



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Milestones Along the Way

By Pastor Brian De Jong

December is here, and we approach the end of another year. In the midst of all the Christmas fanfare, the shopping, the parties, the gifts and the food, the year of our Lord two thousand twenty one creeps to a close. Very soon we will need to restrain ourselves to write “2022” on our checks. We are approaching another milestone – another marker of the passage of time.

As we head through the holiday season, and begin pondering new years resolutions, we ought not lose sight of the journey we are on. To do so would be like watching each mile marker on the highway as we whiz by them, without taking thought for the destination of our travel. Mile markers help us to know how far we have gone, and how far we have to go, but they do not tell us where we are going.

The journey began when we were conceived and born in sin. We came from our mother’s womb under the wrath and curse of God due to the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Soon after our birth, we began habits of sinning against God. We disobeyed our parents, we stole, we lied, we coveted, and many other things.

Those habits of sin continued to build a vast mountain of guilt, until the Lord Jesus Christ came crashing into our lives. He saved us, not because of good works that we had done. Rather, He graciously gave Himself as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. His discharged a debt that He did not owe – a debt that you could never have paid. It was forgiven and wiped out because of His grace and mercy.

Furthermore, He gave you His own

righteousness, and His Spirit to dwell in you. He provided His Word to be the light to your path. And daily He intercedes for you in your weakness and frailty.

All of this has drastically changed the direction of our lives – putting us on a course that leads to heaven. So we live out our days here on earth in service to Christ. We walk by faith and follow where He leads. And when the time comes that He calls us home, we go to be with Him for all eternity.

After the resurrection of the dead, and the great and final day of judgment, we will be glorified in body and spirit. We will be taken by Christ to live forever in the new heavens and the new earth. That will be where we finally, truly,

fully belong. That will be our real home. To be with the Lord, face to face with our Savior, will be life indeed. There will be no more sin or sorrow, no more failures or disappointments, no more injustices. It will just be perfection, and fullness of joy.

Knowing where we are going makes the journey more meaningful. It helps us to see that this current moment is not the final destination, but just another step on the road to the final destination. When we see the present for what it is, we can enjoy it in its proper place. We don’t undervalue it, nor do we overestimate it.

So as we say goodbye to 2021 and hello to 2022, keep in mind the bigger picture – the great journey we are on that will end in glory.



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Mnemonics...

- **Fellowship Dinner 12/5**
- **12/6 Session Meeting**
- **12/8 Prayer Meeting**
- **12/29 Bowling and Pizza Party**



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MERF News

November 2021



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"

Obstacles or Opportunities?

by Pastor Victor Atallah



"Good Morning"
Arabic daily program



Currently in Arab and Muslim lands, there is much talk about the failures of "Christianity." Islamic ideologues identify Christianity with Western countries and Western political, social and cultural developments. Issues increasingly promoted publicly in Western media are used as anti-Christian propaganda, such as redefining human gender, gay marriage and the prevalence of abortion. The weakening of marriages and families in the West is also frequently pointed out. These so-called representations of Christian life are compared to Islam in order to pro-

mote and "prove" Islam to be truly a heavenly religion.

Infidels

The recent Taliban triumph in Afghanistan is also being considered a sign of Allah's favor and pleasure. It is interpreted as evidence of Allah's approval and vindication, evidence that the Supreme Being is on the side of Islam against the "infidel Christians." The "Christian" West is viewed as unjustly attacking Muslim countries and killing many innocent Muslims. The objective of this interpretation of contemporary events is clear

-- convince the masses that "Christianity" is corrupt and constitutes a danger to family, society and the world. Thus Islam is presented as the true religion. And many simple people, including some non-Muslims, are influenced by some of those claims.

It is not uncommon in Arab and Muslim lands for members of Christian minorities to be intimidated and challenged to convert to Islam. These modern issues are added to the traditional arguments against the Bible and the deity and crucifixion of Christ as reasons to yield to the majority

and recognize Islam as the only true religion.

Likewise, one frequently meets naive Arab Christians who still believe that the West truly stands for and defends the Christian faith and values. Consequently, they become alarmed to hear of Muslims in prominent political positions in leading Western nations.

