

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

WALKING IN NEWNESS

By Pastor Brian De Jong

At this time of year everyone is thinking “New.” “New Year’s Day” is here and people are looking ahead with anticipation and hope. New Year’s resolutions abound – to lose weight, to stop smoking, to exercise regularly, etc. Everything is new! It seems human beings everywhere crave newness in their lives. What all men desire, we as Christians have in Christ. Paul says it well in Romans 6:4 “*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*” Because we are united to Christ in His death and resurrection, we too walk in newness of life – all things are “new” to us. Part of our newness comes from our own spiritual transformation, for as Paul reminds the Corinthians, “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*” We live under the new covenant – based on better promises, better blessings and a better mediator. Likewise we are now members of the new Jerusalem and during our days on earth we are putting off the old man and we are putting on the new man – created to be like Christ Jesus in all His newness.

And with great hope we long for the new heavens and the new earth – our heavenly country where righteousness reigns – when all things will be entirely renewed.



So since we are new creatures and members of the new covenant, how should this help us? How should we live in the year ahead? More than ever before, we should walk with a spring in our step and a song in our hearts. We should rejoice in the new things God has brought us, and we should celebrate our “newness of life” in Christ. We are forever freed from slavery to sin

and no longer live under the shadow of death. Even the grave holds no terror for us anymore – our God has given us newness of life. In other words, you can walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God as you victoriously live to please your Lord in the year ahead. You can rightly expect His blessing upon you as you live your life for His honor and glory. Grief, mourning and pain are giving way to freedom, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The old order is passing away and the new order is arriving. The newness of the Spirit is here, and powerfully works in our hearts and lives. Glory in your freedom and exult and celebrate in His newness!

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January 2006

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Mnemonics...

- *Men’s Breakfast & Study, Jan. 7th*
- *Youth Group, Jan. 8th*
- *Session Meeting, Jan. 10th*

Covenant Prosecutors

By Pastor Brian De Jong

One aspect of covenant theology that is often overlooked is the idea of covenant prosecution. Because of His great love, God sends His servants to investigate His covenant people and to deal with them for their covenant breaking behaviors. Covenant prosecutors bring covenant lawsuits against the covenant breakers in the good hopes of stimulating their repentance and restoration. If the covenant people will acknowledge their unfaithfulness, and will turn from their sin toward God, He will restore them and strengthen their hearts in the process. If they refuse to hear God's loving call to repentance, and they persist in their foolish rebellion, God will send further chastisement upon them. Eventually this can lead to their entire destruction if they are stiff-necked and hard-hearted.

In order to better understand this idea – and its practical importance for us today – we need to go back to the beginnings of God's covenant dealings with His people. From the very beginning, God has sought out a relationship with His creatures. He created Adam and Eve for fellowship with Himself, and that voluntary condescension took the form of a covenant relationship. Hence mankind's relationship with God has always had a moral/ethical aspect to it. In other words, God gives man a law to govern their covenant relationship. Law always comes within the context of a covenant. In the garden of Eden, the law was simple: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it – but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was also a penalty attached to the law of the covenant – in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.

We all sadly know that Adam and Eve violated that rule. Rather than filling the earth and subduing it, they ate the forbidden fruit and plunged our race into sin. Adam and Eve were then prosecuted for their covenant breaking, when God Himself cross-examined them. "Where are you?" God asked. When Adam appeared and gave his feeble explanation, God continued, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Adam was indicted. Then the Lord turned to the woman and

prosecuted her: "What is this you have done?" He asked. The Lord later carried out a similar covenant prosecution against Cain regarding his attitudes and actions toward Abel. Having convicted Cain of the sin of murder, God sentences Cain to a life of wandering – a punishment almost too great for Cain.

The idea of covenant prosecution becomes formalized during the Mosaic era. Two passages are especially important in this regard – Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. In Deuteronomy 28 the Lord tells the covenant people what will happen if they obey His commands, and what will happen if they break His statutes and decrees. The equation is very clear – obedience brings blessings, but persistent disobedience will lead to curses and eventual destruction.

