

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

THE SURPRISING GOD

By Pastor Brian De Jong

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

The Christian life is a life of faith. By its very nature, it demands and requires continual and constant faith. That means we must fully trust the God we serve, and move forward confident in His goodness.

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. There is a certainty of invisible realities that does not waver in the mind of the Christian.

To underline this point, Paul tells the Corinthians that we walk by faith, not by sight. In other words, we do not govern our lives by things we can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. Faith and sight are here placed in direct opposition. We walk by faith, which means we do not live by what we can see with our eyes.

Paul makes a similar point in Romans when he writes, *“For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”* Faith and hope are alike in that they look to the invisible rather than the visible. We hope for what we do not see, and with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

Because this is the nature of our Christian commitments, it is not uncommon that we are surprised by the God who does all things well. He has given us His word, including many great and

precious promises. But he hasn’t told us how exactly He will work all things together for good in our lives. Nor has He telegraphed how He intends to fulfill His perfect plan. He just asks us to trust Him, and not waver in unbelief.

We are not unlike a very small child walking beside his parent. Clinging tightly to the adult hand held out to him, the child walks along in reliance and dependence. He can’t and doesn’t know where his parent will take him. He just trusts that mom or dad know what they’re doing.

Very often in life, we do not understand what God is up to. Try though we might, we can’t make out what His plan really is, or what is coming around the next corner. We just trust that He knows what He’s doing.

In this season of our church life, we’ve seen some surprising developments for several of our members. Those difficulties have been a challenge to us all, and we’re left to wonder, “What is God up to?” We have no firm answers, and find ourselves falling back on the promises of God. In other words, because we can’t see what’s coming tomorrow, we must walk by faith today.

The human heart is very prone to fretting over such situations. We feel we have a constitutional right to worry. Yet God tells us “Don’t worry” and “Stop your fretting.” I will take care of you, and all you need do is trust me. Since you can’t walk by sight, try walking by faith instead.

If this past political season has shown

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Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, 9th*
- *Congregational Meeting, 18th*
- *Men’s Breakfast, 28th*
- *Fellowship Lunch, 29th*

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Christ's Judgement and Victory

By Richard Sibbes

We come now to the last part of our text, concerning the constant progress of Christ's gracious power, until he has set up an absolute government in us which shall prevail over all corruptions. It is said here that he will cherish his beginnings of grace in us until he bring forth 'judgment unto victory' (Matt. 12:20).

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT ESTABLISHED IN US

By judgment here is meant the kingdom of grace in us, that government whereby Christ sets up a throne in our hearts. Governors among the Jews were first called judges, then kings, whence this inward rule is called judgment, as also because it agrees with the judgment of the Word, which the Psalmist often calls judgment (as in Psalm 72:1,2) because it agrees with God's judgment. Men may read their doom in God's Word. What it judges of them God judges of them. By this judgment set up in us, good is discerned, allowed, and performed; sin is judged, condemned, and executed. Our spirit, being under the Spirit of Christ, is governed by him, and, so far as it is governed by Christ, it governs us graciously.

Christ and we are of one judgment and of one will. He has his will in us, and his judgments are so invested with authority in us as that they are turned into our judgment, we carrying his law in our hearts, written there by his Spirit (Jer. 31:33). The law in the inner man and the law written answer to each other as counterparts.

The meaning then is that the gracious frame of holiness set up in our hearts by the Spirit of Christ shall go forward until all contrary power is subdued. The spirit of judgment will be a spirit of burning (Isa. 4:4) to consume whatever opposed corruption eats into the soul like rust. If God's builders fall into errors and build stubble on a good foundation, God's Spirit, as a spiritual fire, will reveal this in time (1 Cor. 3:13), and destroy it. The builders shall, by a spirit of judgment, condemn their own errors and courses. The whole work of grace in us is set out under the name of judgment, and sometimes wisdom, because judgment is the chief and leading part in

grace, so that the gracious work of repentance is called a change of the mind, and an after wisdom. On the other hand, in the learned languages the words that express wisdom imply also a general relish and savor of the whole soul, and rather more the judgment of taste than of sight or any other sense, because taste is the most necessary sense, and requires a nearer application of the object than all other senses. So, in spiritual life, it is most necessary that the Spirit should alter the taste of the soul so that it might savor the things of the Spirit so deeply that all other things should be out of relish.

