

REFLECTIONS

Grace Orthodox Presbyterian church's

A Different Perspective

By Pastor Brian De Jong

In our last newsletter an article was published entitled "Don't be a Scrooge This Christmas." It was written by Dr. R.C. Sproul. In that article, Dr. Sproul took a rather provocative position. Due to my absence, I was unable to preview that article before Reflections was published. I wish to offer a different perspective from Dr. Sproul, and examine some of the claims he makes in that article.

Before digging into the substance of the article, let me unambiguously say that the incarnation of our Savior was a blessed and happy event. The fact that God came to earth to dwell among us is beyond remarkable. We rejoice in Jesus' birth, and all that the Scriptures tell us about that grand condescension.

Now, to look at the article. As a theme throughout, Dr. Sproul characterizes any who question the Christmas holiday as a "Scrooge" and a "Grinch" – all cynical men. Such people despise the sacred and are cynical toward the sublime, according to Sproul. This demeans what was holy, he says. He labels such questions and those who ask them as "our own sanctimonious profanation of the holy."

I do not believe it is any great leap of logic to say that Dr. Sproul is accusing such "cynics" of sin. Indeed, it seems like a serious sin, according to Dr. Sproul's line of reasoning. To profane the holy, and to do so sanctimoniously, is sheer hypocrisy.

By making such a provocative case, Dr. Sproul is essentially accusing the Westminster Assembly of hypocrisy and sin. That is a serious charge from a respected Presbyterian minister.

One of the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly was The Directory for the Publick Worship of



God. That Directory includes an appendix entitled "Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship." It reads as follows:

"There is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day,

which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued..."

This appendix is simply the application of the Regulative Principle of Worship. In the Confession of Faith, Chapter 19, paragraph 1, it is stated in these words: *1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not*

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Mnemonics...

- *Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast, January 5th*
- *Session Meeting, January 8th*
- *Appetizer Fellowship, January 13th*
- *Congregation and Corporation Meetings, January 23rd*

prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

According to this principle, anything done in public worship must be clearly prescribed by God in Holy Scripture. (For Scriptural support for the RPW, see Deuteronomy 12:28-32; Leviticus 10:1-3; Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13 and Colossians 2:16-23). We are simply not free to introduce anything into worship that is not explicitly commanded by God.

For anyone who is willing to research the writings of the English and Scottish Puritans on the question of the church calendar, the conclusion will be impossible to miss. The Puritans rejected church calendar festivals because they were not commanded by God in Scripture. It is beyond debate that this is the position of the Westminster Standards, which is the theological constitution of historic Presbyterianism.

In our own OPC Directory of Public Worship, there is a statement regarding special occasions for worship. In DPW 5.1. it says, *“Under the gospel, we are commanded to keep no other particular day holy, except the Lord’s Day. Nevertheless, God’s people may observe special occasions as the dispensations of God’s providence administer cause and opportunity. Such observance is both consonant with Scripture and pastorally appropriate.”*

The following paragraphs then explain what that means. It first addresses times for prayer and fasting, due to “great and notable calamities.” After that, it speaks about special times of thanksgiving for God’s goodness. Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to the feasts and festivals of the church calendar.

Furthermore, our Book of Church Order states plainly that all church power is ministerial and declarative. In other words, the church only has power to declare what God has revealed in His word. We do not possess a “legislative” power. We cannot make up rules, and then enforce them upon God’s people. To do so leads to ecclesiastical tyranny and the abuse of church power.

For instance, if the Session were to announce that we had instituted a new rule for all members of Grace Church, that said that all Grace Church members must wear purple socks to church – then you would have the right to ask, “By what authority do you make this rule?” If we could somehow produce a passage from Scripture that commands all Christians to wear purple socks, then you would be bound to do that. On the other hand, if we could not produce any such passage or verse, then you would be free to reject the new rule. The church doesn’t have authority to make up its own rules, and enforce them on the members. We can only declare the rules that God has made and revealed in His word. Our power is declarative, not legislative!