The second passage is somewhat different from the first. Leviticus 26 provides the outlines for a covenant lawsuit. In the first 13 verses the Lord confirms his covenant promises, and pledges blessings to those who keep His covenant. The chapter hinges on v.14 – "But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments..." Verses 14-17 then describe the first phase of covenant prosecution. Their disobedience will provoke physical, emotional and spiritual consequences. At the end of that phase, there is an opportunity to repent. Repentance was always the goal, and would quickly bring the ordeal to an end. If repentance was not demonstrated, the second phase would kick in from vv.18-20. Predictably, the disciplinary action of the Lord got more intense, and the covenant breaker was more seriously afflicted. Again there was an opportunity for repentance. If the covenant breaker would cry "Uncle" and turn back to the Lord, restoration would result. But if the rebellion hardened into hostility, God would increase the curses in phase three. Phase three is described in vv.21-22 as the increasing of the plague on them "seven times according to your sins." Wild beasts will be let loose, and their children and their

De Jong Continued...

livestock would die. But again, repentance at any point brings the whole process to a screeching halt – the curses will be removed and the blessings will return.

Similar language is used for the fourth phase (vv.23-26), the fifth phase (vv.27-33) and the final phase (vv.24-26). At the conclusion of each phase, there are additional opportunities for repentance and restoration – for that is the goal of the prosecution of the covenant – to encourage God’s people to return to Him again with all their hearts and to renew their covenant obedience to His commands.

In the centuries that followed, God sent His prophets to act as covenant prosecutors against His faithless people. The Lord summarizes this in Jeremiah 7:23-26 when He says, *“But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.’ “Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.”*²⁵ *“Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. “Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers.”*

In 1 Kings 18 Elijah prosecuted God’s covenant people on Mt. Carmel for their idolatry. Likewise, we find extended written covenant lawsuits in Isaiah 1, Hosea 4 and Micah 6. In these lawsuits you find witnesses, charges, indictments, testimony about God’s faithfulness and the people’s perfidy, convictions and sentencing. Elements of covenant prosecution also appear in the book of Malachi, with its charges of covenant breaking on the part of God’s priests and people. This also helps describe the role of Christ as the “messenger of the covenant” in Malachi 3:1-6 (compare John 2:13-22).

Christ came from the Father as a covenant prosecutor to investigate the nation of Israel. There had been a long history of covenant breaking on the

part of these wicked tenants. God had sent innumerable servants to collect his due, but they had abused and rejected those servants – even killing some. When the Son came to investigate and to collect, their iniquity rose to new heights as they determined to kill the Son and take the vineyard for themselves. Much of Jesus’ interaction with the Jewish leadership during his earthly ministry is best understood as the actions of a covenant prosecutor come to inspect and to examine Israel. What he found was not pretty. They did not obey to God’s commands nor keep His everlasting covenant. Their ultimate crime was putting the Lord of glory to death on the cross – thus sealing their doom.

In his grace and mercy, God gave that rebellious generation forty more years to repent of their covenant breaking ways. They only hardened in sin’s deceitfulness and grew ripe for destruction. As Christ predicted in Luke 21 (esp. vv.20-24), God sent the armies of the Gentiles to surround Jerusalem. For three and a half years God sent days of vengeance upon the holy city until she was destroyed and her temple burned in 70 AD. At that time the kingdom was decisively taken away from the Jewish nation and given to a more faithful people. In a clear sense, the historic destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman armies in 70 AD brought to a close Christ’s covenant prosecution against the faithless nation of Israel. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 had been fulfilled against a people who refused to trust and obey the Lord their God.

Why is this important for us to know? The idea of covenant prosecution is significant for the following reasons:

1. This concept helps us understand the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. Is there any section of Scripture more puzzling than the prophets? We sense that they are very important, yet it is hard to get our hands on what they were doing and saying. So often they leave us scratching our heads. Appreciating their roles as prosecutors of God’s covenant will help us “get

De Jong Concluded...

