



# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## Idolatry & the State

By Pastor Brian De Jong

What is a Christian supposed to do when the civil government overreaches its God-given authority? And how should we respond to our government when it demands unquestioned compliance with anything and everything that it says?

Generally speaking, we have a duty to pray for our governing officials so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives (see 1 Timothy 2:1-2). We are also to be generally obedient and respectful of their authority, since they are “ministers of God” appointed to do us good (see Romans 13:1-4).

There are times, however, when civil magistrates overstep their proper bounds, and do things that ought not be done. One such case is found in the familiar story of Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

In their day, the Babylonian empire reigned supreme. Nebuchadnezzar was the unrivaled ruler of

the greatest kingdom on earth. God had previously warned Nebuchadnezzar of his peril in a dream involving a large statue. Nebuchadnezzar apparently missed the point of that warning.

Instead of humbling himself before the God of heaven, Nebuchadnezzar constructed a monstrosity – a golden statue that was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Whom did the statue remind one of? Was it a statue of Nebuchadnezzar himself? That seems more than likely.

Not only did the king erect this gigantic monument to himself, but he demanded that his entire population bow

down and worship the statue, whenever they heard the musical cue. A decree to that effect was circulated throughout the land.

When the big day came, and the music started, the peoples of the Babylonian empire bowed down to Nebuchadnezzar’s idolatrous eyesore. Everyone participated except some Jews. Three Jews were singled out by the Chaldeans, and they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar to answer for themselves.

In a patient and benevolent way, Nebuchadnezzar explained their error, and gave them an opportunity to amend their ways. They would be given another chance to show their dedication to their benevolent monarch. But if they did not comply, the fiery furnace awaited. By this action, Nebuchadnezzar was demanding implicit obedience and

religious homage from these Jews to himself and his statue. The statue was really a representative of Nebuchadnezzar, since the text emphasizes ten times that the king had set it up.

Everyone awaited their answer – would they admit their wrongdoing, and make amends? In a word, they said “No!” They did not need to even answer the king’s ridiculous suggestion. However, they were ready to die in the furnace rather than



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### Mnemonics...

- **3/9 Session Meeting**
- **3/18 Presbytery Christian Ed Seminar**
- **3/19-3/20 Presbytery**
- **3/21 Fellowship Lunch**
- **3/27 Men and Boy’s Leadership Breakfast**

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## Chapter 10: Faults

HE who boasts of being perfect is perfect in folly. I have been a good deal up and down the world, and I never did see either a perfect horse or a perfect man, and I never shall till two Sundays come together. You cannot get white flour out of a coal sack nor perfection out of human nature; he who looks for it had better look for sugar in the sea. The old saying is, "Lifeless, faultless About dead men we should say nothing but good; but as for the living, they are all tarred more or less with the black brush, and half an eye can see it. Every head has a soft place in it, and every heart has its black drop. Every rose has its prickles, and every day its night. Even the sun shows spots, and the skies are darkened with clouds. Nobody is so wise but he has folly enough to stock a stall at Vanity Fair. Where I could not see the fool's cap, I have nevertheless heard the bells jingle. As there is no sunshine without some shadows, so is all human good mixed up with more or less of evil. Even poor law guardians have their little failings, and parish beadles are not wholly of heavenly nature. The best wine has its dregs. All men's faults are not written on their foreheads, and it's quite as well they are not, or hats would need very wide brims. Yet, as sure as eggs are eggs, faults of some sort nestle in every bosom. There's no telling when a man's sins may show themselves, for hares pop out of the ditch just when you are not looking for them. A horse that is weak in the legs may not stumble for a mile or two, but it is in him, and the rider had better hold him up well. The tabby cat is not lapping milk just now, but leave the dairy door open, and we will see if she is not as bad a thief as the kitten. There's fire in the flint, cool as it looks: wait till the steel gets a knock at it, and you will see. Everybody can read that riddle, but it is not everybody that will remember to keep his gunpowder out of the way of the candle.

If we would always recollect that we live among men who are imperfect, we should not be in such a fever when we find out our friends' failings. What's rotten will rend, and cracked pots will leak. Blessed is he who expects nothing of poor flesh and blood, for he shall never be disappointed. The best of men are men at best, and the best wax will melt.