It is my perspective that in this article, Dr. Sproul fires a broadside against historic Presbyterian belief and practice. He makes sweeping statements that are Biblically unsupportable, yet offers no Biblical argumentation for the position he himself espouses. He condemns those who do not believe that Christmas “is the holiest of holy days.” And rather than engage the arguments against Christmas with sober respect, he dismisses them as naïve and childish. Dr. Sproul has said and done many good things during his long ministry. In many areas he has been helpful and insightful. Sadly, on this issue he is wide of the mark.



Book Review:
Suffering by Paul
David Tripp
 By Carla DeMaster



Ian, a friend we made in Maine, had the opportunity he was trained for: pastoral ministry in Kansas. He and his wife and three daughters packed up, anticipating several years of service, when after a few years, he had a stroke. After months of therapy, Ian was well enough to return to Maine but not to the ministry. Gradually he was able to do some work in his woodworking shop, his second love. Never without pain, Ian has adjusted to the limited mobility and has worked on remodeling houses.

When he described this book by Tripp as being such a blessing that it brought tears to his eyes, I knew this was a keeper and ordered three copies. One went to a friend who was terminated without explanation. What a help!! A recently widowed sister-in-law is reading it and being led by God, inch by inch, to examine her new role in the light of Scripture with the help of this book

Paul Trip wrote this book in response to a serious health problem that changed his life drastically. The pain was severe. The recovery, non-existent. As he screamed because of his pain, the doctors were working feverishly to save his life. His vibrant ministry almost stopped.

What topics does the author cover to help his suffering readers? He describes the need to be aware that suffering puts our hearts under attack. Spiritual warfare is constant. There are temptations to lash out, give up, ask “Why?” But suffering can be a “workroom for grace.”

The traps Tripp lists are: Fear (forgets past blessings and leads to evil); Envy (tends to look horizontally at other people, rather than vertically to God, embittering the person), doubt, denial, and discouragement (relating to perception of God, the Bible, and the reaction to both). These six “traps” are detailed in six chapters of the book. Questions and scripture which applies are at the end of each chapter.

The book concludes with six chapters on the comforts God gives: God’s Grace, God’s Presence, God’s Sovereignty, God’s Purpose, God’s People, and a Heart at Rest. Scripture passages are again applied to each topic within the chapter and at the end of it.

If you are suffering or know of those who are, this book should be a help. Since a lot of the topics are temptations for all, this book has a wider appeal also. God’s grace shines throughout.

One review on the back cover says, ” Honest, Compelling, Grace filled. This book is a gift. Paul Tripp speaks to us not as a theoretician but as a fellow sufferer.”



Anchor of Hope Newsletter

Entering 2019 With Confidence in the Lord

Recently I was reading through the 5th chapter of First Chronicles and I came across an interesting piece of Scripture that I had never noticed in depth before. God's Word has that power of being new every morning and never returning void.

Oddly enough, I interpreted the battle strategy as a parallel to the daily battles we face at Anchor of Hope and in pro-life work in general. Allow me to share what I learned and you decide if it applies to any battles you are facing in your life.

LESSON 1

What we learn: There was cooperation, unity and the strength of combined forces. In verse 18, we read that 3 tribes (Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh) had combined their forces for battle. Their fighting unit/team comprised close to 45,000 men.

What we can apply: We are stronger together in this fight. When we combine our skills, resources, talents, and hands of service – we are just more effective in the fight against abortion and against a culture promising fulfillment in sexual sin but actually leading to death.

LESSON 2

What we learn: These men were "ready for military service." In human terms – they were prepared and well trained. Ezra, credited for writing Chronicles, states that the men were: "able-bodied," they could "handle shield and sword," "use a bow," and they were "trained for battle."

It is interesting to note that defensive equipment was mentioned first and that the soldiers' weapons included both proximities of a distant battle (bow) and more hand-to-hand combat (sword).

What we can apply: *Fortune favors the prepared.* As these warriors were equipped and trained for battle, we must be equipped and trained for battle every day. Scripture speaks of "**when** we face trials" not **if** we face them. So we have a responsibility and the opportunity to be prepared and equipped. More than that, we have the ability to be prepared and equipped. A plethora of resources exist in pro-life work to help every day warriors train for battle. Great places to start include The Vitae Foundation's work on Right Brain Research, The Charlotte Lozier Institute's publications on abortion, Wisconsin Family Action's pro-life work, and Wisconsin Right to Life's education arm. The resources are endless.