- it.” Think, for instance, of Nathan’s great speech to David in 2 Samuel 12...
2. Covenant prosecution also helps us appreciate our Lord Jesus’ ministry more fully – explaining why he spent so much time sparring with the Jewish leaders, chief priests and Pharisees. The sequence in Matthew 22:15-46 is an excellent example. Why did Jesus even bother with these stiff-necked people? Why not simply ignore them? Because He was investigating them and collecting evidence against them. He then delivers a blistering indictment in Matthew 23 against these very religious leaders – OUCH!
 3. This concept is additionally instructive to the New Testament church, and will help her avoid the errors of Israel (see I Corinthians 10:1-13). If any doubt the applicability of this idea to the church today, I would invite you to study Jesus’ letters to His churches in Revelation 2-3. Jesus’ message to the church in the New Covenant era is this: *“Those I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent...Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent.”*
 4. Appreciating our obligations to be covenant keepers will also help explain many things in the life of our church. Why do we take membership vows? Why have a “call to confession”, a “reading of the law” and a “confession of sin” in our worship services? What part does the Lord’s Supper play? And why do we practice church discipline? The church is the covenant people of God and our worship services are times of covenant renewal between God and His people. If the church draws near to God again and faithfully obeys His commands (out of love and gratitude for God’s grace), we will thrive, flourish and grow – He still blesses covenant keepers! Deuteronomy 28 is not dead-letter! But if we harden our hearts against His word and refuse to obey Him, He will discipline us for our own good. If we wickedly persist in willful disobedience and open hostility against His authority, we may find ourselves eventually beyond the reach of repentance (Hebrews 6:4-8). But if we will sweetly submit ourselves to His rule and will humbly obey His voice – following His commands and keeping His covenant – He will prosper us beyond our wildest expectations. God’s blessings still flow to those who by faith obey His word. His face shines on those who keep His covenant out of gratitude and thanks for His grace and mercy.
 5. Lastly, this shows us the depths and riches of God’s love for His covenant people. Those whom He loves He chastens and corrects. If God were to leave our rebellion and sin unchecked and unchallenged, it would be a sign that He didn’t love us and that we were not His true children. Because He loves us, He wants us to be holy, even as He is holy. And holiness is for our own good – it is pleasant to live righteous lives. The way of the transgressor is hard, and unpleasant. Sin brings difficulty and distress into our lives, and God wants us to live free from those shackles. Praise God that He patiently corrects us and brings us into greater conformity to His law of liberty!





Grace OPC

January 2006

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	5	6	7 Men's Breakfast & Study 7:30 a.m.
8 Missions Sunday Youth Group	9 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	10 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	11 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	12	13	14
15	16 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	17 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	18 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	19	20	21
22	23 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	24 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	25 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	26	27	28
29 The Lord's Supper,	30 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	31				



January Birthdays



Happy Birthday!!!

ATTENTION!

**Grace Church's email address
has changed! The new address
is graceopc@tds.net**



De Jong's Bowling & Pizza Party

January 27th, 2005



The outing started at Lakeshore Lanes in Sheboygan.

Nice shot, Cameron!



The bowling was followed by pizza at the church.

Robby & Becca were having fun.



Jerry N., CBI Student, TX

In Jail with Jesus

Miguel C., CBI Student, NY

Alone one night
in shame and despair,
I look for help,
but no one was there.

No future but prison,
no past, just pain;
I looked in the mirror—
my tears, the rain.

By justice condemned,
in jail to die;
my only hope God's mercy,
for His grace did I cry.

Then a seed that was planter
somewhere long ago,
in the midst of my sorrow
began to grow.

That seed was Christ
Who died for me,
in jail with Jesus
I am set free.

No longer in the hell
of my sinful ways,
He made me a new person
who loves and prays.

When seasons come
and holidays pass,
in jail with Jesus,
my hope does last.