“Christ and we are of one judgment and of one will.”

And as it is true of every particular Christian that Christ's judgment in him shall be victorious, so likewise of the whole body of Christians, the church. The government of Christ, and his truth, whereby he rules as by a scepter, shall at length be victorious in spite of Satan, antichrist, and all enemies. Christ, riding on his white horse (Rev. 6:2), has a bow and goes forth conquering, in the ministry, that he may overcome either to conversion or to confusion. But yet I take judgment principally for Christ's kingdom

and government within us, firstly, because God especially requires the subjection of the soul and conscience as his proper throne; and, secondly, because, if judgment should prevail in all others about us and not in our own hearts, it would not yield comfort to us; and therefore it is the first thing that we desire when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come', that Christ would come and rule in our hearts. The kingdom of Christ in his ordinances serves but to bring Christ home into his own place, our hearts.

The words being thus explained, that judgment here includes the government of mind, will and affections, there are various conclusions that naturally spring from them.

CHRIST'S MILDNESS AND HIS GOVERNMENT

The first conclusion from the connection of this part of the verse with the former is that Christ is mild in the way that we have seen so that he may then set up his government in those whom he is so gentle and tender over. He pardons in this way so as to be obeyed as a king; he takes us to be his spouse so as to be

obeyed as a husband. The same Spirit that convinces us of the necessity of his righteousness to cover us convinces us also of the necessity of his government to rule us. His love to us moves him to frame us to be like himself, and our love to him stirs us up to be such as he may take delight in, neither do we have faith or hope any further than we have a concern to be purged as he is pure. He makes us subordinate governors, yea, kings under himself, giving us grace not only to fight but to subdue in some measure our base affections. It is one main fruit of Christ's exaltation that he may turn every one of us from our wickedness (Acts 3:26). 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living' (Rom. 14:9). God has bound himself by an oath that he would grant us that 'we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him' (Luke 1:75), and not only before the world.

PARDON LEADS TO OBEDIENCE

This may serve for a trial to discern who may lay just claim to Christ's mercy. Only those that will take his yoke and count it a greater happiness to be under his government than to enjoy any liberty of the flesh; that will take whole Christ, and not single out of him what may stand with their present contentment; that will not divide Lord from Jesus, and so make a Christ of their own, may make this claim. None ever did truly desire mercy for pardon but desired mercy for healing. David prays for a new spirit, as well as for a sense of pardoning mercy (Psa. 51:10).

JUSTIFICATION LEADS TO SANCTIFICATION

This also shows that those are misled that make Christ to be only righteousness to us and not sanctification, except by imputation, whereas it is a great part of our happiness to be under such a Lord, who was not only born for us, and given to us, but has the government likewise upon his shoulder (Isa. 9:6,7). He is our Sanctifier as well as our Saviour, our Saviour as well by the effectual power of his Spirit from the power of sin as by the merit of his death from the guilt thereof; provided these things are remembered:

1. The first and chief ground of our comfort is that Christ as a priest offered himself as a sacrifice to his Father for us. The guilty soul flies first to Christ crucified, made a curse for us. Thence it is that Christ has right to govern us; thence it is that he gives us his Spirit as our guide to lead us home.

2. In the course of our life, after we are in a state of grace, if we are overtaken with any sin, we must remember to have recourse first to Christ's mercy to

pardon us, and then to the promise of his Spirit to govern us.

3. And when we feel ourselves cold in affection and duty, the best way is to warm ourselves at this fire of his love and mercy in giving himself for us.