LESSON 3

What we learn: They waged war against their *enemies* (names I can't pronounce). **They showed up for the battle!**

What we can apply: Showing up and being present in battle are important. So is remembering that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual powers of wickedness in this generation.

Anchor of Hope Continued....

LESSON 4

What we learn: They were helped in battle and God handed their enemies over to His warriors.

What we can apply: As supporters you help us in battle! You pray. You refer. You send clients to us. You support us financially. You encourage us with words of support and boutique donations.

LESSON 5

What we learn: God answered their prayers because they trusted Him.

What we can apply: 'Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.' I believe St. Augustine was first credited for this sage advice. The battle is always the Lord's and so is the victory

As we reflect on 2018 and close the book on a productive year in preparation for the work ahead of us in 2019, we can be encouraged by God's promises from Scripture and His faithfulness. Because we know that God in His constancy, never changes. we can walk by faith. We can carry a boldness and courage to face the challenges ahead of us because we can look behind us at a pattern of His faithfulness and provisions.

Let us do the hard work of preparation, prayer, and trusting Him. Then, let us have the courage to show up for battle each day with the confident expectation God's deliverance and His strength.

Looking forward to 2019 with each and every one of you.

Looking back on 2018

Thank you for being on this journey with us!

God has used your support, prayers, and encouragement to resulted in these victories.

253 clients served (compared to 125 in 2017)

137 pregnancy tests (compared to 82 in 2017)

88 ultrasounds (compared to 57 in 2017)

148 STD tests (compared to 44 in 2017)

17 confirmed choices for LIFE(waiting on several 'unknowns')



John Ploughman

Chapter 10: On Good Nature and Firmness

O not be all sugar, or the world will suck you down; but do not be all vinegar or the world will spit you out. There is a medium in all things, only blockheads go to extremes. We need not be all rock or all sand, all iron or all wax. We should neither fawn upon everybody like silly lapdogs, nor fly at all persons like surly mastiffs. Blacks and whites go together to make up a world. Hence on the point of temper, we have all sorts of people to deal with. Some are as easy as an old shoe, but they are hardly ever worth more than the other one of the pair; others take fire as fast as tinder at the smallest offense and are as dangerous as gunpowder. To have a fellow going about the farm as cross with everybody as a bear with a sore head, with a temper as sour as spoiled milk and as sharp as a razor, looking as surly as a butcher's dog, is a great nuisance; yet there may be some good points about the man, so that he may be a man for all that. But poor soft Tommy, as green as grass, and as ready to bend as a willow, is nobody's money and everybody's scorn. A man must have a backbone, or how is he to hold his head up? But that backbone must bend, or he will knock his brow against the beam.

There is a time to do as others wish, and a time to refuse. If we make ourselves asses, then everybody will ride us, but if we would be respected, we must be our own masters and not let others saddle us as they think fit. If we try to please everybody, we shall be like a toad under a harrow and never have peace; and if we play lackey to all our neighbors, whether good or bad, we shall be thanked by no one, for we shall soon do as much harm as good. He that makes himself a sheep will find that the wolves are not all dead. He who lies on the ground must expect to be trodden on. He who makes himself a mouse the eats will eat. If you let your neighbors put the calf on your shoulder, they will, they will soon clap on the cow. We are to please our neighbor for his good to edification, but this is quite another matter. There are old foxes about whose mouths are always watering for young geese, and if they can coax them to do just what they wish, they soon make their market out of them. What a Jolly good fellow you will be called if you will make yourself a hack for your friends, and what a mess will they soon bring you into!