MINISTRY TO PRISONERS

Jesus said, “The King will reply, ‘I tell the truth whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’.”

Matthew 26:40

At the Sheboygan Detention Center

I just returned from visiting Scott. I have been visiting him weekly for almost 3 months and he is doing great. He has a year in the County Detention Center. A Bible was given to him and he started to follow the schedule of reading through the Bible in a year. As he read he got to know others in his "pod". At first each brought up things and they talked about them. Now he is preparing a study for each night - a list of verses to read on a particular topic and the emphasis of the verse. Last night it was "10 Reasons to Pick Up your Bible". The group has grown to eight. One reason was - the Bible is the manual for living and the Scripture for that was Exodus 20 (The 10 Commandments). The time of study and sharing lasted 2 1/2 hours. They started watching the second half of the Packer game.

Other studies have included Spiritual Warfare, The ABC's of Salvation, Giving Thanks, and Trusting the Lord. One of the young men was recently released on bail and is living with his family in Keil. He made a profession of faith in jail. Scott is going to send me his address so I can find someone to mentor him and help him find a church.

The number of men in jail right now who would like a mentor surpasses the number of mentors we have. At present there are at least a dozen names given. The opportunity is to visit or to write letters to these men. A few months ago there was a large number of women.

Ivan DeMaster



CROSSROAD BIBLE STUDY COURSES

The courses are offered by the Crossroad Bible Institute, located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to tens of thousands of prison inmates across the U.S. and some international countries. There are thousands of volunteer instructors who read and correct the lessons and offer encouragement and give instruction when needed. There are five courses in the program. Some new additions will be available very soon. I am instructing three students, Steven, Michael, and Jeff, at different levels.

God has used the Bible study courses to bring many inmates unto himself. Many students share their testimony through their artistic talents in writing, art drawings, and in letters to the instructor. A sample of each is shown to the left. Michael testifies what his present course means to him. “Now concerning this study—Micah 6:8. It’s all I’ve been talking about. What a fantastic study. 6:8 has been my motto to live by these past few weeks. It’s now highlighted in my Bible.”

Rich Nagle



In our thoughts & prayers

Have you adopted your missionary family yet? What missionary family is that, you ask? Your missionary family is the one on the missionary card you received from the mission committee some weeks ago. The missionaries need your support.

Does your personal support of your missionary really matter? Here is little story that might illustrate how important it is.

A missionary and his helpers were forced to camp on a hill. They carried money and were fearful of an attack. After prayer, they went to sleep. Months later a brigand chief was brought to the mission hospital. He asked the missionary if he had soldiers to guard him that special night. "We intended to rob you," he said, "but we were afraid of the 27 soldiers." When the story was told in the homeland, someone said, "We had a prayer meeting that night, and there were just 27 of us present."

Yes, we are always wondering,
wondering how—

Because we do not see

Someone—perhaps unknown and
far away—

**Prayer is a powerful thing;
God has bound and tied it to
Himself**

Contact Guidelines and Suggestions

1. Pray for them daily. Begin immediately using the prayer list on the back of your card.
2. Pray for their protection. Your missionary might be living in hostile circumstances.
3. Send cards or notes of celebration: birthdays, holidays, successes on the mission field. Be sure to use enough postage for international mail. Check with the post office.
4. Write letters of encouragement. Their work is very difficult. They have ups and downs.
5. Send frequent e-mails if you have a computer. This is the fastest communication. Start sending using the e-mail address listed on your missionary card. If there is a better e-mail address to use your missionary will tell you.
6. Encourage them to share their personal physic

There IS a Reason for the O.P.C.

DANIEL DeMASTER

June 11, 1936 is an important date to the members of a certain, rather small church. It is important because that was when this church was established. The church is important because I am a member.

This church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is unlike some churches for it has remained true to the Bible and its truths. This church holds to the Reformed Faith, or Calvinism, which goes back to the apostle Paul. It is not something added to Christianity by man; it is Christianity.

