end of this year. There will also be changes with Dave and Steve." I felt this was a prophetic word for Joshua.