Gospel Impact

The false impression that the West represents the Christian identity or Christian values clearly negatively impacts gospel work among Muslims.

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Yet, the gospel has had an immeasurably positive impact on Western societies and nations. There are many volumes dealing with this vital subject and some Muslim scholars recognize this. A good number of years ago, a Turkish professor of *History of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* corresponded extensively with me. He was curious to learn about Christianity and Christians in Arab countries. He voluntarily stated his own conclusions from study of the impact of religion on societies.

He had concluded that historically whenever biblical teaching impacted societies the results were positive: more freedom, more tolerance, more progress, more emphasis on human dignity and social justice, improved quality of life and better care for the poor and the oppressed. On the other hand, he observed that periods of return to the teachings and practices of Mohammadan Islam brought intolerance, injustice, oppression, strife, violence, suffering, and decline in the quality of life.

Outspoken

A Syrian scholar, Mohamed Maghoot fearlessly wrote and spoke extensively about the terrible impact of his



inherited religion on the lives of millions in Muslim lands over 14 centuries of existence. While his daring narratives gained him condemnation and even death threats from Islamic zealots, scores of other Muslims continue to defend him, praise his courage and support his conclusions. This includes a growing number of lawyers, journalists, educators and other thinkers. This is only a tiny example of the intellectual revolution taking place in Muslim lands. In some ways, this makes gospel proclamation

easier. We do not have to do the polemical work of pointing out what is wrong with Islam. Disenchanted Muslims are doing the job.

Golden Opportunity

Actually, the problem of mistakenly identifying the growing moral decadence in the West with the Christian faith provides us with golden gospel opportunities. Relevantly pointing out, in clear and simple terms, who Christ is, His perfect life, unique heavenly teaching and His self-giv-

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”
— 1 Timothy 1:15

God that it is neither difficult for us to do nor hard for Muslims to understand. H.R. of Al-Hofuf, Saudi Arabia wrote: “... What matters to me is not what life is like in those corrupt and immoral societies in Europe and America. They are already far from the purity and beauty of the heavenly Jesus the Christ (Issa-al-Masih). They are not worthy of him and I am sure he rejected them... For me I know that we Muslims need him and no other prophets...”

Please pray for the continuing witness of MERF's Arabic and other media language gospel ministry teams and for those hearing and coming to faith in Christ.



ing redemptive work is our joyful calling. The Lord has provided the tools and is graciously working in many hearts and minds to draw them to Him. So, we praise



Chapter 22: Try

F 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.

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.

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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 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.

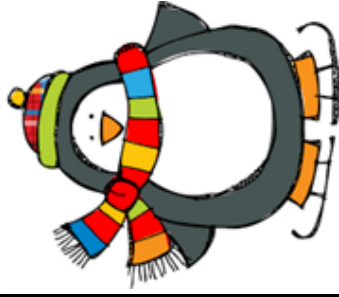
Once let every man say try,
 Very few on straw would lie,
 Fewer still of want would die;
 Pans would all have fish to fry;
 Pigs would fill the poor man's sty;
 Want would cease and need would fly,
 Wives and children cease to cry;
 Poor rates would not swell so high—
 Things wouldn't go so much awry—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



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

December 2021

Grace OPC



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
5 Evening Fellowship Supper	6 Session Meeting	7	8 Prayer Meeting	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Bowling & Pizza Party	30	31	
			1	2	3	4 Deacons & Widows' Lunch

FIVE HORIZONTAL LINES

By Nancy Harmelink

As I strive to get rid of the clutter accumulated for many years, I found the following in my journal, written a week after my mom died. (2002)

MOM, you are the bones in my spine, keeping me straight and true. You are in my blood making it rich and pure. You are the influence in my life that consequently gives me the assurance I will one day be with you forever. I love you, mom!