4. Again, remember this, that Christ rules us by a spirit of love, from a sense of his love, whereby his commandments are easy to us. He leads us by his free Spirit, a Spirit of liberty. His subjects are voluntaries. The constraint that he lays upon his subjects is that of love. He draws us sweetly with the cords of love. Yet remember also that he draws us strongly by a Spirit of power, for it is not sufficient that we have motives and encouragements to love and obey Christ from that love of his, whereby he gave himself for us to justify us; but Christ's Spirit must likewise subdue our hearts, and sanctify them to love him, without which all motives would be ineffectual.

Our disposition must be changed. We must be new creatures. They seek for heaven in hell that seek for spiritual love in an unchanged heart. When a child obeys his father it is from reasons persuading him, as likewise from a child like nature which gives strength to these reasons. It is natural for a child of God to love Christ so far as he is renewed, not only from inducement of reason so to do, but likewise from an inward principle and work of grace, whence those reasons have their chief force. First we are made partakers of the divine nature, and then we are easily induced and led by Christ's Spirit to spiritual duties.

Sibbes, Richard, The Bruised Reed, Chapter 11, Christ's Judgement and Victory

January Birthdays



Wedding Anniversaries



Book Review

by Carla DeMaster

Surprised by Oxford

by Carolyn Weber

Reading a book for a second time means it is a classic for me. This book is such a book. Well written, almost like fiction but it is not, this book has intriguing twists and turns. That is not surprising since it is written by a literature college professor.

The first time I read this book, I could identify with the dilemma of going to college, the meeting of people there, friends away from home. I also followed the friendship of Carolyn with TDH (tall, dark, and handsome) who is never identified until the book is finished. The second time, I wanted to look at the way believers shared with unbelievers on a college campus

in a natural way. What words? Approach? Place of meeting?

Carolyn went to Oxford University with a scholarship to study Romantic literature. She arrived as a feminist with no need of God. Her broken but loving family taught her to rely on reason and intellect. Her studies in literature aided in her coming to faith as well as the people God put into her life. The book covers her first year in graduate school, and it shows the story of a young woman's search for and finding of purpose, identity and faith. If you read Surprised by Joy, by C.S. Lewis, you can see some resemblance here, if only in the title. C.S. Lewis also had his encounter with literature, people, and God with an exciting end.

Men's Retreat

Come join us in Green Lake, WI on February 24-25, 2017, for a challenging time in God's Word, along with opportunities for fellowship with other brothers in Christ from around the Presbytery of the Midwest. Our speaker this year is the Rev. Dale Van Dyke, who is pastor of [Harvest OPC](#) in Wyoming, MI. He will lead us in a study from the Scriptures dealing with the topic of secularization in our society, its impact on the church and our children, and the power that exists in living an "ordinary" Christian life.

Along with the main messages there will also be small group discussion times involving questions derived from the messages. Open time in the afternoon will allow for quiet reflection, fellowship, and recreational activities such as basketball, broomball, and ping pong.

The retreat is open to all men 16 years and older. For consideration of boys younger than 16 years old or if you have questions about the retreat please contact Rick Laczny at 920-470-8382 or rclaczny@gmail.com.



