



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Full Prisons & Empty Churches

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Several years ago I purchased a devotional book entitled 365 Days with Newton. The subtitle gives a fuller picture of the contents: *A unique collection of 365 daily readings from the sermons and hymns of John Newton.*

John Newton is best known as the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.” The famous first stanza of that hymn is surely autobiographical:

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”

In his early life, John Newton had been involved in the slave trade in Africa. By his own admission, he did many horrible and immoral things with the Africans they captured and enslaved. His fortunes turned sour, and he eventually found himself enslaved. Yet God amazingly saved John Newton from that life of corruption and sin, and made him to be an eloquent preacher of the gospel. Furthermore, Newton’s ability at hymnwriting was profound. He often would compose hymns to match the passage for his sermon. I cannot begin to imagine how gifted he was.

Recently the devotional readings have been concentrating on Proverbs 14:34 *Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.* Drawing from a sermon on that passage preached on March 25, 1787, Newton described the condition of a sinful nation as follows: “in general: *dissensions, riots, weak counsels, rash enterprises, ruined fortunes and constitutions, distracted families,*

tyrannical masters, treacherous servants, bankruptcies, robberies, rapes and murders, crowded jails and places of worship almost empty... these things would in their own nature, not only be a reproach, but tend to the ruin of the people.”

In our country in recent decades, the prison population has skyrocketed.



According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2013 there were 2,220,300 adults incarcerated in federal, state and local prisons and jails. Another 4,751,400 adults were on probation or on parole in that same year. That adds up to

6.9 million adults under correctional supervision – almost 3% of the entire adult population.

Such statistics make the United States the leading nation in terms of the total number of people incarcerated, and the highest per-capita rate of imprisonment. This enormous system costs the United States an estimated \$80 billion dollars annually. Another shocking statistic is that within three years of release, two thirds of inmates will be re-arrested, and over half will end up back in jail.

Meanwhile, many faithful, Bible teaching churches struggle to keep their doors open. The failure of church planting efforts is well documented – not every group that begins as a mission church will become a new and separate congregation. After four or five years of struggling to gain a critical mass, the energy and the money runs out, and they often close their doors.

Sound preaching and reverent worship are not what people are clamoring for in

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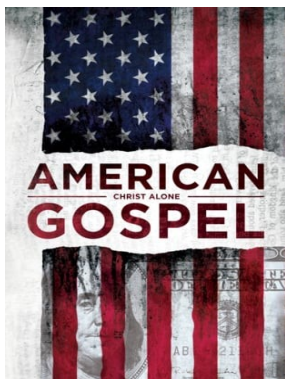
Inside this issue:

<i>Pastor’s Article</i>	1
<i>Spring Worldview Movie Night</i>	2
<i>Ethnic Fellowship Meal</i>	2
<i>Christian Man Academy</i>	2
<i>Prayers for Malawi</i>	3
<i>On Controversy</i>	3-5
<i>John Ploughman</i>	6-8
<i>April Birthdays and Anniversaries</i>	9
<i>April Calendar</i>	10
<i>Recipe Corner</i>	11
<i>Spurgeon Corner</i>	12

Mnemonics...

- *Young Adult Bible Study, April 4th*
- *Worldview Movie Night, April 5th*
- *Session Meeting, April 9th*
- *Ethnic Family Fellowship Meal, April 14th*

Spring Worldview Movie Night



This Friday, April 5th at 7pm we'll watch and discuss a documentary entitled "American Gospel: Christ Alone" This film deals in depth with the so-called Prosperity Gospel and its impact on the American church. Bring a friend and a snack to share. Popcorn and drinks will be provided.

Ethnic Family Favorite Fellowship Lunch

On April 14th we will be having an Ethnic Family Favorite Fellowship Lunch. Every family has their favorite dish! Some recipes even came from the old country! This is our chance to share best-loved main dishes, sides, or desserts. Plan to come and bring a friend!



Christian Man Academy

Attention young men: Dr. David Murray has started a free video-based website for Christian young men that will provide clear, practical, biblical teaching about what it means to be a man of God in our culture. He'll be posting two short videos each week together with further reading suggestions. Please take time to check out this excellent resource.

