



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Thanksgiving for Christ

By Pastor Brian De Jong

As the year winds down, we find ourselves again in that period known as “the holidays.” Thanksgiving has come and gone, and Christmas is weeks away. This is a time of parties, of over-eating, of frantic buying of gifts, and general frenzy. It can also be a time of sadness bordering on depression for some – not everyone basks in the glow of holiday cheer.

What tends to be lost in the holiday hubbub is thanksgiving for the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. People forgot him while indulging in family, food and football on ‘Turkey Day.’ People will forget him even as they ostensibly gather to celebrate his birth. Though cards will proclaim that “Jesus is the reason for the season,” the Jesus of the Bible is conspicuously absent at his own birthday party.

I, for one, am deeply thankful for Jesus Christ. Let me tell you why. I am grateful for the fact that He willingly and freely laid aside His heavenly glory to take on our fallen humanity, and became like us in every way, except for sin. The condescension of the Son of God in the incarnation is impossible to calculate, but Paul is certainly correct to say that “*Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” For His humiliation in the incarnation, I am thankful.

I’m also very moved by the fact that He bore our infirmities, endured our sorrows, and experienced all of the

temptations that we face, yet without sin. His tender heart felt the effects of the fall more than we calloused creatures ever do. Yet He continued obeying His Father’s will personally, perpetually and perfectly. He earned a perfect righteousness that we could never dream of obtaining, and He did it for you and for me.

I’m more thankful than ever for His authoritative teaching. As we worked our way through the book of John, including the various discourses of our Lord, my knowledge and understanding of His ways increased. To know Him

who is the way, the truth and the life, is at the very heart of eternal life. He has shaped and molded my thinking, setting me free in the process! Thanks be to Christ!

I’m also profoundly appreciative for His kingly rule in my life. He not only defends me from all enemies, but He is actively subduing my heart to Himself. His kingdom grows not only extensively (throughout the world), but intensively (within my inmost being). His Spirit dwells in me, and is sanctifying me by His word.

Who cannot be pleased with His work as our Great High Priest? Not only did He offer Himself up once for all upon the cross for my sins, but He ever lives to make intercession for me. He sympathizes with me in my many weaknesses and failings, continuing to encourage me to walk that narrow road that leads to life.

I’m also melted by statements such as this from John 14... “*Do not let your*



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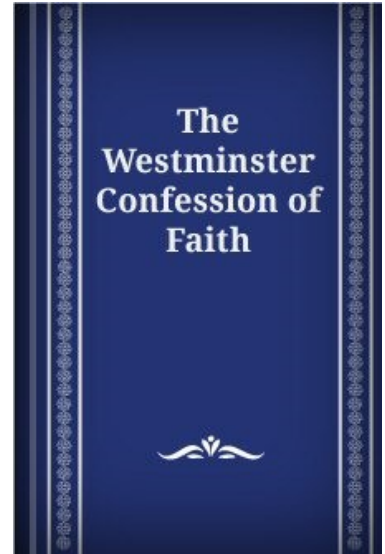
Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, December 10th*
- *Widow’s Lunch, December 14th*
- *Bowling and Pizza Party, December 27th*

Continued on last page...

The Freedom of the Regulative Principle

By Kevin DeYoung



Even though I grew up in a Reformed church, until seminary I was one of the multitude of Christians who had never heard of the regulative principle. It's not been at the core of my identity. But over the years I've come to appreciate the regulative principle more and more.

Simply put, the regulative principle states that "the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself and so limited by his own revealed will" (WCF 21.1). In other words, corporate worship should be comprised of those elements we can show to be appropriate from the Bible. The regulative principle says, "Let's worship God as he wants to be worshiped." At its worst, this principle leads to constant friction and suspicion between believers. Christians beat each other up trying to discern exactly where the offering should go in the service or precisely which kinds of instruments have scriptural warrant. When we expect the New Testament to give a levitical lay out of the *one* liturgy that pleases God, we are asking the Bible a question it didn't mean to answer. It is possible for the regulative principle to become a religion unto itself.

But the heart of the regulative principle is not about restriction. It is about freedom.

1. **Freedom from cultural captivity.** When corporate worship is largely left to our own designs we quickly find ourselves scrambling to keep up with the latest trends. The most important qualities become creativity, relevance, and newness. But of course, over time (not much time these days), what was fresh grows stale. We have to retool in order to capture the next demographic. Or learn to be content with settling in as a Boomer church or Gen X church.