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

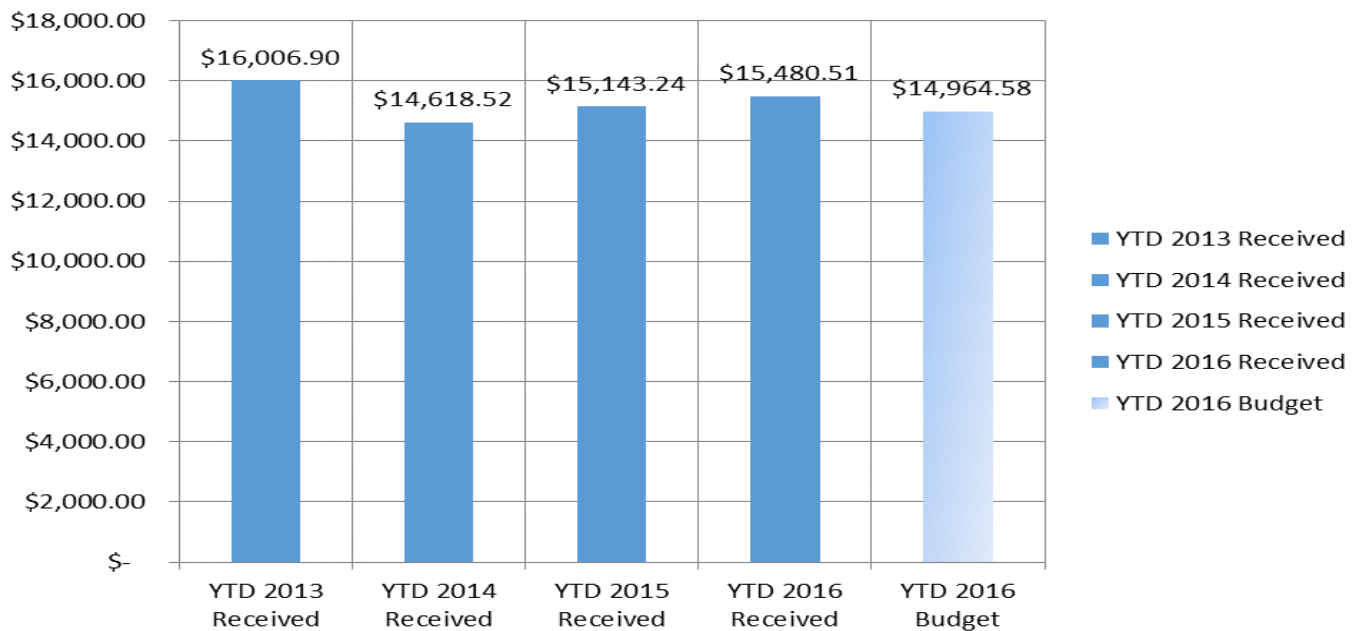
General Fund receipts for November totaled \$12,143.07 as compared to the budget of \$12,893.70, while General Fund disbursements for November totaled \$14,641.07. November year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$153,460.44 as compared to the budget of \$154,724.30 (a shortfall of \$1,263.86), while November year to date disbursements of \$146,699.96 were \$8,024.34 below budget. Through the end of November, the General Fund has increased by \$6,852.18. Year to date General Fund receipts for November were 7.6% above last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 0.7% below the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for November totaled \$1,089.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,360.42 (a shortfall of \$271.42). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through November totaled \$15,480.51 and exceeded budget by \$515.93. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During November, \$500.00 was sent to Worldwide Outreach (WVO) for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and \$200.00 was sent to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension

