

# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## ASSIMILATION

*By Pastor Brian De Jong*

As a new year dawns for Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the topic of assimilation is much on my mind. More specifically, it seems to me that two acts of assimilation are needful if 2012 is going to be a good and godly year for our congregation.

The first part of assimilation may seem obvious to most of our ‘regulars.’ We have numerous new visitors who are worshipping with us on a regular basis, and will likely be joining our membership soon. With so many new folk, effort is needed to assimilate them into our group.

Paul urged such assimilation in Romans 16:1-2, which read, *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; <sup>2</sup> that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*

Paul apparently admired this sister Phoebe. She had assisted him in his ministry, and he knew her commitment to the kingdom of God. He also realized that her move from Cenchrea to Rome would be challenging for her. Thus he commends her to the Roman congregation, speaks of her service to the church, and urges the Romans to receive her in the Lord a manner worthy of the saints. Beyond just receiving her into their number, he appeals for their help to Phoebe ‘in whatever matter she may have need of you.’

New people often have a very challenging time fitting into an established congregation. While they are treated cordially, they don’t have long-standing friendships. If they need help, they are sometimes shy to ask. Furthermore, they feel isolated and alone while others are interacting with their own established circles.

Assimilation is never easy, but it is most necessary. If newcomers are left all by themselves, they may grow discouraged and decide to leave. If no one goes out of their way to include them in meaningful ways, the new person feels like a third wheel – unwanted and unappreciated. This can be particularly painful if they had a vibrant church home elsewhere. Their new church just doesn’t measure up to their old church, and they yearn for the good old days when they ‘belonged.’

Not only should the ‘old guard’ welcome and embrace the ‘new guard,’ but we must find ways for these new friends to use their gifts and abilities to serve the Lord and His people. Phoebe had been very helpful to many – now she needed help. But as soon as she got her feet on the ground, she would want to be helping others again. The Roman Christians needed to open the circle so that Phoebe would have a place to serve. We, too, need to find ways for our newest friends to meaningfully serve the Lord. There is an added bonus when new members and old members serve together – they get to know each other quickly, and learn to...

*...continued on the last page*

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Inside this issue:

<i>Pastor’s Article</i>	1
<i>The Hold Fast by Charles Spurgeon</i>	2-3
<i>January Birthdays</i>	4
<i>Congregational &amp; Corporation Migs.</i>	4
<i>January Calendar</i>	5
<i>Letter</i>	6-7
<i>Pray for Your Missionaries by the Schlernitzauers</i>	7
<i>Thank You</i>	8
<i>Camp Calvin</i>	8
<i>Recipe Corner</i>	9
<i>Front Page Concluded</i>	10
<i>Spurgeon Corner</i>	10

### Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, 10th*
- *Congregational Meeting, 18th*

# The Hold Fast

by Charles H. Spurgeon

*“Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.”*—Proverbs 4:13.

Faith may be well described as taking hold upon divine instruction. God has condescended to teach us, and it is ours to hear with attention and receive his words; and while we are hearing faith comes, even that faith which saves the soul. To take “fast hold” is an exhortation which concerns the strength, the reality, the heartiness, and the truthfulness of faith, and the more of these the better. If to take hold is good, to take fast hold is better. Even a touch of the hem of Christ’s garment causeth healing to come to us, but if we want the full riches which are treasured up in Christ we must not only touch but take hold; and if we would know from day to day to the very uttermost all the fullness of his grace, we must take fast hold, and so maintain a constant and close connection between our souls and the eternal fountain of life. It were well to give such a grip as a man gives to a plank when he seizes hold upon it for his very life—that is a fast hold indeed.

We are to take fast hold of instruction, and the best of instruction is that which comes from God; the truest wisdom is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus: of that therefore we are to take fast hold. The best understanding is obedience to the will of God and a diligent learning of those saving truths which God has set before us in his word: so that in effect we are exhorted to take hold of Christ Jesus our Lord, the incarnate wisdom in whom dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We are not to let him go but to keep him and hold him, for he is our life. Does not John in his gospel tell us that the Word is our light for instruction and at the same time our life? “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The more we abide in the Lord Jesus and the more firmly we take hold upon him, the better will it be for us in a thousand ways. I intend at this time to

speaking as the Holy Spirit shall enable me upon this *fast-hold*; and I reckon that the subject is one of the most important which can occupy your attention at this particular crisis in the history of the church. Many there be around us who believe in Christ, but it is with a very trembling faith and their hold is unsteady; we need to have among us men of tighter grip, who really believe what they profess to believe, who know the truth in its living power, and are persuaded of its certainty, so that they cannot by any

means be moved from their steadfastness. Among the vacillating crowd we long to see fast-holders who are pillars in the house of our God, whose grasp of divine truth is not that of babes or boys, but of men full grown and vigorous.

