

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

THANKS @ YEAR'S END

By Pastor Brian De Jong

What a year was 2008! In the twelve months just past, we have seen God's goodness in many ways. He has cared for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep. We have seen people come and go, with new members replacing those who have departed. We have learned from God's word, and enjoyed true worship on a weekly basis. Our hearts have been tuned to sing God's grace, and the sacraments have been especially sweet. Most visibly, our building expansion has moved forward and we are seeing what the new and improved structure will look like.

At the close of such a banner year, it is fitting to say "Thanks" to the Lord for His favor. In Psalm 9, David says, "I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High." To receive blessings without a word of thanks is the height of ingratitude. Thank You, Lord, for ALL that You have been and done!

It is also appropriate to say a word of thanks to those servants of God who have served in 2008. We have many people deserving of "Thanks". As Pastor, I see many of these hard-workers, though their labors are often invisible to others.

I would start by thanking our officers for their tireless efforts on behalf of Christ and the congregation. Don Schler-

nitzauer, Rich, Mark, and Bob have given time and energy as elders. Jeff, Jay, Chris and Don De Troye have also ably served the needs of the congregation as our deacons. Our Trustees have also been trustworthy – Steve, Rodney, and the others.



Such a list would be incomplete without mentioning our helpers on the building project. Ken, Roger, Carl, Don, Tim, Steve, Matt, Dan, and others have put in significant hours of free labor, as have the regular clean-up crews that have transformed the construction mess of Saturday into a clean church for Sunday. Our finance committee has also served to keep the money flowing responsibly. As always, Joel has been superb as our treasurer – especially with the added activity of the construction process.

Others have also contributed time and talents to the good of the body. I'm especially grateful for our many talented musicians – Sandy, Gail, Megan, Emily, Kristin, Lona and Kathy. Our Sunday School and VBS teachers should be thanked also – Deb, Sue, Moni, Phyllis, Mark, Samantha, Rodney, Sara, Ashley, Jenna, Grace, Megan and Emily.

And then there are those "secret saints" who do much covert ministry – people like Paul & Linda, Lynn and Sandy, Ivan and Carla, and Debbie Boss. You may not be aware, for instance, of...

Volume 4, Issue 1
January 2009

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Mnemonics...

- *Men's Breakfast & Study, 10th*
- *Congregational & Corporation Meetings, 21st*

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Reading & Hearing the Word

By Thomas Watson

We must provoke ourselves to reading of the word. What an infinite mercy it is that God hath honoured us with the Scriptures! The barbarous Indians have not the oracles of God made known to them; they have the golden mines, but not the Scriptures which are more to be desired “than much fine gold,” Psalm 19:10. Our Savior bids us “search the Scriptures”, John 5:39. We must not read these holy lines carelessly, as if they did not concern us, or run over them hastily, as Israel ate the passover in haste; but peruse them with reverence and seriousness. The noble Bereans did “search the Scriptures daily,” Acts 17:11. The Scripture is the pandect of divine knowledge; it is the rule and touchstone of truth; out of this well we draw the water of life. To provoke to a diligent reading of the word, labor to have a right notion of Scripture.

Read the word as a book made by God Himself. It is given “by divine inspiration” 2 Tim. 3:16. It is the library of the Holy Ghost. The prophets and apostles were but God’s amanuenses or notaries to write the law at his mouth. The word is of divine original, and reveals the deep things of God to us. There is a numen, or sense of deity engraven in man’s heart and is to be read in the book of the creatures; ... but who this God is, and the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, is infinitely, above the light of reason; only God Himself could make this known. So for the incarnation of Christ; God and man hypostatically united in one person; the mystery of imputed righteousness; the doctrine of faith: what angel in heaven, who but God himself, could reveal these things to us? How this may provoke to diligence and seriousness in reading the word which is divinely inspired. Other books may be written by holy men, but this book is indited by the Holy Ghost.

Read the word as a perfect rule of faith; it contains all things essential to salvation. “I adore the fullness of Scripture,” saith Tertullian. The word teaches us how to please God; how to order our conversation in the world. It instructs us in all things that belong either to prudence or piety. How we should read the word with care and reverence, when

it contains a perfect model and platform of religion and is “able to make us wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15)!

When you read the word, look on it as a soul-enriching treasury. Search here as for a “vein of silver” Prov. 2:4. In this word are scattered many divine aphorisms; gather them up as so many jewels. This blessed book helps to enrich you; it fills your head with knowledge, and your heart with grace; it stores you with promises: a man may be rich in bonds. In this field the pearl of price is hid: What are all the world’s riches compared to these? Islands of spices, coasts of pearl, rocks of diamonds? These are but the riches that reprobates may have, but the word gives us those riches which angels have.