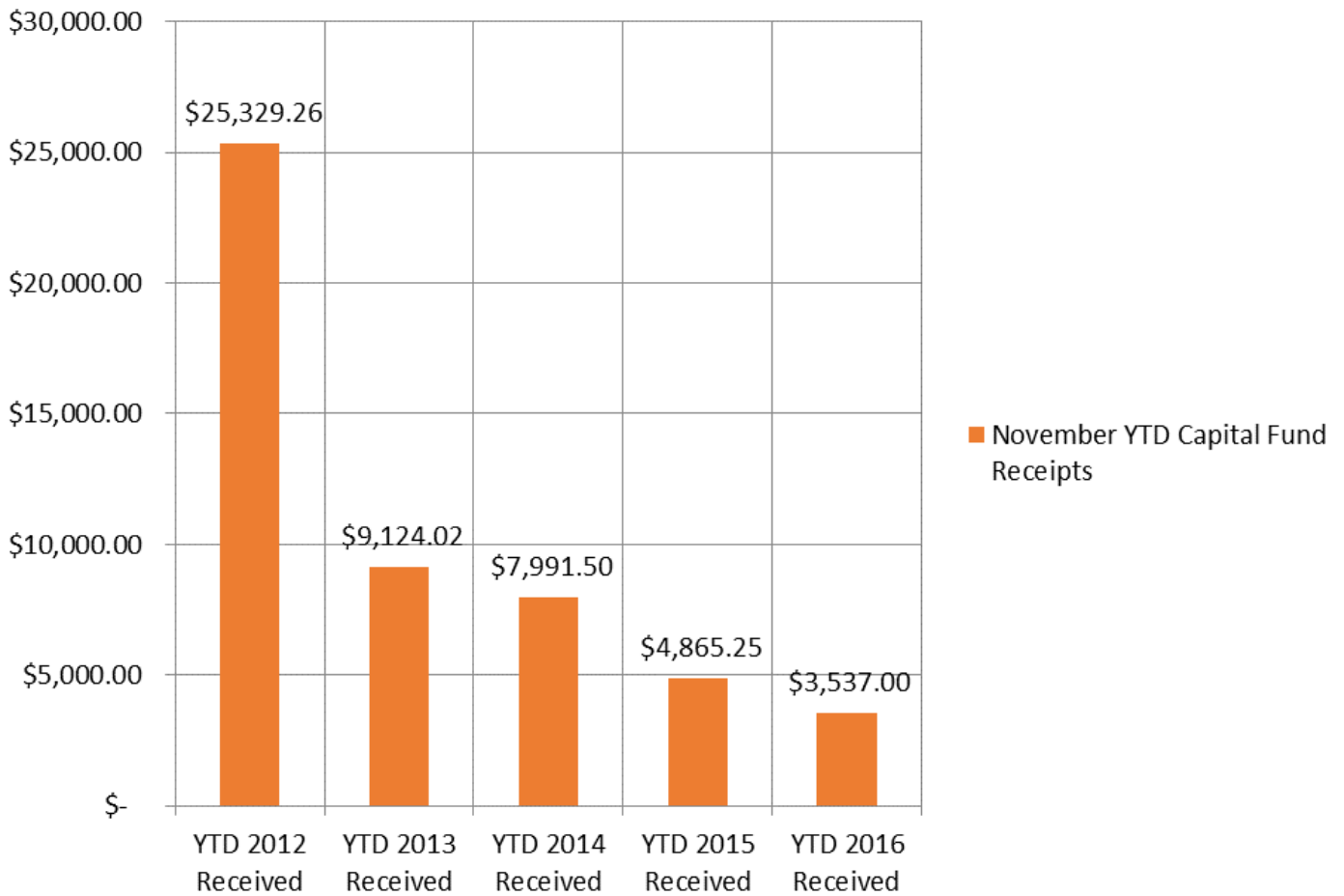
Committee (CHEX). In addition, \$500.00 was sent to Sheboygan County Christian School, \$600.00 to Pine Haven, and \$850.00 was provided for parents paying Christian School tuition or home school education expenses.

November Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$3,537.00. Please refer to the Capital Fund Graph that shows the historical giving for the years indicated in the graph. You may contribute to the Capital Fund by marking your gift as "Capital Fund" and placing it in the offering plate. Please note that the Capital Fund is used to pay for current and future needs that may exist to purchase additional equipment (such as computers, the sound system, tables and chairs, etc.) or building-type items (such as a parking lot, driveway, furnace boiler, etc.). Since some capital needs are quite substantial in nature, resources to finance and pay for these projects can take years to pay for them. Even though capital needs may not be large in the current year, we should wisely allocate our giving not only to current needs, but also to these future needs as well.

November YTD Benevolence Receipts Actual vs. Current Budget



November YTD Capital Fund Receipts



Men's Leadership Breakfast

The first men's leadership breakfast for 2017 will be on Saturday, January 28th, at 7:00 a.m. Men and boys of all ages are encouraged to come!





Grace OPC

January 2017

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 Session Meeting	10	11 Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Congregationa l Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	26	27	28 Men's Breakfast 7:00 a.m.
29 Lord's Supper a.m. Fellowship Lunch	30	31				

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Prayer Meeting

Just as a reminder, our weekly prayer meeting will resume on Wednesday, January 11th at 7:00 p.m. All are encouraged to come.



Fellowship Lunch

We will have a fellowship lunch after Sunday School on January 29th. All are invited to join! More details will be given later.