<https://christianmanacademy.com/>

Prayers for Malawi

Dear Peter,

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus! We received your letter regarding the storm and the flooding. We saw the pictures on tv of the cyclone in Mosambique and Malawi. There certainly was a lot of damage. **Today** I sent some funds which will help. I spoke to the diaconal committee of the OPC and they will consider the need. Right now we have a lot of needs from the storms in our own country. The number you need for getting the funds is 61328152,

We had our presbytery meeting and heard the reports of the churches. One man was licensed, another taken under care of presbytery, and 2 young men postponed their theological exam until the next meeting. One church had some problems and people left but others are coming in and the church is doing well again. Doug Clawson was not there because of the funeral for his daughter.

We'll keep you in our prayers. The Lord will provide even though we face these difficulties.

In Christ, Ivan DM

On Controversy

By John Newton

Editor's note: A minister, about to write an article criticizing a fellow minister for his lack of orthodoxy, wrote to John Newton of his intention. Newton replied as follows:

Dear Sir,

As you are likely to be engaged in controversy, and your love of truth is joined with a natural warmth of temper, my friendship makes me solicitous on your behalf. You are of the strongest side; for truth is great, and must prevail; so that a person of abilities inferior to yours might take the field with a confidence of victory. I am not therefore anxious for the event of the battle; but I would have you more than a conqueror, and to triumph, not only over your adversary, but over yourself. If you cannot be vanquished, you may be wounded. To preserve you from such wounds as might give you cause of weeping over your conquests, I would present you with some considerations, which, if duly attended to, will do you the service of a great coat of mail; such armor, that you need not complain, as David did of Saul's, that it will be more cumbersome than useful; for you will easily perceive it is taken from that great magazine provided for the Christian soldier, the Word of God. I take it for granted that you will not expect any apology for my freedom, and therefore I shall not offer one. For method's sake, I may reduce my advice to three heads, respecting your opponent, the public, and yourself.

Consider Your Opponent

As to your opponent, I wish that before you set pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.

If you account him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab concerning Absalom, are very applicable: "Deal gently with him for my sake." The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you

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Newton Continued.....

likewise, and expects that you should show tenderness to others, from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself. In a little while you will meet in heaven; he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts; and though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ forever.

But if you look upon him as an unconverted person, in a state of enmity against God and his grace (a supposition which, without good evidence, you should be very unwilling to admit), he is a more proper object of your compassion than of your anger. Alas! "He knows not what he does." But you know who has made you to differ. If God, in his sovereign pleasure, had so appointed, you might have been as he is now; and he, instead of you, might have been set for the defense of the gospel. You were both equally blind by nature. If you attend to this, you will not reproach or hate him, because the Lord has been pleased to open your eyes, and not his.

Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are called Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation. If, indeed, they who differ from us have a power of changing themselves, if they can open their own eyes, and soften their own hearts, then we might with less inconsistency be offended at their obstinacy: but if we believe the very contrary to this, our part is, not to strive, but in meekness to instruct those who oppose. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." If you write with a desire of being an instrument of correcting mistakes, you will of course be cautious of laying stumbling blocks in the way of the blind or of using any expressions that may exasperate their passions, confirm them in their principles, and thereby make their conviction, humanly speaking, more impracticable.

Consider the Public

By printing, you will appeal to the public; where your readers may be ranged under three divisions: First, such as differ from you in principle. Concerning these I may refer you to what I have already said. Though you have your eye upon one person chiefly, there are many like-minded with him; and the same reasoning will hold, whether as to one or to a million.

