

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

SHEEP & WOLVES

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Everyone knows sheep and wolves don't mix. Wolves have a nasty habit of eating sheep. Sheep are defenseless against wolves. Thus, wise sheep do well to avoid wolves if they value their lives.

Sometimes wolves devise ways to trick the sheep. Jesus warns of the savage ingenuity of wolves, when he says, "Beware of the false

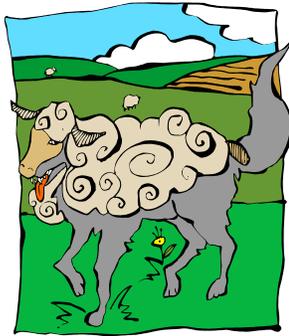
prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." These are the proverbial wolves-in-sheep's-clothing. Disguising themselves and pretending to be something they are not, they will infiltrate the flock in search of an easy meal. It is incumbent upon the real sheep to "beware" of these counterfeit sheep.

So is Jesus delivering zoological instruction? Is this a lecture in animal husbandry? Obviously we know that the Savior is employing a powerful metaphor to describe how false teachers and false prophets will steal into the church incognito, hoping to lead God's people astray. We must be on our guard against false teaching in the church, lest we be deceived and sidetracked from the truth of the gospel.

Recently I listened to a book by C.H. Spurgeon, and I heard Spurgeon turn this metaphor in a new direction. He warned of sheep dressing up like wolves – a sheep in a wolf's clothing. Specifically Spurgeon was cautioning against ministers who take on all the trappings of Ro-

man Catholicism. To all outward appearances those men looked and sounded like Catholic priests. Spurgeon warned his own generation against the protestant slide into Roman Catholic tendencies.

Spurgeon's playful turn of the phrase – "sheep in wolves' clothing" – sparked me to think about a growing problem in our day. The danger of our time is for Christians who want to look, sound, think, and act like the world. Thus our habits and our characteristics are modeled not after Christ, but after the hip-hop-happnin' world around us. This is true for those young people who mimic the "gangsta" culture of the 'hood with their "homies." This is



true of 40-somethings who dress and act like 14-year-olds. This describes the increasingly immodest apparel of men and women alike as they don fashions that leave almost nothing to the imagination. And sadly, this is true of churches that fashion their music after rock-and-roll, and model their worship services after Disneyworld.

We live in a time when sheep think it's "cool" to dress like wolves, to talk like wolves, to act like wolves – to pretend to be wolves. And what does God think? How does the Almighty react to these trends? I leave you two verses to savor and to ponder: *1 Peter 1:15* but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; *16* because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

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Mnemonics...

- *Men's Breakfast & Bible Study, 5th*
- *Pastor's Pizza & Bowling Party,*

NPP & FV

by Pastor Brian De Jong

During his visit with us, Dr. John Carrick warned about two movements that have swept through Reformed circles – the New Perspective on Paul, and the Federal Vision. As I have studied (and battled) these movements, let me share a bit more about their basic beliefs. This may help “inoculate” you against their dangers. This month I’ll focus on the NPP, and next month we’ll look at the Federal Vision.

The New Perspective on Paul (NPP) is a movement arising out of evangelical circles in England. Some of the “founders” of this movement include E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright. Of the three, N.T. (Tom) Wright is currently the most influential spokesman for this position. Wright is also the most dangerous of the three, because he connects with average Christian readers and seems so “plausible.”

Dr. Carrick told me that he knew Tom Wright from Oxford, and that in the early days Wright believed and defended the traditional Reformed understanding of justification. But due to the influences of Sanders, Dunn and others, Wright has turned against the Reformed position and has spent much energy attacking the position he once espoused.

Another friend of Wright is Dr. Don Carson. According to Dr. Carson, Wright is a very likable and personable fellow – enormously popular and personally charismatic. But Carson is also quick to point out that Wright is dead wrong in his main theological position on justification.