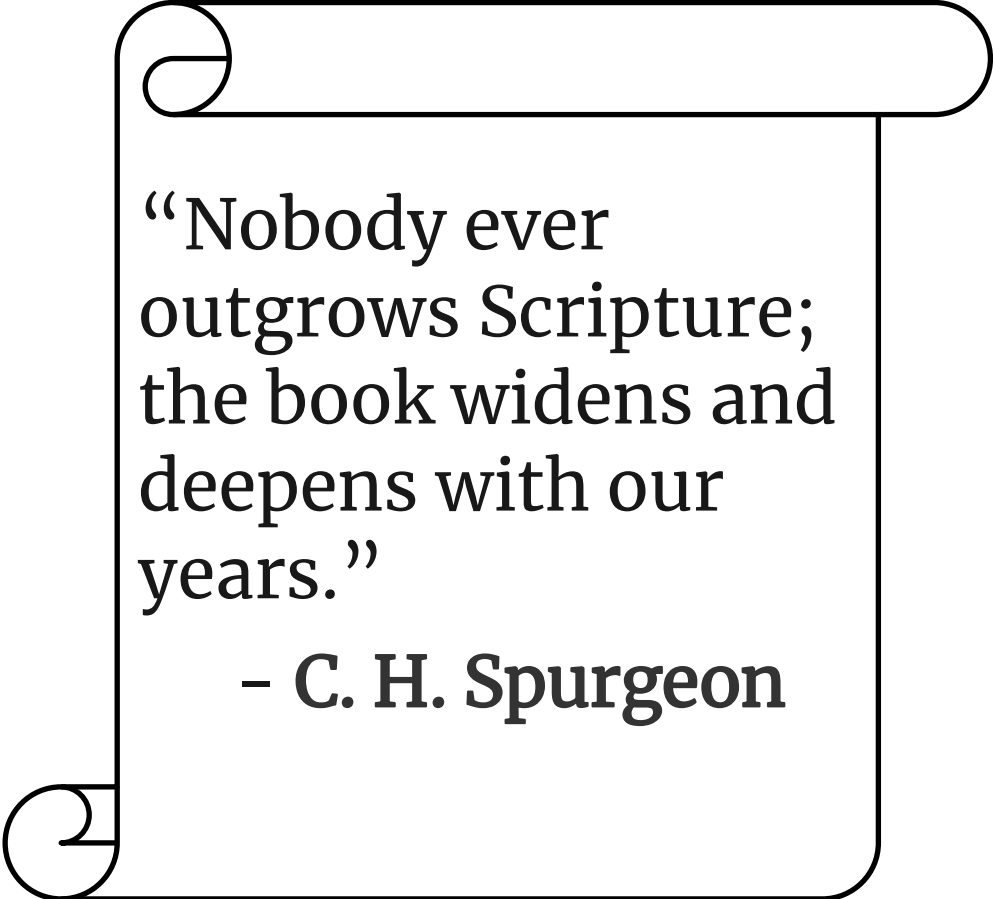
“I will sing praises to my God as long as I live”. Ps. 104:33 Thinking of these words made me wonder about music and how that too runs through my veins, bringing much joy, healing and peace. Music: Sounds by voices and instruments, showing how it can be sung or played, a language of emotions, rhythm, melody and harmony. There are many Bible verses that start with ‘sing to the Lord’. There is a hymn I remember my dad singing at the top of his voice while he was in his study. This song is in the hymn book but I only remember the phrase ‘He has washed us with His blood He presents our souls to God’. Not knowing the title, I started paging through the hymnal until I found it, page 172. Let Us Love And Sing And Wonder. This song will always remind me of my dad who loved music as much as I do. It is taken from Rev. 1:5-6. I miss not having the Bible verse relating to a song underneath the title in the Psalter hymnal. And, I surely can’t forget the Back To God Hour theme song ‘By The Sea Of Crystal’. With this song, every stanza starts with the same intensity and slowly crescendos to the last sentence, ‘Robed in white apparel, washed in Jesus’ blood, they now reign in heaven with the Lamb of God’. I just want to shout “Hallelujah, Amen”!!