There will be likewise many who pay too little regard to religion, to have any settled system of their own, and yet are preengaged in favor of those sentiments which are at least repugnant to the good opinion men naturally have of themselves. These are very incompetent judges of doctrine; but they can form a tolerable judgment of a writer's spirit. They know that meekness, humility, and love are the characteristics of a Christian temper; and though they affect to treat the doctrines of grace as mere notions and speculations, which, supposing they adopted them, would have no salutary influence upon their conduct; yet from us, who profess these principles, they always expect such dispositions as correspond with the precepts of the gospel. They are quick-sighted to discern when we deviate from such a spirit, and avail themselves of it to justify their contempt of our arguments. The scriptural maxim, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," is verified by daily observation. If our zeal is embittered by expressions of anger, invective, or scorn, we may think we are doing service of the cause of truth, when in reality we shall only bring it into discredit. The weapons of our warfare, and which alone are powerful to break down the strongholds of error, are not carnal, but spiritual; arguments fairly drawn from Scripture and experience, and enforced by such a mild address, as may persuade our readers, that, whether we can convince them or not, we wish well to their souls, and contend only for the truth's sake; if we can satisfy them that we act upon these motives, our point is half gained; they will be more disposed to consider calmly what we offer; and if they should still dissent from our opinions, they will be constrained to approve our intentions.

You will have a third class of readers, who, being of your own sentiments, will readily approve of what you advance, and may be further established and confirmed in their views of the Scripture doctrines, by a clear and masterly elucidation of your subject. You may be instrumental to their edification if the law of kindness as well as of truth regulates your pen, otherwise you may do them harm. There is a principle of self, which disposes us to despise those who differ from us; and we are often under its influence, when we think we are only showing a becoming zeal in the cause of God.

I readily believe that the leading points of Arminianism spring from and are nourished by the pride of the

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human heart; but I should be glad if the reverse were always true; and that to embrace what are called the Calvinistic doctrines was an infallible token of a humble mind. I think I have known some Arminians, that is, persons who for want of a clearer light, have been afraid of receiving the doctrines of free grace, who yet have given evidence that their hearts were in a degree humbled before the Lord.

And I am afraid there are Calvinists, who, while they account it a proof of their humility, that they are willing in words to debase the creature and to give all the glory of salvation to the Lord, yet know not what manner of spirit they are of. Whatever it be that makes us trust in ourselves that we are comparatively wise or good, so as to treat those with contempt who do not subscribe to our doctrines, or follow our party, is a proof and fruit of a self-righteous spirit.

Self-righteousness can feed upon doctrines as well as upon works; and a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature and the riches of free grace. Yea, I would add, the best of men are not wholly free from this leaven; and therefore are too apt to be pleased with such representations as hold up our adversaries to ridicule, and by consequence flatter our own superior judgments. Controversies, for the most part, are so managed as to indulge rather than to repress his wrong disposition; and therefore, generally speaking, they are productive of little good. They provoke those whom they should convince, and puff up those whom they should edify. I hope your performance will savor of a spirit of true humility, and be a means of promoting it in others.

Consider Yourself

This leads me, in the last place, to consider your own concern in your present undertaking. It seems a laudable service to defend the faith once delivered to the saints; we are commanded to contend earnestly for it, and to convince gainsayers. If ever such defenses were seasonable and expedient they appear to be so in our own day, when errors abound on all sides and every truth of the gospel is either directly denied or grossly misrepresented.

And yet we find but very few writers of controversy who have not been manifestly hurt by it. Either they grow in a sense of their own importance, or imbibe an angry, contentious spirit, or they insensibly withdraw their attention from those things which are the food and immediate support of the life of faith, and spend their time and strength upon matters which are at most but of a secondary value. This shows, that if the service is honorable, it is dangerous. What will it profit a man if he gains his cause and silences his adversary, if at the same time he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of his presence is made?

Your aim, I doubt not, is good; but you have need to watch and pray for you will find Satan at your right hand to resist you; he will try to debase your views; and though you set out in defense of the cause of God, if you are not continually looking to the Lord to keep you, it may become your own cause, and awaken in you those tempers which are inconsistent with true peace of mind, and will surely obstruct communion with God. Be upon your guard against admitting anything personal into the debate. If you think you have been ill treated, you will have an opportunity of showing that you are a disciple of Jesus, who "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." This is our pattern, thus we are to speak and write for God, "not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; knowing that hereunto we are called." The wisdom that is from above is not only pure, but peaceable and gentle; and the want of these qualifications, like the dead fly in the pot of ointment, will spoil the savor and efficacy of our labors.