So what does the NPP really teach? Among other things, they believe that the Protestant Reformation badly misread Paul and the book of Romans. Luther and other Reformers went through their own personal struggles with works righteousness, and then (supposedly) projected their own experiences back onto Paul and the first century. Luther misun-

derstood the Pharisees and the nature of 1st century Judaism, and was wrong in characterizing them as works oriented. According to the NPP, Judaism in the first century was grace-based and grace oriented. Their “problem” was not a work righteousness scheme, but the fact that they were too exclusive. Thus, their attitudes toward the Gentiles were the big issue, in the view of the NPP.

*“So
what
should
we think
of these
bold
claims?”*

Based on this assumption, the NPP has sought to reconsider Paul and the conflict with the Pharisees of the 1st century. Especially and particularly they desire to rework our understanding of justification. Justification is no longer understood as a judicial act whereby God pardons the sinner of all his guilt, and imputes Christ’s righteousness to the sinner. In fact, according to the NPP, justification is not really a legal act at all. Rather, justification has to do with inclusion in the covenant, and how a person stays in the covenant.

With this new formulation of justification, it opens the door for “works” to enter the discussion. We know we are in covenant and we remain in covenant by “faithfulness.” This small but significant shift changes the formula from “justification by faith” to “justification by faithfulness.” If you are “faithful” then you will be justified, they suggest.

Gone is any focus on faith alone, gone is the emphasis on guilt, forgiveness and redemption. According to N.T. Wright, the traditional Reformed view of justification is “a piece of legal fiction.” He also despises any idea of imputation. They deny the imputation of man’s sin to Christ’s account, and they reject the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the sinner. Imputation is also “legal fiction” in their eyes.

So what should we think of these bold claims? Are these new ideas worthy of consideration? Was Luther wrong about justification by faith alone? I think not, and let me tell you why.

NPP & FV Concluded...

First, you must seriously examine Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. Here Jesus compares and contrasts the proud, self-righteous Pharisee who boasts before God in his works. He prays "to himself" about his goodness. Then there is the tax collector – the poster child for sin. He humbly comes before God, not daring even to lift his eyes, and begs for mercy. Jesus judges that the tax collector went home "justified" by his faith. The Pharisee, with all his "faithfulness" to the jots and tittles of the law, went home unjustified. Ask yourself this: does Luke 18:9-14 teach that the Pharisees were grace-based and grace oriented? Isn't it plain that the Pharisee is claiming all his "works done in obedience to the law" as the ground for his acceptance before God?

Second, if you stop and think about it, there is something fundamentally dishonest about the claims of the NPP. They assert that "justification" is not a legal act of God the Judge. Yet a close examination of the language used by the New Testament show that it is essentially legal language. You may not like the implications, but you cannot change the fact

that justification is a legal concept. To empty the terminology of its true connotations and to re-fill it with new and different connotations is deceitful. An honest student of Scripture cannot escape from the legal implications of the language of justification. Dishonest students only escape through linguistic deceit and trickery.

Finally, the NPP leaves an enormous question unanswered and unanswerable: namely, how does a man get right with God? How can man be rid of the guilt of his sin? How can a sinner be accepted in the sight of a holy God? We answer, by grace through faith in the completed work of Christ! The NPP is strangely silent on this question. They have no answer, because they have gutted the gospel of its saving truth. By removing the orthodox Protestant view of justification, they have cut out their own tongues. When sinners come crying, "What must we do to be saved?" The only thing that the NPP can mumble is "be faithful." That answer is no answer at all! What a wretched thing when Christians cannot clearly answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!"

opc.org highlight

Have a question about some biblical issue? Check out the OPC's Question & Answer section on opc.org! This part of the website contains good biblical answers to a wide spectrum of questions that individuals have posed over time.



December Birthdays



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

General Fund receipts for October totaled \$10,467.72 as compared to the budget of \$10,956.60, while General Fund disbursements for October totaled \$12,094.09. October year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$118,714.06 as compared to the budget of \$117,783.60 (an excess of \$930.46), while October year to date disbursements of \$118,216.96 were \$433.36 above budget. Through the end of October, the General Fund has increased by \$737.20.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for October totaled \$1,547.26 as compared to the budget of \$1,462.50. Year to date benevolence receipts through October totaled \$16,094.44, while the budget amount was \$14,625.00. Each month, \$475.00 is sent to Worldwide Outreach for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In addition, \$200.00 is sent each month to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee. During October, \$1,200.00 was provided in assistance to parents providing their children Chris-

tian School education or home school education. Please remember to pray for the ministries that our church helps to support.