We shall handle our subject by speaking first upon *the method* by which we may take fast hold; then upon *the difficulties* which will lie in our way in so doing; thirdly, upon *the benefits* of such a firm grasp; and lastly upon *the arguments* for our fast holding mentioned in the text...

IV. Now lastly I have to mention *the arguments* of the text, which are three. All through the sermon I have been using argument, therefore I shall be the more brief and draw to a close.

The first argument is, take fast hold of true religion because it is your best friend. Read the text: “Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go.” You cannot find your way to heaven without this guide, therefore do not suffer it to leave you... What a sweet companion the gospel is! How often it has cheered you! ...Do you what the disciples at Emmaus did when Jesus talked with them: they constrained him, saying “Abide with us.” Do not let him go; you will be a lonely pilgrim if you do. No, if you could be led by an angel but must lose the presence of your God, you would be wise to cry out against such an evil, and like Moses plead: “If thy Spirit go not with us, carry us not up hence.”

The next argument is that true godliness

*...take  
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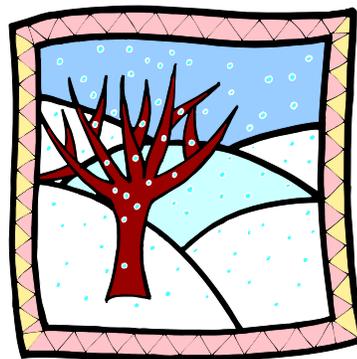
## Spurgeon Concluded...

should be held fast, for it is your treasure. “Keep it,” says our text. It is your best inheritance at the present moment, and it is to be your eternal inheritance: keep it then. Let everything else go, but do not part with a particle of truth. The slightest fragment of truth is more valuable than a diamond. Hold it then with all firmness. You are so much the richer by every truth you know; you will be so much the poorer by every truth you forget. Hold it then, and hide it in your heart. A certain king who had a rare diamond sent it to a foreign court, entrusting it to a very faithful servant. This servant was attacked however on the road by a band of robbers, and as they could not find the diamond, they drew their swords and killed him. He was found dead, but his master exclaimed, “He has not lost the diamond, I am sure!” He judged truly, for the trusty servant had swallowed the gem and so preserved it with his life. We also should thus place the truth in our inward parts, and then we shall never be deprived of it. A priest took a Testament from an Irish boy. “But” cried the boy, “you cannot take away those six chapters of Matthew that I learned by heart.” They may take away our books but they cannot take away what we have fed upon and made our own. “His flesh is meat indeed, his blood is drink indeed,” for when we have fed upon him our Lord Jesus remains in us the hope of glory. Hold fast the truth, O believers in Jesus, for it is your treasure.

Lastly, it is your “lift.” Mr. Arnot, in his very beautiful book upon the Proverbs, tells a story to illustrate this text. He says that in the Southern seas an American vessel was attacked by a wounded whale. The huge monster ran out for the length of a mile from the ship, and then turned round, and with the whole force of its acquired speed struck the ship and made it leak at every timber, so as to begin to go down. The sailors got out all their boats, filled them as quickly as they could with the necessaries of life, and began to pull away from the ship. Just then two strong men might be seen leaping into the water who swam to the vessel, leaped on board, disappeared for a moment, and then came up bringing something in

their hands. Just as they sprang into the sea, down went the vessel, and they were carried round in the vortex, but they were observed to be both of them swimming, not as if struggling to get away, but as if looking for something, which at last they both seized and carried to the boats. What was this treasure? What article could be so valued as to lead them to risk their lives? It was the ship’s compass which had been left behind, without which they could not have found their way out of those lonely southern seas into the high road of commerce. That compass was life to them, and the gospel of the living God is the same to us. You and I must venture all for the gospel: this infallible word of God must be guarded to the death. Men may tell us what they please, and say what they will, but we will risk everything sooner than give up those eternal principles by which we have been saved. The Lord give all of us his abundant grace that we may take fast hold of divine instruction. Amen.

*Taken from a sermon delivered on Sunday, June 9, 1878 “The Hold Fast” by Charles H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Chapel, Newington.*



# January Birthdays



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## Annual Congregational & Corporation Meeting

This year's annual Congregational & Corporation Meeting will be held on Wednesday evening, January 18th starting at 7:00 p.m. at the church. As a reminder, all committee reports are due in by Wednesday, the 11th of January so the agendas can be distributed the Sunday before the meeting.





