



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Straining Ahead

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

At the turn of the year, our culture traditionally closes the book on the holidays and begins thinking about resolutions for the months ahead. This is not unhealthy, though many of the resolutions are relatively short-sighted. Yes, losing weight is almost always a good idea. Self control in other areas is likewise laudable.

What is too often conspicuous by its absence are goals of a spiritual nature. These are the matters of our eternal souls, and can have eternal consequences. So let me suggest a few spiritual resolutions that may spur you on toward greater faithfulness.

My first resolution is to pray more, and to develop my prayer life to at least an intermediate level. Part of the problem is that we do not pray often enough – we lack consistency. Having some deliberate times each day when we pray can build habits of regular prayer. Another aspect of our problem is that our prayers are often shallow and self-centered. Although there is nothing wrong with praying for a parking space as we wander around the parking lot, that should not be the extent of our prayer life. Without ceasing to pray for ourselves, we can and should pray for

our brothers and sisters in Christ – bearing one another’s burdens before the throne of grace. We can pray for the life of our church – for our deacons, elders and pastor. We should be praying for the spread of the gospel in our city, region and state. We should be offering up thanksgiving, praise and even lamentation. There are so many aspects of prayer that remain untouched by most Christians. Living in a selfish

culture that is obsessed with our own personal experiences, we don’t look beyond the end of our own noses in prayer – we ought to take our prayer life up a level or two in the months ahead.

A second resolution is to seek ways to serve others – both Christians and non-Christians. By actively engaging in service to others, we carry out the ministry

of the gospel. To the unbeliever our service is an evangelistic witness. To our fellow believers it is the fulfillment of the second great commandment – love your neighbor as yourself. To seek ways to serve without calling attention to ourselves is even better still. An understated expression of genuine love and concern is to show ourselves to be children of our heavenly Father, who is kind to ungrateful and undeserving people – even to people like us!

A third suggestion is to make it your intention to be under the means of



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Inside this issue:

<i>Pastor’s Article</i>	1
<i>MERF</i>	2-3
<i>John Ploughman Article</i>	4-5
<i>January Calendar</i>	6
<i>Book Review</i>	7
<i>Recipe Corner</i>	8
<i>Pizza and Bowling</i>	10
<i>January Birthdays and Anniversaries</i>	11
<i>Spurgeon Corner</i>	12

Mnemonics...

- 1/7 **Bowling and Pizza Party**
- 1/9 **Ben Hopp & Fellowship Supper after evening service**
- 1/12 **Prayer Meeting**
- 1/19 **Congregation & Corporation Meetings**
- 1/28 **Pastors & Wives dinner**

Chapter 23: Monuments

EVERY man should leave a monument behind in the recollection of his life by his neighbors. There's something very much amiss about a man who is not missed when he dies. A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered; Carve your name on hearts and not on marble. So live towards others that they will keep your; memory green when the grass grows on your grave. Let us hope there will be something better to be said about us than of the man whose epitaph is:

"Here lies a man who did no good,
And if he'd lived he never would;
Where he's gone, and how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares."

May our friends never remember us as; great gormandizers of meat and drink, like this glutton over whose grave is written:

"Gentle reader, gentle reader,
Look on the spot where I do lie,
I always a very good feeder,
But now the worms do feed on I."

As much as that might be said of a prize; pig or a fat bullock if it died of disease. Some men are nothing better than walking bee barrels while they live; when death staves in the cask, they deserve to rot out of notice.

However, a plain-speaking tombstone better than downright lying. To put flattery a grave is like pouring melted butter down a stone sink. What queer tastes those must have; who puff up the departed as if they wanted to blow the trumpet of the dead before the last angel makes his appearance! Here's an apple out of their basket:

"Here lies the body of Martha Gwyn,
Who was so very pure within;
She cracked the outer shell of sin,
And hatched herself a cherubim."

Where do they bury the bad people? Everywhere in our churchyard, they seem all to have been the best of folks, a regular nest of saints. Some of them were so precious good, it is no wonder they died: they were too fine to live in such a wicked world as this. Better give bread to the poor than stones to the dead. Better kind words to the living than fine speeches over the grave. Some of the lavish stuff on monuments is enough to make a dead man blush.

What heaps of marble are stuck over many people's tombs, half enough to build a house with! What a lift they will have at the resurrection! It makes me feel as if I could not get my breath to think of all those stones being: heaped on my bones—not that there's any fear of it. Let the earth which I have tilled over so often lie light upon my corpse when it is turned over me. Let John Ploughman be buried somewhere under the boughs of a spreading beech with a green grass mound above him, out of which primroses and daisies peep in their season—a quiet shady spot where the leaves fall, and the robins play, and the dewdrops gleam in the sunshine. Let fee wind blow fresh and free over my grave, and if there must be aid line about me, let it be:

HERE LIES THE BODY OF JOHN PLOUGHMAN
WAITING FOR THE APPEARING OF
HIS LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.