Gifts for the annual Thank Offering may be provided up through the second Sunday of December. Please mark your gift for "Thank Offering" for any gifts you wish to be directed for this important missions support effort in our denomination. Gifts for the Thank Offering help to support missionaries both in the U.S. and around the world. In addition, funds are used to support various Christian Education ministries of our denomination. The amount received from Grace Church through November 22 totals \$1000.00

Current year gifts directed towards the Capital Fund/Church Expansion Project totaled \$42,664.65 through the end of October (89.8% of what was expected for the entire current year). Approximately 99% of 2008/9 expected gifts for the Capital Fund have been received through the end of October. The bank mortgage payment that Grace Church is required to pay is \$2,076.00 per month.



Grace OPC

December 2009

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	3	4	5 Men's Breakfast & Bible Study, 7:30 a.m.
6	7 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	8 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	9 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	10	11	12
13 Missions Sunday	14 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i>	15	16 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	17	18	19
20	21 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	22	23	24	25	26
27 Lord's Supper, (p.m.)	28	29	30 Bowling & Pizza Party: Bowling 3-5 p.m., Pizza & Games later	31		



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Memories of my Great-Grandma Churchill

by Rebecca Taggart

Before I was born and my great grandma Churchill was in her late 70's she lost her husband to a sudden heart attack. My great grandpa's name was Robert K. Churchill. He was a wonderful poet, minister, and family member. A couple of years after his death, my great grandma fell and broke her hip, so she had to move to Pine Haven Nursing Home.

We would visit my grandma at least once a month. It was always fun visiting her because she was so kind and caring. I remember when my siblings and I went to visit her, but we ended up playing bingo in the main room of the nursing home. My great Grandma enjoyed visitors and in turn she often visited sick and lonely residents on the other side of Pine Haven (That's why you would never find my great Grandma in her room). She would daily read her Bible, pray, and worship with others.

Another thing I remember about my great grandma is that when she got older, she didn't lose beauty. Well, sure she lost her beauty on the outside, but on the inside she just got more and more beautiful as she kept reading her Bible and getting closer to God. She didn't just read the Bible and do nothing about it like some people do. She read it and did what it said. Even though she was old she always tried to go to church.

I think God really blest my great grandma in so many ways. For example, my great grandma was always so healthy, even in her late 90's. She never had any strokes or heart problems that most elderly people have. Even though she was the oldest of her siblings, she lived the longest.

My great grandma died at Pine Haven Nursing home in her sleep. She was 98 years old when she died. I remember her funeral; it was the saddest place that I had ever been. I remember my Aunt making a speech about how my great grandma had helped her through a rough time, and at the middle of the speech she started crying. Everyone was sad but at the same time everyone was rejoicing inside because they knew my great grandma had finally made it to heaven.

You will almost never find a more dedicated Christian than my great grandma Churchill. She is my Grandma's role model, my mom's role model, and my role model. When you needed love, she was there. When you needed encouragement, she was there. She was kind, cheerful, loving, grateful, humble, and God-honoring, and that is why I will never forget my Great Grandma, Dorothy L. Churchill.

Rebecca Taggart, age 12 (Daughter of Gail). (This was a school project)



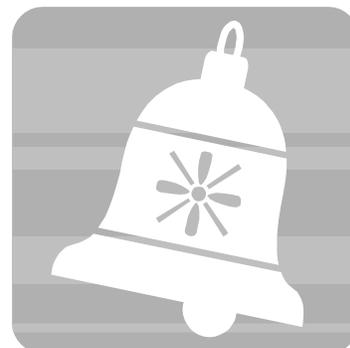
Pastor Brian's Pizza & Bowling Party

Everyone's invited to Pastor Brian's Bowling & Pizza Party, which will be held on Wednesday, December 30th. Bowling will be held from 3-5 p.m. and Pizza & Games at the church will follow. Mark your calendars for this fun time!