But since Christianity has been around for about two thousand years, what makes this young denomination so special? Perhaps its importance can be shown in how and why it was established.

The first members of this small church came from the much larger Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. (now the United Presbyterian). This large church once held very strongly to the gospel; but slowly over the years liberalism had crept in.

How it all began

It started in 1801 with a plan of union between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. They wanted to work together so that the settlers in the West could form united churches. But I doubt if it was worth it. During the thirty-six years of this union, the "New School" theology of the Congregationalists crept into the whole church. This theology denied original sin and taught a universal atonement, contrary to the Presbyterian creeds. There were even two seminaries, Auburn and Union, that taught this "New School" doctrine.

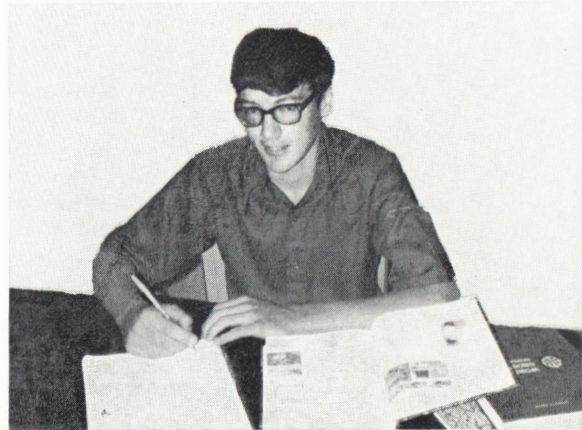
In 1903 the Cumberland Presbyterian Church merged with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. To do this, the Presbyterians had to change their creeds to allow for certain Arminian doctrines held by the Cumberland group. The Presbyterians gave up some biblical truths, and no merger is worth that.

Modernism—20th century idolatry

Before this school year, I thought of modernism as something that disturbed easily-excited ministers of our denomination. But now I think of it as the twentieth-century idolatry, for it really worships man and his reasoning power. The modernist says the Bible is wrong because he cannot explain certain things in it by science. On this basis, he would deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ, Christ's bodily resurrection, his miracles, his virgin birth, and thus the infallibility of the Scriptures.

In 1923 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church said that these doctrines were essential. In that same year, thirteen hundred ministers signed the Auburn Affirmation protesting the Assembly's act. By signing that document they declared themselves as heretics, or as willing to allow heretics in the church. Yet no action was taken against these men.

During all this time only one of the church's thirteen seminaries had remained entirely orthodox. Princeton



Daniel DeMaster, a member of Bethel O. P. Church, Oostburg, Wisc., wrote this paper for an assignment in Church History last year at Sheboygan County Christian High School where he is now a sophomore.

Seminary graduated about forty men each year, nearly a fourth of the new ministers for the whole denomination. But in 1929 the seminary was reorganized to fit the demands of the modernists. An orthodox training was no longer available in the church's seminaries. For that reason, Westminster Theological Seminary was established in Philadelphia.

In 1932 it was pointed out that the church's foreign missions board included two signers of the Auburn Affirmation. Some of the missionaries sent out were modernists also. Yet nothing was done. Then in 1933, Dr. J. Gresham Machen led a group of people in forming a new missions board independent of the Presbyterian Church.

The 1934 General Assembly reacted by declaring that anyone who would not support the official missions program was like one who refused to partake of the Lord's Supper. Dr. Machen and those who supported his views rejected this, for it was making the words of men to be equal to the Word of God.

Dr. Machen was convicted by his presbytery of disturbing the peace of the church because he refused to support the official missions board. Machen appealed to the General Assembly, but they again insisted that their word must be obeyed whether it was right or wrong. Dr. Machen was officially put out of the ministry; other orthodox men were also convicted and deposed.

On June 11, 1936, a new denomination was formed separated from the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. forever. The establishment of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was not a glorious event. It was done with sorrow because its founders could not forget that Presbyterian Church which was once so strong and true but now was practically dead. But it was done also with a bright hope for the future.