I've often heard tell of patience on a monument, but I have never seen it sitting there when I have gone through churchyards. I have a good many times seen stupidity on a monument, and I have wondered why the parson, or the churchwarden, or the deacon, or whoever else has the ruling of things let people cut such rubbish on the stones. Why, a lostershire man told me that at Dymock graveyard there's a writing like this:

"Two sweeter babes you ne'er did see—
Than God's grace gave to we;
But they were taken with ague fits,
And here they lie as dead as nits."

I've read pretty near enough silly things myself in our Surrey burying grounds to fill a book. Better leave the grave alone than set up a monument to your own ignorance.

Of all places for jokes and fun, the strangest are tombstones. Yet many a time grave stones have had such oddities carved upon them that one is led to surmise that the nearer the church, the further from common decency.

This is a cruel verse, but I dare say a true one:

"Here lies, returned to clay,
Miss Arabella Young,
Who on the first day of May—
Began to hold her tongue."

This is not much better:

"Upjohn Adams lies here, of the parish of Southwell,
A carrier who carried his can to his mouth well;
He carried so much, and he carried so fast,
He could carry no more, so was carried at last;
For the liquor he drunk was too much for the one,
He could not carry off, so he's now carrion."

Why could not these people poke their fun somewhere else? A man's wit must be nearly dead when he can find no place for it but the grave. The body of the most ragged beggar is too sacred a thing to crack jokes upon. What a odd fish must Roger Martin have been, who lived in Walworth, and put on his wife's tomb:

"Here lies the wife of Roger Martin,
She was a good wife to Roger—that's sartin."

And whoever was the foolish creature at Ockham, one of the prettiest spots in these; parts, who wrote these outrageous lines?

"The Lord saw good,
I was topping off wood,
And down fell from the tree;
I met with a check,
And I broke my blessed neck,
And so death topped off me."

There, that's enough, and quite as good as a feast. Here's proof positive that some fools are left alive to write on the monuments of those who are buried. Well may there be ghosts about. No wonder the sleepers get out of bed when they are so badly tucked in. I say let us have a law to let nobody put nonsense over the dead unless he likes to take out a certificate to be an ass, just like the license to shoot partridges and pheasants. At the same time, let all puffery be saved for dressmakers' shops quack doctors, and none be allowed at grave. I say as our minister does:

"Let no proud stone with sculptured virtues rise,
To mark the spot wherein a sinner lies,
Or if some boast must deck the sinner's grave,
Boast of His love who died lost man to save."

One more Surrey rhyme, and John Ploughman leaves the churchyard to go about work and turn up other sods. It is ill Saviours, Southwark, and is, I think a rare good one.

"Like to the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree,
Or like the dainty flower of May,
Or like the sun of the day,
Or like the sun, or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonah had;
Even so is man, Whose thread is spun,
Draw out, and cut, and so is done:
The rose withers, the blossom blasteth,
The flower fades, the morning hasteth,
The sun sets, the shadow flies,
The gourd consumes, and man he dies."



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

January 2022

Grace OPC



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	
2	3	4	5	6	7 Bowling and Pizza Party	8
9 Ben Hopp PM, Fellowship Supper after evening service	10	11 Session Meeting	12 Prayer Meeting	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Congregation & Corporation Meetings	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 Pastors & Wives Dinners	29
30 Lord's Supper	31					

Ezra Nehemiah, the Return from Exile by Dr. Norman DeJong

Dr. DeJong found out I liked Nehemiah so one Sunday when he visited Grace Church, he gave me this Bible study that he wrote and published. What a treasure! Nehemiah has been a favorite book for years because of a Bible study in Pioneer Girls which is used with junior high girls, including 2 of my own. The study was called, The Reluctant Leader. As I see now, Nehemiah was not reluctant! It probably had to do with his four months of prayer before approaching the king about the needs in Jerusalem.

Ezra is the first in Dr. DeJong's book. Using Dr. DeJong's four questions helps in this study as well as any other Bible study:

What is God doing in this passage?

What is God saying in this passage?

How are God's people responding to God's actions and words?

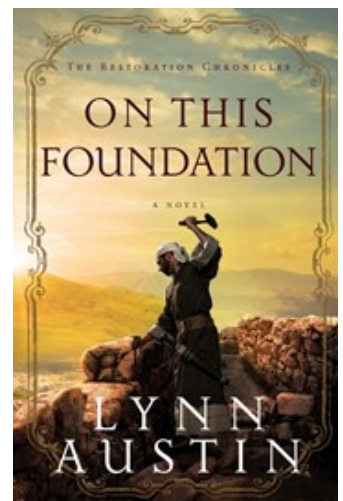
How should you and I respond today?

The study begins with an introduction with prophecies of Isaiah coming true right here. I appreciated the chart that dates occurrences from 740 BC to 458 BC. This puts into perspective the kings, prophets, battles, and sovereignty of God in all. The text notes on discussion starts give meaty information interspersed with application then and now. The discussion start questions help to focus on the people and circumstances they are in. They focus on important facts in chronological order. Although the material in Ezra and Nehemiah needs explanations from the other books of history, Dr. DeJong weaves all that information in careful but easy steps.