2. **Freedom from constant battles over preferences.** The regulative principle does not completely eliminate the role of opinion and preference. Even within a conservative Reformed framework, worship leaders may disagree about musical style, transitions, volume, tempo, and many other factors. Conflict over preferences will remain even with the regulative principle. But it should be mitigated. I remember years ago at a different church sitting in a worship planning session where people were really good at coming up with new ideas for the worship service. Too good in fact. We opened one service with the theme song from *Cheers*. Another service on Labor Day had people come up in their work outfits and talk about what they do. Everyone had an idea that seemed meaningful to them. The regulative principle wouldn't have solved all our problems, but it would have been a nice strainer to catch some well-intentioned, but goofy ideas.

3. **Freedom of conscience.** Coming out of the Catholic church with its host of extra biblical rituals, newly established Protestant churches had to figure out how to worship in their own way. Some were comfortable keeping many of the elements of the Catholic Mass. Others associated those elements with a false religious system. They didn't want to go back to the mess of rites they left behind, even if by themselves some rites didn't seem all that harmful.

This was the dynamic that made the regulative principle so important. Reformed Christians said in effect, "We don't want to ask our church members to do anything that would violate their consciences." Maybe bowing here or a kiss there could be justified by some in their hearts, but what about those who found it idolatrous?

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The Regulative Principle Continued....

Should they be asked to do something as an act of worship that Scripture never commands and their consciences won't allow? This doesn't mean Christians will like every song or appreciate every musical choice. But at least with the regulative principle we can come to worship knowing that nothing will be asked of us except that which can be shown to be true according to the Word of God.

4. Freedom to be cross cultural. It's unfortunate most people probably think worship according to the regulative principle is the hardest to transport to other cultures. And this may be true if the regulative principle is mistakenly seen to dictate style as well as substance. But at its best, the regulative principle means we have simple services with singing, praying, reading, preaching, and sacraments—the kinds of services whose basic outline can “work” anywhere in the world.

5. Freedom to focus on the center. Usually when talking about corporate worship I don't even bring up the regulative principle. It is unknown to many and scary to others. So I try to get at the same big idea from a different angle. I'll say something like this: “What do we know they did in their Christian worship services in the Bible? We know they sang the Bible. We know that preached the Bible. We know they prayed the Bible. We know they read the Bible. We know they saw the Bible in the sacraments. We don't see dramas or pet blessings or liturgical dance numbers. So why wouldn't we want to focus on everything we know they did in their services? Why try to improve on the elements we know were pleasing to God and practiced in the early church?” In other words, the regulative principle gives us the freedom to unapologetically to go back to basics. And stay there.

Taken from the Gospel Coalition. February 14th, 2012.



Once again we are collecting donations for the Milwaukee Rescue Mission till the end of the year. A list of need will be in the bulletin. Collection boxes are in the foyer.

Making Music to Jesus in Our Hearts

By Scotty Smith



“Mary responded, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!”

For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. [Luke 1:46–50](#) (NLT)

Lord Jesus, I woke up today extremely thankful for the gift of music—especially the songs of Advent and Christmas. Every hymn, carol, and chorus of this season fuels our hope, ignites our longings, and expresses our joy. Thank you for giving us multiple reasons to sing, Lord.

Mary, your mother, certainly had a different experience of you than us. And yet we can easily join in her Advent refrain today. We too are compelled to sing her song, for you’ve been mindful of our humble, broken, sinful state.

We have nothing to boast in but you, Jesus. You came to us when we weren’t seeking you, and you are being formed in us as surely as you entered the world through Mary’s womb. One Day we will be with you forever, and we will be fully like you. Hallelujah!

Like Mary, you have done great things for us, and you continue to do so. Because of your life, death, and resurrection, we are forgiven, declared righteous, desired, enjoyed, and as loved today as we’ll be loved throughout eternity.

Therefore, our hearts glory in you, and our spirits rejoice in you—our God and our Savior. As the gospel goes deeper into our hearts, free us from all fears, except the fear of the Lord.

Indeed, fill us to overflowing with awe and adoration in this season of Advent, Jesus. We don’t want a “merry little Christmas,” we want one as big as the gospel is beautiful. Restore our joy, renew our first love, capture our gaze, supersize our hope, intensify our peace. Free us to live and love well until you return. So very Amen we sing and pray, in your most glorious and grace-full name.