Soft Almond Sugar Cookies

- ★ 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- ★ 2/3 cup butter
- ★ 2/3 cup shortening
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 2 tsp. almond extract (more if you like!)
- ★ 1/2– 1 tsp vanilla
- ★ 1 cup flour
- ★ 2 1/2 cups cake flour (make each cup less 2 Tbsp. flour and substitute 2 Tbsp. cornstarch)
- ★ 2 tsp cornstarch
- ★ 2 tsp baking powder
- ★ 1 tsp salt
- ★ Coarse or regular sugar

Preheat oven to 350. Cream sugar, butter, and shortening. Stir in eggs and extracts. Combine flour, cornstarch, baking powder and salt and add to butter/egg mixture. Stir to combine until dough forms. Form into walnut-sized balls and roll in sugar before placing on cookie sheet. Flatten slightly if desired. Bake for 8 minutes and no longer. (I ended up actually doing 9-10 and they were just fine!)

Emily Will



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”

Almond Bark Cookies

- ★ 1 1/2 lb. white almond bark or white chocolate
- ★ 1 cup peanut butter
- ★ 2 cups salted peanuts
- ★ 4 cups Rice Krispies
- ★ 2 cups miniature marshmallows

Melt almond bark or white chocolate in microwave in short intervals, being careful not to burn. Add peanut butter and stir until smooth. Stir in peanuts and Rice Krispies. Add marshmallows last and stir lightly. Drop by teaspoonfuls on wax paper to cool.

Emily Will

Pumpkin Bread

- ★ 2/3 cups shortening
- ★ 2 2/3 cups sugar
- ★ 4 eggs
- ★ 1 16 oz. can pumpkin (We just cook one pie pumpkin and use the whole thing)
- ★ 2/3 cups water
- ★ 3 1/3 cup flour
- ★ 2 tsp. baking soda
- ★ 1 tsp. salt
- ★ 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- ★ 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ★ 1 tsp. ground cloves
- ★ 2/3 cups coarsely chopped walnuts
- ★ 2/3 cups raisins

Heat oven to 350. Grease bottoms of 2 loaf pans. Mix shortening and sugar; add eggs, pumpkin, and water. Blend in flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and cloves. Stir in nuts and raisins. Pour into pans and bake until wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 1 hour (usually longer).

***Zucchini bread variation:** Substitute 3 cups (generously heaped) shredded zucchini for the pumpkin. Blend in 2 teaspoons vanilla with the cloves.

Emily Will

Easy Yogurt Popsicles

- ★ 1 quart plain yogurt (not fat free)
- ★ 1-12 oz. can frozen orange juice concentrate
- ★ 1/4 cup honey
- ★ 1 Tbs vanilla

Mix all ingredients together. Pour into small paper cups. Put in freezer for 2-3 hours until partially frozen, then push popsicle stick into middle of cup. Freeze overnight. Store in covered dish. Peel off paper cup when ready to eat. Enjoy!

Emily Will



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon Corner

*“Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”
(1 Samuel 7:12)*

The word “hitherto” seems like a hand pointing in the direction of the *past*. Twenty years or seventy, and yet, “hitherto the Lord hath helped!” Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honour, in dishonour, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation, “hitherto hath the Lord helped us!” We delight to look down a long avenue of trees. It is delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of verdant temple, with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves; even so look down the long aisles of your years, at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys. Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely there must be many, and they all sing of mercy received “*hitherto*.”

But the word also points *forward*. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes “hitherto,” he is not yet at the end, there is still a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; and then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No! there is more yet-awakening in Jesus’ likeness, thrones, harps, songs, psalms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fulness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. O be of good courage, believer, and with grateful confidence raise thy “Ebenezer,” for—

He who hath helped thee hitherto
Will help thee all thy journey through.

When read in heaven’s light how glorious and marvellous a prospect will thy “hitherto” unfold to thy grateful eye!

Morning, December 29th by C. H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded

us nothing else, it taught us that our God can do as He pleases with the inhabitants of earth, with their rulers and parties and campaigns and elections. Moreover, we learned that He doesn’t need to announce His plans to us in advance. We just watch and wonder as God surprises us again and again.

Can you trust God for what you do not see? Are you willing to be surprised by Him?