If we act in a wrong spirit, we shall bring little glory to God, do little good to our fellow creatures, and procure neither honor nor comfort to ourselves. If you can be content with showing your wit, and gaining the laugh on your side, you have an easy task; but I hope you have a far nobler aim, and that, sensible of the solemn importance of gospel truths, and the compassion due to the souls of men, you would rather be a means of removing prejudices in a single instance, than obtain the empty applause of thousands. Go forth, therefore, in the name and strength of the Lord of hosts, speaking the truth in love; and may he give you a witness in many hearts that you are taught of God, and favored with the unction of his Holy Spirit.

Reprinted from The Works of John Newton, Letter XIX "On Controversy." Reprinted from New Horizons, October 2002.

John Ploughman

Chapter 12: Debt

When I was a very small boy in pinafores and went to a woman's school, it so happened that I wanted a stick of slate pencil and had money to buy it with. I was afraid of being scolded for losing my pencils so often, because I was a real careless little fellow and so did not dare to ask at home what was John to do? There was a little shop in the place where nuts, and tops, and cakes, and balls were sold by old Mrs. Dearson, and sometimes I had seen boys and girls get trusted by the old lady. I argued with myself that Christmas was coming, and that somebody or other would be sure to give me a penny then and perhaps even a whole silver sixpence. I would, therefore, go into debt for a stick of slate pencil and be sure to pay at Christmas. I did not feel easy about it, but still I screwed my courage up and went into the shop. one farthing was the amount; since I had never owed anything before and my credit was good, the pencil was handed over by the kind dame, and I was in debt. It did not please me much, and I felt as if I had done wrong, but I little knew how soon I should smart for it. How my father came to hear of this little stroke of business I never knew, but some little bird or other whistled it to him, and he was very soon down upon me in right earnest. God bless him for it. He was a sensible man and not a child spoiler; he did not intend to bring up his children to speculate and play at what big rogues call financing; therefore, he knocked my getting into debt on the head at once, and no mistake. He gave me a very powerful lecture about getting into debt; how like it was to stealing; about the way in which people were ruined by it; and how a boy who would owe a farthing might one day owe a hundred pounds, get into prison, and bring his family into disgrace. It was a lecture, indeed; I think I can hear it now and can feel my ears tingling at the recollection of it. Then I was marched off to the shop like a deserter being marched back to barracks, crying bitterly all down the street, and feeling dreadfully ashamed because I thought everybody knew I was in debt. The farthing was paid amid many solemn warnings, and the poor debtor was set free like a bird let out of a cage. How sweet it felt to be out of debt! How did my little heart vow and declare that nothing should ever tempt me into debt again! It was a fine lesson, and I have never forgotten it. If all boys were inoculated with the same doctrine when they were young, it would be as good as a fortune to them and save them wagon loads of trouble in later life. God bless my father, say I, and send a breed of such fathers into old England to save her from being eaten up with villainy—for what with companies and schemes and paper money, the nation is getting to be as rotten as touchwood.

Ever since that early sickening, I have hated debt as Luther hated the Pope, and if I say some fierce things about it, you must not wonder. To keep debt, dirt, and the devil out of my cottage has been my greatest wish ever since I set up housekeeping. Although the last of the three has sometimes got in by the door or the window—for the old serpent will wriggle through smallest crack—yet, thanks to a good wife, hard work, honesty, and scrubbing brushes, the two others have not crossed the threshold. Debt is so degrading that if I owed a man a penny I would walk twenty miles in the dead of winter to pay him, sooner than feel that I was under an obligation. I should be as comfortable with peas in my shoes, or a hedge-hog in my bed, or a snake up my back, as with bills hanging over my head at the grocer's, and the baker's, and the tailor's. Poverty is hard, but debt is horrible; a man might as well have a smoky house and a scolding wife, which are said to be the two worst evils of life, as be in debt. We may be poor and yet respectable, which John Ploughman and his wife hope they are and will be; but a man in debt cannot even respect himself, and he is sure to be talked about by the neighbors, and that talk will not be much to his credit. Some persons appear to like to be owing money; but I would as soon be a cat up a chimney with the fire lit, or a fox with the hounds at my heels, or a hedgehog on a pitchfork, or a mouse under an owl's claw. An honest man thinks a purse full of other people's money to be worse than an empty one. He cannot bear to eat other people's cheese, wear other people's shirts, and walk about in other people's shoes; neither will he be easy while his wife is decked out in the milliner's bonnets and wears the dressmaker's flannels. The jackdaw in the peacock's feathers was soon plucked, and borrowers will surely come to poverty—a poverty of the bitterest sort because there is shame in it.