Read the word as a book of evidences. -- How carefully doth one read over his evidences! Would you know whether God is your God? Search the records of Scripture, 1 John 3:24. “Hereby we know that he abides in us.” Would you know whether you are heirs of the promise? you must find it in these sacred writings. 2 Thes. 2:13. “He hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification.” They who are vessels of grace, shall be vessels of glory.

Look upon the word as a spiritual magazine, out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and satan. 1. Here are weapons to fight against sin. The word of God is a consecrated sword that cuts asunder the lusts of the heart. When pride begins to lift up itself, the sword of the Spirit destroys this sin, 1 Peter 4:5 “God resists the proud.” When passion vents itself, the word of God, like Hercules’s club, beats down this angry fury: Eccles. 5:9. “Anger rests in the bosom of fools.” When lust boils, the word of God cools that intemperate heat, Ephes. 5:5. “No unclean person hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ.” 2. Here are weapons to fight against Satan. The word fenceth off temptation. When the devil tempted Christ, he three times wounded the old serpent with the sword of the Spirit. ’Tis written, Matt. 4:7. Satan never sooner foils a Christian than when he is unarmed, and without Scripture weapons.

Watson Continued...

Look upon the word as a spiritual glass to dress yourselves by: It is a looking-glass for the blind, Psalm 19:8. In other glasses you may see your faces; in this glass you may see your hearts, Psalm 119:104. "Through Thy precepts I get understanding." This looking-glass of the word clearly represents Christ; it sets him forth in his person, nature, offices, as most precious and eligible, Song of Solomon 6:16. "He is altogether lovely;" he is a wonder of beauty, a paradise of delight. Christ who was veiled over in types, is clearly revealed in the mirror of the Scriptures.

Look upon the word as a book of spiritual receipts. Basil compares the word to an apothecary's shop, which has all kinds of medicines and antidotes. If you find yourselves dead in duty, here is a receipt, Psalm 119:50. "Thy word hath quickened me." If you find your hearts hard, the word doth liquify and melt them; therefore it is compared to fire for its mollifying power, Jer. 23:29. If you are poisoned with sin, here is an herb to expel it.

Look upon the word as a sovereign elixer to comfort you in distress. It comforts you against all your sins, temptations, and afflictions. What are the promises but divine cordials to revive fainting souls. A gracious heart goes feeding on a promise as Samson on the honeycomb, Judges 14:9. The word comforts against sickness and death, 1 Cor 15:55. "O death, where is thy sting?" A Christian dies embracing the promise, as Simeon did Christ, Heb. 11:13.

Read the word as the last Will and Testament of Christ. Here are many legacies given to them that love him; pardon of sin, adoption, consolation. This will is in force, being sealed in Christ's blood. With what seriousness doth a child read over the will and testament of his father, that he may see what is left him.

Read it as a book by which you must be

judged: John 12:48. "The word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day." They who live according to the rules of this book, shall be acquitted; they who live contrary to them, shall be condemned. There are two books God will go by, the book of Conscience, and the book of Scripture: the one shall be the witness, and the other the judge. How should every Christian then provoke himself to read this book of God with care and devotion! This is that book which God will judge by at the last. -- They who fly from the word as a guide, shall be forced to submit to it as a judge.

*"What are
the
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2. The second duty of religion wherein we must provoke ourselves, is, in hearing of the word. We may bring our bodies to the word with ease, but not our hearts without offering violence to ourselves. When we come to the word preached, we come to a business of the highest importance, therefore should stir up ourselves and hear with the greatest devotion. Constantine the emperor was noted for his reverent attention to the word: Luke 19:48. "All the people were very attentive to hear him." In the Greek it is "they hung upon his lip."-- When the word is dispensed, we are to lift up the everlasting doors of our hearts that the

King of glory may enter in.

1. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who scarce mind what is said, as if they were not at all concerned in the business: they come to church more for custom than conscience: Ezekiel 33:31. "They come to thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them." If we could tell them of a rich purchase, or of some place of preferment, they would diligently attend; but when the word of life is preached, they disregard it.

2. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing, who come to the word in a

Watson Concluded...

dull, drowsy manner, as if they came to church to take a receipt to make them sleep. The word is to feed; it is strange to sleep at meat. The word judgeth men: it is strange for a prisoner to fall asleep at the bar. To such sleepy hearers God may say, *sleep on*. He may suffer them to be so stupefied, that no ordinance shall them: Matt. 3:25. "While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares." The Devil is never asleep, but sows the tares of sin in a drowsy hearer.

That we may, when we come to the word, offer violence to ourselves, and stir up ourselves to hear with devotion, consider,

1. It is God that speaks to us. If a judge gives a charge upon the bench, all listen.-- If a king speaks, all pay attention. When we come to the word, we should think thus with ourselves, we are to hear God in this preacher. Therefore Christ is said, now to speak to us from Heaven, Heb. 7:25. -- Christ speaks in his ministers, as a king speaketh in the person of his ambassador. When Samuel knew it was the Lord that spake to him, he lent an ear, 2. Sam. 3:5. "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth." They who slight God speaking in His word shall hear him speaking in his wrath, Psalm 2:5. "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath."