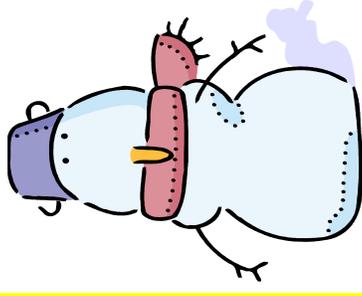
Grace OPC

# January 2012

*Showing forth the  
excellencies of  
Jesus Christ*

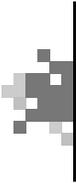


Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	3	4	5	6	7
8 Missions Sunday	9 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.</i>	10 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	11 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	12	13	14
15	16 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class, 3:30 p.m.</i>	17	18 Congregational/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



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## *Pray for Your Missionaries*

“Praying...and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Eph.6:19).

Just as the Apostle Paul was dependent upon the Christians of his day to pray for his ability to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, so our missionaries today are likewise very much in need of our prayers for their ministry, whether it is in Asia, Africa, Europe or the Americas. So that we may be more personally involved, each church family has been assigned a specific missionary family. A few weeks ago prayer cards were placed in the church mail boxes in order that each family would be able to pray for and communicate with their missionary. If you did not receive a card and would like one, see Don or Shary DeTroye. As we are reminded in the book of James:

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and

he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit”“(James 5:17-18).

In like manner, let us pray fervently that our missionaries may see through their work and our prayers the spiritual dead come to life and then progressively take on the very likeness of Christ. What a privilege we have in our prayers for their work!

*Don & Pam Schlernitzauer*





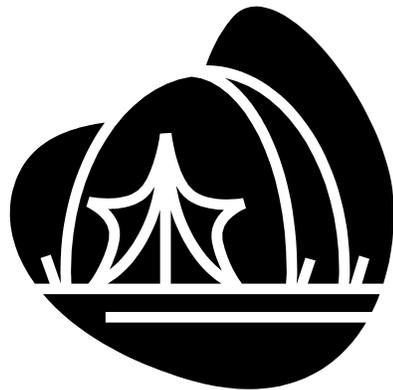
# Thank You

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## Camp Calvin

*Mark your calendars for...*

**Camp Calvin**  
**June 18-23, 2012**



# Hazelnut Cookies

- ★ 2 cups white flour
- ★ 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ★ 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- ★ 1/2 tsp. salt
- ★ 1 stick butter, softened
- ★ 1 1/2 cups sugar
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 1 cup nutella
- ★ 1 tsp. vanilla
- ★ chopped pecans

Mix the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, & salt in a bowl.

In another bowl, beat the butter & sugar on medium speed for 5 minutes. Add eggs one at a time, beating until well blended before adding the next. Add the nutella & vanilla, beating until combined. Add the flour mixture & stir until just combined. Chill dough for four hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 350°, & line the baking sheets with parchment paper.

Scoop dough into balls into a size of about 3 Tbsp., roll in pecans, or instead, roll into balls and then press the nuts on the top of the cookie. Bake cookies, six at a time, until edges are set, about 15 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets. For the perfect cookie, remove them from the oven when the centers look underdone.

*Samantha Nyhof*



“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.”



Showing forth the  
excellencies of Jesus  
Christ

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## Spurgeon Corner

*“Continue in prayer.”*  
(Colossians 4:2)

It is interesting to remark how large a portion of Sacred Writ is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises.

We scarcely open the Bible before we read, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;” and just as we are about to close the volume, the “Amen” of an earnest supplication meets our ear. Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elias; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in his Word, he intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If he has said much about prayer, it is because he knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray. Dost thou want nothing? Then, I fear thou dost not know thy poverty. Hast thou no mercy to ask of God? Then, may the Lord’s mercy show thee thy misery! A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of a Christian. If thou be a child of God, thou wilt seek thy Father’s face, and live in thy Father’s love. Pray that this year thou mayst be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter oftener into the banqueting-house of his love. Pray that thou mayst be an example and a blessing unto others, and that thou mayst live more to the glory of thy Master. The motto for this year must be, “Continue in prayer.”



*Evening, January 2, Morning & Evening, by C. H. SPURGEON*

## Front Article Concluded

...appreciate each other deeply.

The second area of assimilation follows the first – we all need to assimilate the truth of God’s word into our lives. Whether we’re new members, or long-time members, we all need to be doers of the word, and not mere hearers. It can be very easy (and tempting) to listen intently to sermons, Bible studies, Sunday School lessons and even Bible reading – and then go away and immediately forget what we’ve heard and learned.

To be an effectual doer of the word, you must

first understand what it says, and what it requires of you. Then you must make that decision to do what God is commanding. In this way, we put into practice what we’re learning and that word takes root in our hearts and lives. When the truth of God’s word becomes a part of our lifestyle, we begin to enjoy God’s blessings as we keep His commands out of gratitude to Christ.

So will you assimilate – our visitors and new members, and God’s holy word? Will you welcome them in and embrace them? This is our challenge!