Taken from the Gospel Coalition. December 11th, 2018.

John Ploughman

Chapter 22: Try

Of all the pretty little songs I have ever heard my youngsters sing, that is one of the best which winds up:

"If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again."

I recommend it to grown up people who are down in the mouth, and fancy that the beats thing they can do is to give up. Nobody known what he can do till he tries. "We shall get through it now," said Jack to Harry as they finished up the pudding. Everything new is hard work, but a little of the *TRY* ointment rubbed on the hand and worked into the heart makes all things easy.

Can't do it sticks in the mud, but Try soon drags the wagon out of the rut. The fox said *Try*, and he got away from the hounds when they almost snapped at him. The bees said Try and turned flowers into honey. The squirrel said Try, and up he went to the top of the beech tree. The snowdrop said Try and bloomed in the cold snows of winter. The sun said Try, and the spring soon threw Jack Frost out of the saddle. The young lark said Try, and he found that his new wings took him over hedges and ditches and up where his father was singing. The ox staid Try and plowed the field from end to end. No hill too steep for Try to climb, no clay too stiff for Try to plow, no field too wet for Try to drain, no hole too big for Try to mend.

"By little strokes—
Men fell great oaks."

By a spadeful at a time the canal laborers dug the cutting, cut a big hole through the hill, and heaped up the embankment.

"The stone is hard, and the drop is small,
But a hole is made by the constant fall."

What man has done, man can do; and what has never been, may be. Plowmen have become gentlemen, cobblers have turned their lapstones into gold, and tailors have sprouted into members of Parliament. Tuck up your shirtsleeves, young hopeful, and go at it. Other there's a will, there's a way. The sun shines for all the world. Believe in God, stick to hard work, and see if the mountains are not removed. A faint heart never won a fair lady. Cheer, boys, cheer, God helps those who help themselves. Never mind luck—that's what the fool had when he killed himself with eating suet pudding; the best luck in all the world is made up of joint oil and sticking plaster.

Don't wait for helpers. Try those two old friends, your strong arms. Self's the man. If the fox wants poultry for his cubs, he must eat the chickens home himself. None of her Miens can help the hare: she must run for herself, or the greyhounds will have her. Every man must carry his own sack to the mill. You must put your own shoulder to the wheel and keep it there, for there are plenty of ruts in the road. If you wait till all the ways are paved, you hare light shining between your ribs. If you sit still till great men take you on their backs, you will grow to your seat. Your own legs are better than stilts; don't look to others, but trust in God and keep your powder dry.

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Ploughman Continued...

Don't be whining about not having a fair start. If you throw a sensible man out of a window, he'll fall on his legs and ask nearest way to his work. The more you have to begin with, the less you will have at the end. Money you earn yourself is much brighter and sweeter than any you get out of dead men's bags. A scant breakfast in the morning whets the appetite for a feast later in the day. He who has tasted a sour apple will have the more relish for a sweet one; your present want will make future prosperity all the sweeter. Eighteenpence has set up many a peddler in business, and he has turned it over till he has kept his carriage.

As for the place you are cast in, don't find fault with that. you need not be a horse because you were born in a stable. If a bull tossed a man of mettle sky high, he would drop down into a good place. A hard working young man, with his wits about him, will make money where others do nothing but lose it.

Who loves his work and knows to spare,
May live and flourish anywhere.

As to a little trouble, who expects to find cherries without stones or roses without thorns? He who would win must learn to bear. Idleness lies in bed sick of the mulligrubs, where industry finds health and wealth. The dog in the kennel barks at the fleas, the hunting dog does not even know they are there. Laziness waits till the river is dry and never gets to market; Try swims it and makes all the trade. *Can't do it* couldn't eat the bread and butter which was cut for him, but Try made meat out of mushrooms.

Everybody who does not get on lays it all on competition. When the wine was stolen they said it was the rats; it's very convenient to have a horse to put the saddle on. A mouse may find a hole, be the room ever so full of cats. Good workmen are always wanted. There's a penny to be turned at the worst booth in the fair. No barber ever shaves so close but another barber will find something left. Nothing is so good but what it might be better; and he who sells the best wins the trade. We were all going to the workhouse because of the new machines, or so the prophets down at the taproom were telling us. But instead of it, all these threshing, and reaping, and hay-making machines have helped to make those men better off who had sense enough to work them. If a man has not a soul above clodhopping, he may expect to keep poor; but if he opens his eyes and picks up here and there a little, even Johnny Raw may yet improve. "Times are bad," they say; yes, and if you go gaping about and send your wits woolgathering, times always will be bad.