*It is a good horse that never stumbles,*

*And a good wife that never grumbles.*

But surely such horses and wives are only found in the fool's paradise, where dumplings grow on trees. In this wicked world the straightest timber has knots in it, and the cleanest field of wheat has its share of weeds. The most careful driver one day upsets the cart; the cleverest cook spills a little broth; and as I know to my sorrow a very decent plowman will now and then break the plow and often make a crooked furrow. It is foolish to turn off a tried friend because of a failing or two, for you may get rid of a one-eyed nag and buy a blind one. Being all of us full of faults, we ought to keep two bears, and learn to bear and forbear with one another. Since we all live in glass houses, we should none of us throw stones. Everybody laughs when the saucepan says to the kettle, "How black you are!" Other men's imperfections show us our imperfection for one sheep is much like another; and if there's an speck in my neighbor's eye, there is no doubt one in mine. We ought to use our neighbors as mirrors to see our own faults in, and mend in ourselves what we see in them.

I have no patience with those who poke their noses into every man's house to smell out his faults, and put on magnifying glasses to discover their neighbors' flaws. Such folks had better look at home; they might see the devil where they little expected. What we wish to see, we shall see or think we see. Faults are always thick where love is thin. A white cow is all black if your eye chooses to make it so. If we sniff long enough at rose water, we shall find out that it has a bad smell. It would be a far more pleasant business, at least for other people, if fault-finders would turn their dogs to hunt out the good points in other folks; the game would pay better, and nobody would stand with a pitchfork to keep the hunters off his farm. As for our own faults, it would take a large slate to hold the account of them; but, thank God, we know where to take them and how to get the better of them. With all our faults, God loves us still if we are trusting in His Son. Therefore, let us not be downhearted, but hope to live and learn and do some good service before we die. Though the cart creaks, it will get home with its load, and the old horse, broken-kneed as he is, will do a sight of work yet. There's no use in lying down and doing nothing because we cannot do everything as we should like. Faults or no faults, plowing must be done; imperfect people must do it, too, or there will be no harvest next year. Bad plowman as John may be, the angels won't do his work for him, and so he is off to do it himself. Go along, Violet! Gee, whoa! Dapper!

# Upcoming Events

There will be a Presbytery Christian Ed Seminar on Thursday, March 18th at Calvary in Cedar Grove at 7:00 pm. This event is free and open to the public!

We will be having a fellowship lunch after Sunday School on March 21st.

We will be a having a Men and Boy's Leadership breakfast on March 27th at 7 am.

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“Nobody ever outgrows  
Scripture; the book widens and  
deepens with our years.”

*C.H. Spurgeon*



# March Birthdays

Paul Damkot	1 <sup>st</sup>	Margaret Adam	10 <sup>th</sup>
Lynn Baatz	5 <sup>th</sup>	Tim Voskuil	24 <sup>th</sup>
Oliver Mamazza	6 <sup>th</sup>	Joe Mamazza	29 <sup>th</sup>
Tammy Voskuil	8 <sup>th</sup>		



## *March Anniversaries*

Jeff and Wendy Froh  
 March 1st      25 Years





*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*

# March 2021

Grace OPC



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Session Meeting	10	11	12t	13
14	15	16	17	18 Presbytery Christian Ed Seminar	19 Presbytery	20 Presbytery
21 Fellowship Lunch following Sunday School	22	23	24	25	26	27 Men & Boys Leadership Breakfast
28 Lord's Supper	29	30	31			