Christmas Program

A Christmas Program, "Who is He" will be presented by the Sunday School Students, ladies choir, and other members and will be held Sunday evening, December 20th starting at 5:00 p.m. at the church.



Nominations

It's once again time for nominations for elder, deacon, and trustees. If you have a nominee in mind, please speak with them first. If they are agreeable, you can either slip their name in the box, or speak to a member of the Session.



What a storehouse the Bible is, since a man may continue to preach from it for years, and still find that there is more to preach from than when he began to discourse upon it! What pyramids of books have been written upon the Bible, and yet we who are students find no portion over-expounded, but large parts which are scarcely touched! If you take Darling's Cyclopaedia, and look at a text which one divine has preached upon, you will see that dozens have done the same; but there are hundreds of texts which remain like virgin summits, whereon the foot of preacher has never stood. I might almost say that the major part of the Word of God is in that condition; it is still an Eldorado unexplored, a land whose dust is gold.

— C. H. S., in speech at a Bible Society meeting, 1882



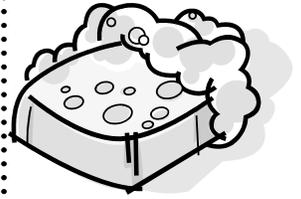
Laundry Soap

- ★ 1/3 bar Fels Naptha soap
- ★ 1/2 cup washing soda (Arm & Hammar)
- ★ 1/2 cup borax

Grate the bar soap into saucepan. Add 6 cups water and heat until melted. Add soda and borax, stir until dissolved. Remove from heat. Pour 4 cups hot water into bucket. Add soap mixture and stir. Add 1 gallon plus 6 cups water and stir. Let sit for about 24 hours and it will gel. Use 1/4 cup for front load and 1/2 cup for top load. This will make 2 gallons. Have fun!

*stir or shake the gel before putting the desired amount in the washing machine.

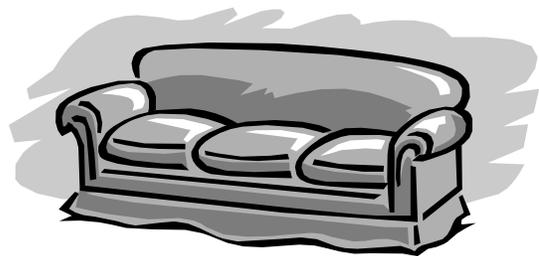
Gail Moody



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open Your
hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”

DONATION!

Do you have a couch you would consider donating? If so, please speak with one of the deacons.





Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

SERMONAUDIO.COM/

GRACESHEBOYGAN

CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:



★ Did you know that TULIP, commonly referred to as the “5 points of Calvinism” were not actually written by John Calvin?
★ Did you know that these points were actually constructed by the Synod of Dordt in the year 1618 over in Holland more than 40 years after Calvin passed away?

★ Did you know that these five principles were written to refute Arminianism, which had sprung up in the church at that time through the teachings of Jacob Arminius?

★ Did you know that Arminianism does not affirm man’s total depravity but instead teaches that each person has the inward ability to have faith and repentant as Christ died for all who choose to come to him?

★ Did you know that the Synod went back to the truths that the reformers had rediscovered, namely that man is completely dead in his sin and unable to come to Christ unless the Spirit gives him faith to repent and believe?

★ Did you know that TULIP stands for: T-Total Depravity, U- Unconditional Election, L- Limited Atonement, I- Irresistible Grace, P- Perseverance of the Saints?

★ Did you know that for an in-depth look at the meaning of each of these terms you can go to the Q&A section of the [opc.org](http://www.opc.org) website?

http://www.opc.org/qa.html?question_id=152



Pine Haven Bake & Craft Sale

This Friday, December 4, is the Pine Haven Auxiliary craft and bake sale at Oostburg State Bank from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Thanks so much to those who have already donated crafts! Donations in both categories are still needed. Items can be

brought to the bank that morning or to church by noon on Thursday. Also, you are encouraged to come out and support Pine Haven by doing a little shopping at the sale. Any questions, contact Kate or Debbie.