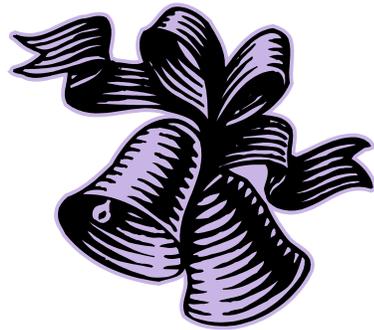
2. Let us consider the weightiness of the matters delivered to us. As Moses said to Israel, Deut. 3:19. "I call Heaven and Earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death." We preach to men of Christ and of eternal recompenses; here are the *magnalia legis*, the *weighty matters of the law*; and doth not all this call for serious attention? There is a great deal of difference between a letter of news read to us, and a letter of special business, wherein our whole land and estate is concerned. In the word preached our salvation is concerned; here we are instructed to the kingdom of God, and if ever we will be serious, it should be now: Deut. 37:47. "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."

3. If the word be not regarded, it will not be remembered. Many complain they cannot remember; here is the reason, God punisheth their carelessness

in hearing with forgetfulness. He suffers Satan to take away the word from them, Matt. 13:4. "The fowls of the air came and devoured the seed." The Devil is no recusant; he comes to church, but it is not with any good intent; he takes away the word from men. How many have been robbed of the sermon and their souls both at once.

4. It may be the last time that God will ever speak to us in His word; it may be the last sermon that ever we shall hear; and we may go from the place of hearing, to the place of judging. Did people think thus when they come into the house of God; perhaps this will be the last time that God will counsel us about our souls, the last time that ever we shall see our minister's face, with what devotion would they come! how would their affections be all on fire in hearing? We give great attention to the last speeches of friends. A parent's dying words are received as oracles. Oh let all this provoke us to diligence in hearing; let us think this may be the last time that *Aaron's bell* shall sound in our ears and before another day, we shall be in another world.

Taken from Heaven Taken by Storm, by Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686), "Reading & Hearing the Word."



Help Needed!

Help is needed!! If you would like to help with the building expansion project, here is a great way!

If you would be willing to lend a hand and clean up the parts of the building that are needed for the coming Sunday by vacuuming & dusting & such, just call up Steve & Megan Boss at 946-2904 for details and which day might be best for the clean up.

We are very thankful for all those who have helped this way in the past! Thank you!!



Front Page... Concluded

...the great job Darryl Harmelink does as our representative on the Pine Haven Board, or how much Kate, Marge and Pam do in serving the residents of Pine Haven.

Near and dear to my heart are the social fellowship activities. We owe a debt of gratitude to Mary, Wendy, Kim, DeLou, Deb and Roger for coming up with good ideas, and carrying them out for the enjoyment of everyone. And then there are the “regulars” who have served Grace Church for so many years – we give thanks for Harlan and Nancy, Toni, and others.

Finally, I’d just like to thank Harvey Williams for being himself – he keeps us all smiling!

You see, God has been good to us and through us! He has blessed us directly and indirectly. Can you imagine what He will do in 2009?



January Birthdays



Happy Birthday!!!

Meetings

The Congregational & Corporation Meetings will be held on Wednesday, January 21st starting at 7:00 p.m. The alternate snow date is the next Wednesday, January 28th. Those in charge of committee reports are asked to hand them in to the church secretary (mailbox S. Boss) or e-mail them to graceopc@tds.net.

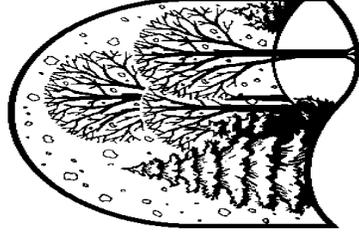




Grace OPC

January 2009

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



WINTER

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

Perfect Winter Stew

- ★ 3/4 cup Kraft Zesty Italian Light Dressing
- ★ 2 lbs. beef for stew (beef chuck roast cut into 1/2-1 in. chunks)
- ★ 6 slices lean bacon chopped
- ★ 3 cups sliced mushrooms
- ★ 1 cup chopped onion (1 large)
- ★ 3 cups sliced carrots
- ★ 1 1/2 lbs. potatoes, peeled, cut into large chunks
- ★ 1 can (14 1/2 oz.) stewed tomatoes, undrained
- ★ 1 can (14 1/2 oz.) beef broth

Pour dressing over meat in large resealable bag. Seal bag; turn to evenly coat meat with dressing. Refrigerate 30 minutes to marinate.