November, 1970

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This article was taken from The Presbyterian Guardian, an issue from November 1970, which was written by Rev. Ivan De Master's brother who passed away many years ago.



STEPPING HEAVENWARD BY ELISABETH PRENTISS

Report by Samantha J. De Jong

Stepping Heavenward, by Elizabeth Prentiss is the diary of a fictional, 19th-century young lady named Katherine Mortimer. It is more, however, than a charming tale of life in a bygone era. It is a chronicle of the Holy Spirit's work in one person's life. Through Katy's struggles and reflections, readers will see her grow in faith and godliness, while themselves learning important lessons about the Christian life.

"How dreadfully old I am getting! Sixteen!" writes Katy on the first page of her journal. The reader soon discovers Miss Mortimer's weaknesses, as well as her genuine desire to please God. Struggling to gain assurance of salvation, she fluctuates between religious fervor and indifference to spiritual matters. Her merciful heavenly Father uses the pain of bereavement, the joy and responsibility of marriage

and motherhood, the suffering of a lingering illness, and the encouragement of mature Christian friends to bring her close to Him. At the end of the book, she joyfully praises God for the complete change He had wrought in her life. Stepping Heavenward beautifully portrays God's work of Sanctification.

Elizabeth Prentiss' readers will be both convicted and comforted by Katy's spiritual journey. To see in her life one's own faults as they appear to others is indeed a humbling experience. However, God's persevering work in Miss Mortimer's life, despite her failings, reminds us of His promise in Philippians 1: 6, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Stepping Heavenward is a true treasure for all who desire a closer relationship with God.

PINE HAVEN CORNER STORE

The Pine Haven Ladies Auxiliary



**Who can shop at the
Pine Haven Corner Store?
All of you!**

Hours of operation:
M-F 9:30am-12pm, 12:30pm-1:30pm
Sat. 1-4pm

Not only are all cards marked at only 40 cents, there are a lot of other beautifully handmade arts and crafts available for purchase. If you are looking for a unique personal gift, the Comer Store is a great place to start.

Location: Enter Pine Haven's north entrance adjacent to the Sheboygan Falls Reformed Church parking lot. After you come through the entrance, the store is immediately to your right, directly across from the office.

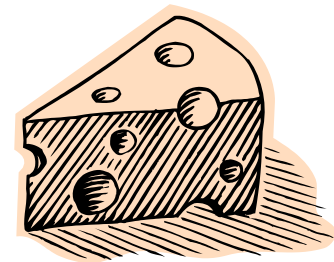
Deborah Arndt, continued...

CHEESY HAM POTATO SOUP

- 1/4 cup onion (diced)
- 1/4 cup carrots (diced)
- 1/4 cup celery (diced)
- 3 Tbs margarine
- 1/2 cup ham (diced)
- 3 Tbs flour
- 4 cups milk
- 3/4 cup Velveeta
- 4-5 large potatoes

Piece onions, carrots, and celery in large pan. Add small amount of water, ham, and margarine. Cook until tender. To thicken, mix flour with small amount of milk. Add flour mixture, milk, and cheese. Cook slowly and stir often til hot.

Nancy Harmelink



“There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him?”



**Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:
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Did You Know...

- ★ *That John Calvin was born in 1509 and died in 1564?*
- ★ *That he was the son of a lawyer?*
- ★ *That Calvin was born in Noyon, Picardy in France?*
- ★ *That he studied law at Bourges & Orleans?*
- ★ *He wrote the Institutes of Christian Religion in 1536?*
- ★ *That he lived in Geneva, Switzerland from 1536 until he died?*
- ★ *That Martin Luther was born in 1483 and died in 1546?*
- ★ *That he was born in Eisleben, Germany?*
- ★ *That he was the son of a miner/smelter?*
- ★ *That he wrote and put up his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517?*
- ★ *That he taught at Wittenberg University, at which chapel he posted the 95 Theses?*

Some taken from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/luther.htm>.

Getting to know... Deborah Arndt

Compiled by Harlan Harmelink

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