On This Foundation, by Lynn Austin

This historical novel is recommended within Dr. DeJong's Bible study because it has characters that make us understand what it might be like to be living in 473 BC and beyond, along side those in the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah shows his leadership qualities all the time, in Susa and beyond. Sometimes he seems harsh, but always godly. Other characters besides those in Scripture include women who worked on the wall, landowners, daughters that were used to pay family debts, enemies who taunt or even endanger Nehemiah, and priests who lead. Chapter 13 of Nehemiah is not included in Lynn Austin's fictional account, so the book ends on a positive note with the celebration of worship.



Recipe from Carla

Cheesy Chicken Bacon Ranch Casserole

1lb bacon

2lbs boneless chicken breasts

One package of dry Hidden Valley Ranch dressing

2 jars of Alfredo sauce

1tbsp minced garlic

1lb box rotini noodles (or similar)

3+ cups of Italian cheese (like Parmesan or shredded Italian)

Cook box of noodles... Leaving them slightly hard.

Fry the package of bacon. Drain grease but keeping 2 tablespoons to cook the chicken in.

Crumble the bacon and set aside.

Cut the 2 pounds of chicken breasts into bite-size pieces and toss with ½ package of ranch mix. Fry chicken in bacon grease – adding in the garlic. Drain any leftover grease off the chicken. Now add one jar of alfredo sauce and remaining half package of ranch dressing and simmer. Meanwhile, in a greased 9 X 13 baking dish, place one half jar Alfredo sauce in the bottom. Layer noodles, bacon, and chicken mixture, 1 cup of cheese and repeat saving a tiny bit of bacon for topping. The final layer will be the last jar of Alfredo sauce, a good sprinkle of cheese and bacon crumbles.

Bake at 375 degrees.



This came from a member of the Gresham (Old Stockbridge) church—Interesting history!

OLD STOCKBRIDGE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



THE PRESBYTERY of the Midwest of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met Friday, September 18 at the Old Stockbridge Church in Morgan. Delegates were present from the four states composing the Presbytery to survey the work of the churches and to consider ways and means to bring forward the preaching of the gospel. Those attending were: first row—host pastor, the Rev. Henry D. Phillips, the Rev. Francis Mahaffy of Kenosha, Wis., and Lake Forest, Ill.; Moderator, the Rev. George Haney of Menomonee Falls; the Rev. Henry Fikkert of Cedar Grove; Stated, Clerk Ivan DeMaster of Westchester, Ill. Second row—Elder Stanley Moulter of Menomonee Falls; Elder Allen Klokow of Westchester; the Rev. Donald Stanton of Oostburg; Evangelist John Fikkert of Green Bay; the Rev. John Barnett of Greenville, Mich., Elder Louis Voskuil of Cedar Grove. Third row—the Rev. Ted Engstrom of the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod of Merrill; the Rev. Donald Parker of Tinley Park, Ill.; Elder Clarence Worst of Greenville; Elder Calvin LeMahieu of Oostburg; the Rev. Eugene Williams of Cedar Falls, Iowa; Elder Clarence Roskamp of Cedar Falls. Others attending were the Rev. James Bosgraf and Elder John Baldwin of Hanover Park, Ill., and Elder Virgil Murphy of the host church.

Pastor Brian's Bowling & Pizza Party

Date: Friday January 7th

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!



“O God, we praise Thee for
keeping us till this day, and
for the full assurance that
Thou wilt never let us go.”

- C. H. Spurgeon



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Mark Friberg

1st

Tom Ver Velde

23rd

Brady Froh

3rd

Marge Ten Pas

31st

Debbie Boss

7th

Eyob Kaeiser

9th

Clara Will

14th

Alyssa Arndt

22nd



January Anniversaries

Steve & Megan Boss 28th

16 Years





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Spurgeon Corner

“Serve the Lord with gladness.”
Psalm 100:2

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Delight in divine service is a token of acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving him at all; they bring the form of homage, but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace his throne; he is the Lord of the empire of love, and would have his servants dressed in the livery of joy. The angels of God serve him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks. That obedience which is not voluntary is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart, and if he seeth that we serve him from force, and not because we love him, he will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed *the test of his sincerity*. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, “It is sweet for one’s country to die,” proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness is *the support of our strength*; in the joy of the Lord are we strong. It acts as *the remover of difficulties*. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without oil the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing,

“Make me to walk in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road.”

Reader, let us put this question—do *you* serve the Lord *with gladness*? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery, that it is to us a delight and a joy! Let our gladness proclaim that we serve a good Master.

Evening, January, 9th C. H. Spurgeon

grace whenever possible. We believe that God has given us these means of grace so that we can grow spiritually by their use. The reading, preaching and hearing of God’s word is the primary means of grace. Prayer, the sacraments and church discipline are also means whereby God makes us grow. This is also true of real Christian fellowship, where we spur one another on to love and good deeds. All of these things are God’s prescribed means for spiritual growth. So whatever hindrances stand in the way, let us diligently remove them and make it our ambition to be engaged in the means of grace.

The list could go on and on – this is a representative sampling, not an exhaustive list. In

what ways can you set your sights on the year ahead for a time of spiritual progress and development?