Living beyond their incomes is the ruin of many of my neighbors; they can hardly afford to keep a rabbit and have to drive a pony and chaise. I am afraid extravagance is the common disease of the times; many professing Christians have caught it to their shame and sorrow. Good cotton or stuff gowns are not

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enough nowadays; girls must have silks and satins, and then there's a bill at the dressmaker's as long as a winter's night and quite as dismal. Show, style, and smartness run away with a man's means, keep the family poor, and the father's nose down on the grindstone. Frogs try to look as big as bulls and burst themselves. A pound a week apes five hundred a year and comes to the county court. Men burn the candle at both ends and then say they are very unfortunate; why don't they put twaddle on the right horse and say they are extravagant? Economy is half the battle in life, but it is not so hard to earn money as to spend it well. Hundreds would never have known want if they had not first known waste. If all poor men's wives knew how to cook, how far a little might go. our minister says the French and the Germans beat us hollow in nice cheap cookery. I wish they would send missionaries over to convert our gossiping women into good managers; this is a French fashion which would be a good deal more useful than those fine pictures in Mrs. Fripper's window, with ladies rigged out in a new style every month. Dear me! Some people are much too fine nowadays to eat what their fathers were thankful to see on the table, and so they please their palates with costly feeding, come to the workhouse, and expect everybody to pity them. They turn up their noses at bread and butter and end up eating raw turnips stolen out of the fields. They who like fighting cocks at other men's costs will get their combs cut, or perhaps get roasted for it one of these days. If you have a great store of peas, you may put more in the soup; but everybody should fare according to his earnings. He is both a fool and a knave who has a shilling coming in, and on the strength of it, spends a pound which does not belong to him. cut your coat according to your cloth is sound advice; but cutting other people's cloth by running into debt is as like thieving as a sofa is like a couch. If I meant to be a rogue, I would deal in marine stores, or be a petty fogging lawyer or a priest, or open a loan office, or go out picking pockets, but I would scorn the dirty art of getting into debt without a prospect of being able to pay.

Debtors can hardly help being liars, for they promise to pay when they know they cannot; and when they have made up a lot of false excuses, they promise again, so they lie as fast as a horse can trot.

Now, if owing leads to lying, who shall say that it is not a most evil thing? Of courses there are exceptions, and I do not want to come down hard upon an honest man who is brought down by sickness or heavy losses. But take the rule as a rule, and you will find debt to be a great dismal swamp, a huge mud hole, a dirty ditch: happy is the man who gets out of it after once tumbling in, but happiest of all is he who has been by God's goodness kept out of the mire altogether. If you ask the devil to dinner, it will be hard to get him out of the house again; it is better to have nothing to do him. Where a hen has laid one egg, she is very likely to lay another; when a man is once in debt, he is likely to get into it again; it is better to keep clear of it from the first. He who gets in for a penny will soon be in for pound, and when a man is in over his shoes, he is very liable to be in over his boots. Never owe a farthing, and you will never owe a guinea.