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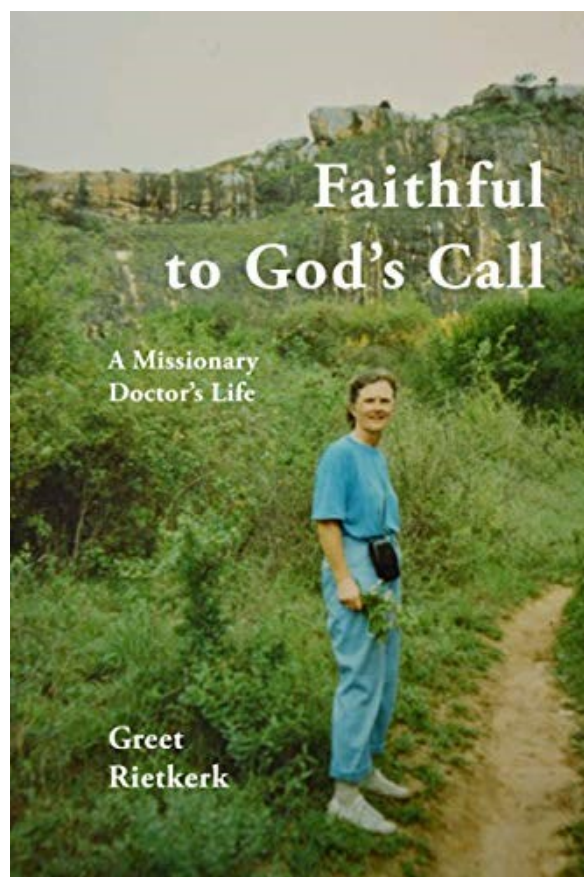
## Book Review

By Dorothy Wingard

*Faithful to God's Call*

by Greet Rietkerk

Our church library now has a copy of the autobiography of Dr. Grietje “Greet” Rietkerk, missionary doctor from the Netherlands, who served in OP missions in Eritrea and Kenya. The book is short, includes good photos, and gives a flavor of God’s kingdom work overseas in the 1970-1990s. God’s providence in all Greet’s experience is noteworthy—beginning with growing up in a very large, Christian family in Lisse (tulip country), south of Amsterdam. Her education stopped after middle school due to family needs, and her first job outside the home was in a bank; nevertheless, God so directed and provided that she went on to complete medical studies in a prestigious university in the Netherlands. Greet’s ability to adapt, her optimism and sense of humor, and her unflappable faith in God allowed her to work in sometimes primitive conditions, sometimes torrid climates, the middle of war, with overwhelming numbers of patients, and in contrasting cultures/languages. Characteristically she often understates the difficulty of those situations, to which Brian and I can attest. It is a joy to read her description of the medical work as “a beautiful work” and her reminder that was God’s work in which she was an instrument.



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Showing forth the  
excellencies of  
Jesus Christ

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## Spurgoen Corner

“He is precious.”

1 Peter 2:7

As all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights centre in our Beloved. The glances of his eyes outshine the sun: the beauties of his face are fairer than the choicest flowers: no fragrance is like the breath of his mouth. Gems of the mine, and pearls from the sea, are worthless things when measured by his preciousness. Peter tells us that Jesus is precious, but he did not and could not tell us *how* precious, nor could any of us compute the value of God’s unspeakable gift. Words cannot set forth the preciousness of the Lord Jesus to his people, nor fully tell how essential he is to their satisfaction and happiness. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden himself, and all the world was black to you; or it was night, and since the bright and morning star was gone, no other star could yield you so much as a ray of light. What a howling wilderness is this world without our Lord! If once he hideth himself from us, withered are the flowers of our garden; our pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and a tempest overturns our hopes. All earth’s candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness be eclipsed. He is the soul of our soul, the light of our light, the life of our life. Dear reader, what wouldst thou do in the world without him, when thou wakest up and lookest forward to the day’s battle? What wouldst thou do at night, when thou comest home jaded and weary, if there were no door of fellowship between thee and Christ? Blessed be his name, he will not suffer us to try our lot without him, for Jesus never forsakes his own. Yet, let the thought of *what life would be without him* enhance his preciousness.

Evening, March 1st, C.H. Spurgeon

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worship this golden abomination. They trusted that their God could save them, and that He would save them. But even if Yahweh did not intervene, they would not violate their principles and join this state sponsored idolatry. They preferred to die than soil their hands with such blasphemies.

The story ends with a mighty surprise for Nebuchadnezzar. The God he mocked did save His servants out of that ferociously hot furnace. One like a son of the gods walked amidst the flames with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. When they emerged from the flames, there was not even the smell of smoke on their clothing.

So what should Christians do when they are coerced to worship the state and submit blindly to its power? Like these men, we should trust our God, retain our integrity, refuse to yield, and take whatever the Lord has for us. If He rescues us, we will praise Him. If He chooses to not rescue us, but take us home to glory, we will praise Him. By so doing, we will remind our power-drunk leaders that they are mere men, and that our God will not be mocked! We live to Him and we die to Him. We will not surrender our consciences to petty human tyrants.