Many don't get on because they have not the pluck to begin in right earnest. The fat pound laid by is the difficulty. The fast blow is half the battle. Over with that beer jug, up with the Try flag, then out to your work, and away to the savings bank with the savings, and you will be a man yet. Poor men will always be poor if they think they must be. But there's a way up out of the lowest poverty if a man looks after it early, before he has a wife and half-a-dozen children: after that he carries too much weight for racing, and most commonly he must be content if he finds bread for the hungry mouths and clothes for the little backs. Yet, I don't know; some hens scratch all the better for having a great swarm of chicks. To young men the road up the hill may be hard, but at any rate it is open. They who set stout heart against a stiff hill shall climb it yet. What was hard to bear will be sweet to remember. If young men would deny themselves, work hardy live hard, and rave in their early days, they; need not keep their noses to the grindstone all their lives, as many have to do. Let them be teetotalers for economy's sake; water is the strongest drink, it drives mills. It's the drink of lions and horses, and Samson never drank anything else. The beer money would soon build a house.

If you want to do good in the world, the little word "Try" comes in again. There are plenty of ways of serving God, and some that will fit you exactly as a key Kilts a lock. Don't hold back because you cannot preach in St. Paul's; be content to talk to one or two in a cottage. Very good wheat grows in little fields. You may cook in small pots as well as in big ones. Little pigeons can carry great messages. Even a little dog can bark at a thief, wake up the master, and save the house. A spark is fire. A sentence of truth has heaven in it. Do what you do right thoroughly, pray over it heartily, and leave the result to God.

Alas! Advice is thrown away on many, like good seed on a bare rock. Teach a cow for seven years, but she will never learn to sing the Old Hundredth. Of some it seems true that when they were born, Solomon

Ploughman Concluded....

went by the door but would not look in. Their coat of arms is a fool's cap on a donkey's head. They sleep when it is time to plow and weep when harvest comes They eat all the parsnips for supper, and wonder they have none left for breakfast. Our working people are shamefully unthrifty, and as old England swarms with poor. If what goes; into the moonshine still went into the kneading trough, families would be better fed and better taught. If what is spent in waste were only saved against a rainy day, workhouses would never be built.

Once let every man say try,
Very few on straw would lie,
Fewer still of want would die;
Pans would all have fish to fry;
Pigs would fill the poor man's sty;
Want would cease and need would fly,
Wives and children cease to cry;
Poor rates would not swell so high—
Things wouldn't go so much awry—
You'd be glad, and so would I.

“All our actions, as well as our
thoughts and words, should praise
Him who always blesses us”

C.H. Spurgeon

Church Assignment Schedule



It is the time of year to begin creating a new Building Assignment Schedule. If you would like to be added or removed to the greeter, refreshment, or opener list please let Liz know as soon as possible. We are especially in need of building openers.

Bowling and Pizza Party

On Friday, [Dec 27th](#) we have the annual Bowling & Pizza Party. We bowl from 3:00pm - 5:00 pm at Odyssey Fun Center in Sheboygan Falls, then we eat pizza and play games at the church from 5:30 onward. The cost is \$7 per person for bowling, and \$4 per person for pizza. Invite your friends!