If you want to sleep soundly, buy a bed of a man who is in debt; surely it must be a very soft one, or he never have rested so easy on it. I suppose people get hardened to it, as Smith's donkey did when its master broke so many sticks across its back. It seems to me that a real honest man would sooner get as lean as a greyhound than feast on borrowed money, and would choke up his throat with dust before he would let the landlord make chalkmarks against him behind the door for a beer score. What pins and needles tradesmen's bills must stick in a fellow's soul! A pig on credit always grunts. Without debt, without care; out of debt, out of danger. Owing and borrowing are bramble bushes full of thorns. If ever I borrow a spade from my next-door neighbor, I never feel safe with it for fear I should break it; I never can dig in peace as I do with my own. If I had a spade at the shop and I knew I could not pay for it, I think I should set to and dig my own grave out of shame. Scripture says, "Owe no man anything," which does not mean pay your debts, but never have any to pay. My opinion is that those who willfully break this law ought to be turned out of the Christian church, neck and crop, as we say. our laws are shamefully full of encouragement to credit: nobody need be a thief now. A man has only to open a shop and fail at it, and it will pay him much better; as the proverb is, "He who never fails will never grow rich." Why, I know tradesmen who have failed five or six times and yet think they are on the road to heaven; the scoundrels, what would they do if they got there? They are a deal more likely to go where they shall never come out till they have paid the uttermost farthing. But people say, "How liberal they are! Yes, with other people's money. I hate to see a man steal a goose and then give religion the giblets. Piety by all means but pay your way as part of it. Honesty comes first and then generosity. But how often religion is a cloak for deceiving! There's Mrs. Scamp as fine as a peacock, all the

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girls out at boarding school learning French and the piano, the boys swelling about in kid gloves, and G. B. Scamp, Esquire, driving a fast-trotting mare and taking the chair at public meetings, while his poor creditors cannot get more than enough to live from hand to mouth. It is shameful and beyond endurance to see how genteel swindling is winked at by many in this country. I'd have off with their white waistcoats and kid gloves and patent leather boots, if I had my way, and give them the county crop and the prison livery for six months; gentlemen or not, I'd let them see that big rogues could dance on the treadmill to the same tune as little ones. I'd make the land too hot to hold such scamping gentry if I were a member of Parliament or a prime minister; since I've no such power, I can at least write against the fellows and let off the steam of my wrath in that way.

My motto is, "pay as you go, and keep from small scores. Short reckonings are soon cleared. Pay what you owe, and what you're worth, you'll know. Let the clock tick, but no Sticky for me. Better go to bed without your supper than get up in debt. Sins and debts are always more than we think them to be. Little by little, a man gets in over his head and ears. It is the petty expenses that empty the purse. Money is round and rolls assay easily. Tom Thriftless buys what he does not want because it is a great bargain, and so he is soon brought to sell what he does want and finds it a very little bargain. He cannot say "No" to his friend who wants him to be security; he gives grand dinners, makes many holidays, keeps a fat table, lets his wife dress fine, never looks after his servants, and by-and-by he is quite surprised to find that the end of the quarter comes round so very fast, and that creditors bark so loud. He has sowed his money in the fields of thoughtlessness, and now he wonders that he has to reap the harvest of poverty. Still he hopes for something to turn up to help him out of difficulty, and so muddles himself into more troubles, forgetting that hope and expectation are a fool's income. Being hard up, he goes to market with empty pockets, and buys at whatever prices tradesmen like to charge him, and so he pays more than double and gets deeper and deeper into the mire. This leads him to scheming and trying little tricks and mean dodges, for it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. This is sure not to be the answer, for schemes are like spiders' webs which never catch anything better than flies and are soon swept away. You might as well try to mend your shoes with brown paper or stop a broken window with a sheet of ice, as to try to patch up a failing business with maneuvering and scheming. When the schemer is found out, he is like a dog in church that everybody kicks, or like a barrel of powder which nobody wants for a neighbor.

They say poverty is a sixth sense, and it had need be, for many debtors seem to have lost the other five or were born without common sense, for they appear to fancy that you not only make debts, but pay them by borrowing. A man pays Peter with what he has borrowed of Paul and thinks he is getting out of his difficulties, when he is only putting one foot into the mud to pull his other foot out. It is hard to shave an egg or pull hairs out of a bald pate, but they are both easier than paying 'debts out of an empty pocket. Samson was a strong man, but he could not pay debts without money. He is a fool who thinks he can do it by scheming. As to borrowing money of loan sharks, it's like a drowning man catching at razors: both Jews and Gentiles, when they lend money, generally pluck the geese as long as they have any feathers. A man must cut down his outgoings and save his incomings if he wants to clear himself; you can't spend your penny and pay debts with it too. Stint the kitchen if the purse is bare. Don't believe in any way of wiping out debts except by paying hard cash. Promises make debts, and debts make promises, but promises never pay debts. Promising is one thing, and performing is quite another. A good man's word should be as binding as an oath, and he should never promise to pay unless he has a clear prospect of doing so in due time. Those who stave off payment by false promises deserve no mercy.