I have many favorite songs; many are like a prayer with a melody, singing with humble reverence but also, depending on the song, with jubilation, stomping my feet to the beat. To me, singing to the Lord is to sing with my whole heart, praising Him. There are the songs ‘I will Sing To The Lord For He Has Triumphed Gloriously, The Horse and Rider Fell Into The Sea’, (Jimmy Drier) and ‘Take My Life And Let It Be’, (Jerry Meyer), that brought so much joy to these two. These men were definitely not virtuosos but, who cares? These words must have been very dear to them. Early in my life I accustomed myself to those five horizontal lines where black notes were printed on paper. It was a world of sign language that became very clear to me, a place of lines, symbols, spaces and notes that are world-wide. My parents weren’t wealthy but managed music lessons for all three of us. One of the benefits of all those lessons were the many times our family went to the Boardwalk Chapel where my dad was the speaker and my mom, sister and I were the musicians (piano, violin and cello). In the Berkeley church my mom was the pianist, thus leaving Mary, Cathy and me to be farmed out to anyone in the congregation willing to sit with us during the service. I was the fortunate one to sit with Mrs. Neilands who was a stalwart, strict, buxom English lady who expected much from her charge. She wore black old-lady shoes, tan cotton stockings (probably a girdle), nice dress and white gloves. On her head was a grey felt hat with a veil down to her nose which had feathers on the side and wobbled any time she exhaled! Having said all that, I actually grew to love Mrs. Neilands! If my sisters and I ever misbehaved we would have to sit with mom on the piano bench! Many times after a nice Sunday dinner my mom would turn to me and quietly say “Nancy, I’m sure you know you will be sitting with me on the piano bench tonight”. Yikes!!

Continued on next page...

To sing a song in sign language the signer uses hand, body and facial expressions instead of voice. This signer is singing with hands and it is an enlightening experience for me to see. 'I sing because I cannot be silent' (Redeemed How I Love To Proclaim It) means the deaf can't be silent either! They lift up their hands in glorious silence, showing their love with gestures and countenance. Lastly, I just have to mention a moment in my life I will never forget. A few years ago Sandy, Gail and I were on our way to visit my sister who had Alzheimer's and while we were in the car I said we should sing a few songs for her. We did that and though she probably didn't know who I was, she sang along with all of us!! She knew the words! This was truly a powerful moment for all of us, a smile never leaving her face and a lump in my throat. As we walked to the front door to leave, I turned around to wave and thought, will I ever see her again and went back to kiss her. My sister was taken to hospice that night and left this earth the following day. When she was near death, eyes closed, she was mouthing the words to the Hallelujah Chorus that was being played over the intercom. What an impact music has on our lives! I will be forever grateful for that visit, knowing we had made her day a little brighter with MUSIC. So, whether we sign or sing, music unites us all, binding us together. We have heard timeless hymns all our lives over and over for many years and never tire of them; all of us worshipping and praising God as one.

- Nancy



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

- C. H. Spurgeon



December Birthdays

Heidi Mamazza 3rd
 Sue Lorenz 3rd
 Robert Boss 13th
 Connor Froh 14th
 Darryl Harmelink 14th
 Grace Davis 20th

Marshall Ver Velde 22nd
 Dorothy Wingard 27th



December Anniversaries

Brian & Dorothy Wingard 11th
 28 Years

Ivan & Carla De Master 28th
 61 Years





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Spurgeon Corner

“The Lord mighty in battle.”
Psalm 24:8

Grace OPC

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Well may our God be glorious in the eyes of his people, seeing that he has wrought such wonders for them, in them, and by them. *For them*, the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by his finished work of satisfactory obedience; by his triumphant resurrection and ascension he completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by his cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent’s seed, for in the midst of the church the lame take the prey, and the feeblest warriors are crowned.

The saved may well adore their Lord for his conquests *in them*, since the arrows of their natural hatred are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion broken. What victories has grace won in our evil hearts! How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear, shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare: he has won our love, and he shall wear it. Even thus securely may we look for victories *by us*. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness; we shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us. This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for to-morrow’s fight. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

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CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Evening, December 3rd, C.H. Spurgeon

Pastor Brian's Bowling & Pizza Party

Date: Wednesday, December 29

Bowling from 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm at Odyssey Fun Center in Falls

Pizza and Games from 5:30-???

at the church
Cost for bowling: \$8 per bowler

Cost for Pizza: \$5 per eater

Invite a friend!