December Birthdays

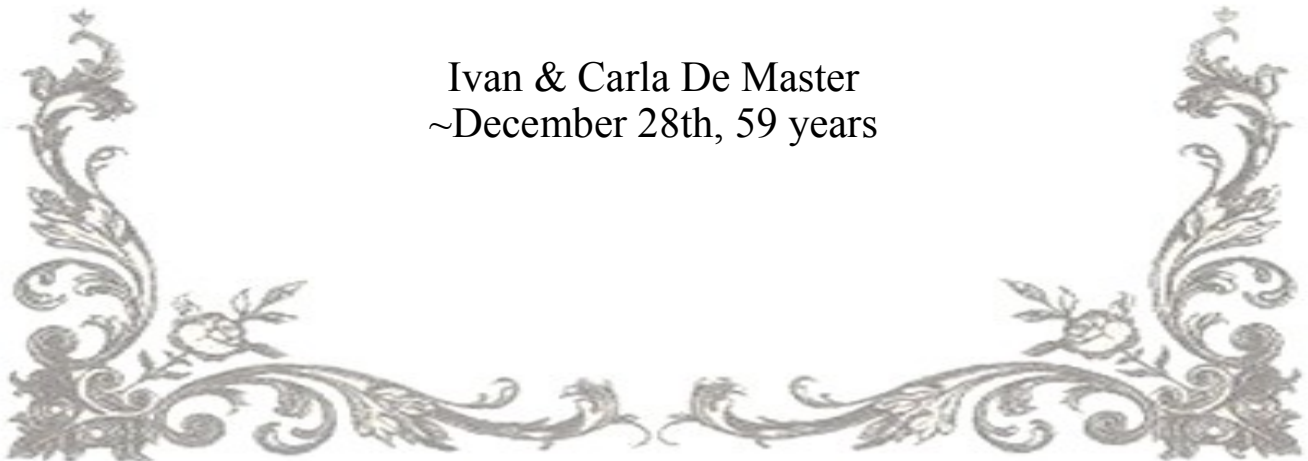
Heidi Mamazza	3rd
Sue Lorenz	3rd
Robert Boss	13th
Conner Froh	14th
Darryl Harmelink	14th
Grace Davis	20th
Marshall Ver Velde	22nd
Holly Froh	26th
Dorothy Wingard	27th
Darlene Cooper	30th



December Anniversaries

Brian & Dorothy Wingard
~December 11th~

Ivan & Carla De Master
~December 28th, 59 years

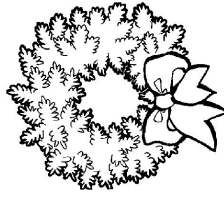




Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

December 2019

Grace OPC



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	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10 Session Meeting	11	12	13	14 Widow's lunch	
15	16	17	18 Prayer Meeting on Holiday Break	19	20	21	
22	23	24	25 Prayer Meeting on Holiday Break	26	27 Bowling and Pizza Party	28	
29	30						

Broccoli Cheese Soup

Ingredients:

- ½ cup butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 (16 ounce) package frozen chopped broccoli
- 4 (14.5 ounce) cans chicken broth
- 1 (1 pound) loaf processed cheese food, cubed
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- ⅔ cup cornstarch
- 1 cup water

Instructions:

In a stockpot, melt butter over medium heat. Cook onion in butter until softened. Stir in broccoli, and cover with chicken broth. Simmer until broccoli is tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

Reduce heat, and stir in cheese cubes until melted. Mix in milk and garlic powder. In a small bowl, stir cornstarch into water until dissolved. Stir into soup; cook, stirring frequently, until thick.



*“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

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Spurgeon Corner

“Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.”

Psalm 68:10

All God’s gifts are prepared gifts laid up in store for wants foreseen. He anticipates our needs; and out of the fulness which he has treasured up in Christ Jesus, he provides of his goodness for the poor. You may trust him for all the necessities that can occur, for he has infallibly foreknown every one of them. He can say of us in all conditions, “I knew that thou wouldst be this and that.” A man goes a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day’s advance, and pitched his tent, he discovers that he wants many comforts and necessities which he has not

brought in his baggage. “Ah!” says he, “I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to go again, I should bring these things with me, so necessary to my comfort.” But God has marked with prescient eye all the requirements of his poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies are ready. It is goodness which he has prepared for the poor in heart, goodness and goodness only. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Reader, is your heart heavy this evening? God knew it would be; the comfort which your heart wants is treasured in the sweet assurance of the text. You are poor and needy, but he has thought upon you, and has the exact blessing which you require in store for you. Plead the promise, believe it and obtain its fulfilment. Do you feel that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold, the crimson fountain is open still, with all its former efficacy, to wash your sin away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever arrive in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for your history has all been foreknown and provided for in Jesus.

Evening, December 8th, C.H. Spurgeon

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Front Page Concluded...

heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

The more I know about Jesus Christ, as He reveals Himself in the Scriptures, the more I am driven to my knees in humble gratitude for all He is and all He does. Yet I am conscious of the fact that this is the very smallest tip of an enormous iceberg of truth. Thanks be to God for Jesus!