Now I'm afraid all this sound advice might as well have been given to my master's cocks and hens as to those who have gotten into the habit of spending what is not their own, for advice to such people goes in at one ear and out at the other. Well, those who won't listen will have to feel, and those who refuse cheap advice will have to buy dear repentance; but to young people beginning life, a word may be worth a world, and this shall be John Ploughman's short sermon, with three points to it: always be a little below your means, never get into debt, and remember,

"He who goes a borrowing
Goes a sorrowing."

April Birthdays

Jay Buyze 1st
Nicholas Froh 3rd
Warren Gillmer 4th
Pastor Brian De Jong 5th
Vincent Froh 5th
Nancy Harmelink 7th
Trent Adam 8th
Randy Jensema 10th
Mary Gillmer 12th
Audrey Voskuil 17th



Gail Moody 18th
Sue Gross 20th
Sara TenPas 21st
Toni Barthels 22nd
De Lou De Jong 22nd
Jeff Froh 22nd
Emile Blasczyk 24th
Chris Kaeiser 24th
Christian De Jong 28th
Rodney Nyhof 28th

April Anniversaries

Jason and Emily Will
~April 8th, 3 years~

Josh and Stephanie Arndt
~April 13th, 6 years~

Joe and Heidi Mamazza
~April 20th, 7 years~





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

April 2019



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

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Website:
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Email:
graceopc@ids.net

Gluten Free Magic Cookie Bars

Ingredients:

Cookie Base:

- 2 cups white sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups peanut butter

Toppings:

- 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup butterscotch chips
- 1/2 cup chopped raw pecans
- 1/2 cup chopped raw almonds
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Line a 9x13-inch glass baking dish with parchment paper.

Mix sugar and eggs together in a bowl until smooth; stir in peanut butter until well blended. Pour peanut butter mixture into the prepared baking dish.

Bake in the preheated oven until cookie base is partly cooked, 8 minutes. Layer semisweet chocolate chips, butterscotch chips, pecans, almonds, and coconut onto the cookie base. Slowly pour sweetened condensed milk evenly over the toppings.

Bake in the preheated oven until coconut is slightly brown, about 30 minutes. Cool completely before removing cookie bars from pan. Peel away parchment paper and cut into small squares using a sharp knife.



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon

Corner

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Psalm 23:4

Behold, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed

Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and his person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

Evening, April 8th, C.H. Spurgeon

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Front Page Concluded...

the evangelical world today. Instead, they want to have their individual needs met, and their personal interests served, but they don't want to put out too much effort or make any serious commitments.

The health-and-wealth, name-it-and-claim-it ministries pushing the prosperity gospel attract huge crowds. The trendy and relevant church growth ministries with their "Lite" versions of Christian teaching pack in the crowds. Celebrity preachers that build their own empires seem to prosper.

But meat and potatoes Reformed Christianity doesn't do so well. Good old gospel preaching isn't catchy enough to hold people's interest. And so we solemnly sing, "We long to see your churches full, that all the chosen race, may, with one voice and heart and soul, sing thy redeeming grace."

So what does this contrast tell us? What should

we conclude as we compare our overflowing prisons to our empty churches? It seems undeniable that our nation is far more given to sin than to righteousness. We are not being exalted, but are being disgraced as a nation. Our culture is not trending upward, but nosediving downward.

We can also conclude that we desperately need a true heaven-sent revival that must begin with deep, lasting, heart-breaking repentance. We must humble ourselves before the Lord, if we are to see any change. This should stimulate extended seasons of earnest prayer on the part of the church – of our church!

And then God must work! If He will be pleased to come to our aid, we may see these disturbing trends change. What would a true revival look like? Churches full to overflowing, and prisons being closed down due to lack of inmates. Pray God that He will be so pleased!