Meanwhile, cook bacon in a large pan on medium heat 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove bacon from pan. Drain. Add mushrooms and onions in the same pan, cook medium-high 10 minutes or until tender. Remove meat from marinade; discard marinade. Add meat, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, broth, & bacon. Stir. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; cover & simmer 1 hour 15 minutes.

Uncover, simmer an additional 15 minutes or until meat is cooked through and sauce is thickened. Use cornstarch/water mix to thicken if needed.

Serves 8 people.

Deborah Arndt



“There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him?”

ARE WE BUILDING GOD'S WAY?

by Don Schlernitzauer

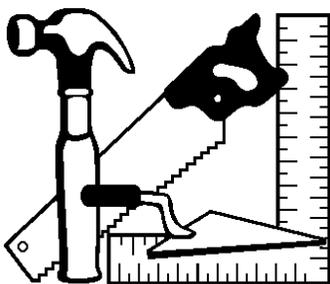
“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night... Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you are doing.”

— *1 Thes. 5:1-2, 11 (ESV)*

In our current expansion and remodeling, the physical house of Grace OPC is being built up. We don't know what the immediate months or years ahead hold, but we hope that these improved facilities will better able us to minister according to God's will as He gives us opportunity.

There is undoubtedly much ministry that needs to be done before what Paul in v. 2 calls “the day of the Lord”, that is, when Jesus returns. We believe our current physical improvements to God's house are necessary and good. But in themselves they won't amount to more than a hill of beans if we do not faithfully and assiduously apply ourselves to that which Paul commands in v. 11: (1) to encourage one another; (2) to build up one another. It would be foolish to build physically and at the same time neglect the spiritual construction project to which God has called us.

The Bible often stresses the need for believers to encourage one another, and by that it doesn't just mean saying hello or shaking hands. Rather the Scriptures give us many ways for us to minister to one another in this godly fashion including: (1) giving evidences of our faith (Romans 1:12); by not neglecting meeting together (Heb. 10:25); (3) by helping each other to



know God's will in His Word (1 Cor. 14:31). Each of us in the body of Christ is to be a Barnabas to one another (which means “son of encouragement” — Acts 4:36.)

The second part of Paul's command in v. 11, our building up of one another, goes hand in hand with mutual encouragement. This building up of each other is not simply giving appropriate compliments; that is more the province of the command to encourage one another. The Greek word translated “build up” is “oikodome”, formed from “oikos”, meaning house, and “domeo”, meaning to build. The idea of this word is “to build a spiritual house” or “to profit spiritually.” I believe the translation “to edify” in the NKJV more appropriately captures the original meaning.

To better grasp what is here meant by edifying one another, I find profit in combining the thoughts of Romans 2:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” with those in

Col. 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.” In the body of Christ each of us is to spiritually edify one another and in so doing help one another build our spiritual houses. This means each of us as Christians is to work to know God's word as well as we can, and then through our conversation, priorities, decisions, attitudes, — in fact, in any way our lives touch the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, convey the wisdom of God's word to them.

If we are to build according to God's way, Paul is telling us we are not only to be a Barnabas to one another, but that we are each to be our brother's teacher. Such is the way God builds His house in preparation for Christ's return.



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:

OPC.ORG



- ★ Did you know that Thomas Watson was born around the year 1620?
- ★ Did you know that he attended Emmanuel College in Cambridge, England “the nursery of the Puritans”¹ and became a minister?
- ★ That it was reported that he applied himself to his studies very diligently?

- ★ Did you know that he involved himself in a plot by Christopher Love to set up the monarchy again in England in 1651 and ended up in jail?
- ★ That a year later he was released & resumed his ministry?
- ★ Did you know that the government enstated an “Act of Uniformity” which caused him to loose his pastorate?
- ★ That he continued spreading the good news privately after this?
- ★ That he left a myriad of sermons & writings including, Heaven Taken by Storm, from which the inside article is taken?
- ★ That he died in 1686 while praying in secret?

Information found at <http://www.ccel.org/w/watson>, www.fivesolas.com/watson/wattarget.htm, & ¹the inside leaf of Heaven Taken by Storm, by Thomas Watson, edited by Dr. Don Kistler, The Northampton Press, 2007.

Pie Sale

Don't miss Sheboygan County Christian High's annual pie sale! This year they are offering Door County Cherry pies and Michigan Blueberry pies in the usual 10" size, and the special 6" Sweetheart pie. The smaller size is perfect for singles or a couple. These pies are ready to freeze or bake, so order enough to last all year! The 10" pies are \$12.00 each and the 6" sweetheart pies are \$7.00 each. Order your pies. Pick up your pies at SCCHS at 929 Greenfield

Avenue, on Sat., February 7 from 9:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. or Mon., February 9 from 10:00 a.m.- 6:00p.m. Orders are due January 26!