Out of that mess you will have to get all alone, for your friends will be sure to say to you, Good-bye, basket, I've carried all my apples or they will give you their good wishes and nothing more, and you will find out that fair words won't feed a cat, nor butter your bread, nor fill your pocket. Those who make so very much of you either mean to cheat you, or else are in need of you: when they have sucked the orange they will throw the peel away. Be wise, then, and look before you leap, lest a friend's advice should do you more mischief than an enemy's slander. "The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going." Go with your neighbor as far as good conscience will go with you, but part company where the shoe of conscience begins to pinch your foot. Begin with your friend as you mean to go on, and let him know very early that you are not a man made of putty, but one who has a judgment of his own and means to use it. Pull up the moment you find you are out of the road, and take the nearest way back at once. The way to avoid great faults is to beware of small ones. Therefore, pull up in time if you would not be dragged into the ditch by your friend. Better offend your acquaintance than lose your character and hazard your soul. Don't be ashamed to walk down Turnagain Lane. Never mind being called a turncoat when you turn from bad courses: better to turn in time than to burn in eternity. Do not be persuaded to ruin yourself—it is buying gold too dear to throw oneself away to please our company. Put your foot down where you mean to stand, and let no man move you from the right. Learn to say, "No," and it will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin.

A friend to everybody is often a friend to nobody; or else in his simplicity, he robs his family to help strangers and becomes brother to a beggar. There is wisdom in generosity as in everything else, and some had need go to school to learn it. A kind-hearted soul may be very cruel to his own children, while he takes the bread out of their mouths to give to those who call him a generous fellow but laugh at his folly. Very often he

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Ploughman Continued....

that lends his money loses both his gold and his friends, and he who is surety is never sure. Take John Ploughman's advice, and never be security for more than you are quite willing to lose. Remember the word of God says, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure."

When we are injured, we are bound as Christians to bear it without malice; but we are not to pretend that we do not feel it, for this will but encourage our enemies to kick us again. He who is cheated twice by the same man is half as bad as the rogue; and it is very much so in other injuries. Unless we claim our rights, we are ourselves to blame if we do not get them. Paul was willing to bear stripes for his Master's sake, but he did not forget to tell the magistrates that he was a Roman; and when those gentlemen wished to put him out of prison privately, he said, "Nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us out". A Christian is the gentlest of men, but then he is a man. A good many people don't need to be told this, for they are up in a moment if they think anybody is likely to ill treat them. Long before they know whether it is a thief in the farmyard or the old mare got loose, they are up with the window and firing off the old blunderbuss. Dangerous neighbors these; a man might as well make a seat out of a bull's forehead, as expect to find comfort in their neighborhood.

Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

In my day I have seen a few downright obstinate men, whom neither sense nor reason could alter. There's a queer chap in our village who keeps a bulldog, and he tells me that when the creature once gives a bite at anything, he never lets go again, and if you want to get it out of his mouth, you must cut his head off. That's the sort of man that has fretted me many a time and almost made me mad. You might sooner argue a pitchfork into a threshing machine, or persuade a brickbat to turn into marble, than to get the fellow to hear common sense. Getting spots out of leopards is nothing at all compared with trying to lead a downright obstinate man. Right or wrong, you might as easily make a hill walk to London as turn him when his mind is made up. When a man is right, this sticking to his text is a grand thing (our minister says, "it is the stuff that martyrs are made of"), but when an ignorant, wrong-headed fellow gets this hard grit into him, he makes martyrs of those who have to put up with him. old Master Pighead swore he would drive a nail into an oak board with his fist and so lamed his hand for life; he could not sell his corn at his own price, and so he let the rats eat up the ricks. You cannot ride by his fields without noticing his obstinacy, for he vows, "He won't have none of these ever newfangled notions," and so he grows the worst crops in the parish. Worst of all, his daughter went among the Methodists, and in a towering rage, he turned her out of doors. Though I believe he is very sorry for it, he will not yield an inch, but stands to it that he will never speak to her so long as he lives. Meanwhile, the dear girl is dying through his unkindness. Rash vows are much better broken than kept. He who never changes, never mends; he who never yields, never conquers.

With children, you must mix gentleness with firmness; they must not always have their own way, but they must not always be thwarted. Give to a pig when it grunts, and to a child when it cries, and you will have a fine pig and a spoiled child. A man who is learning to play on a trumpet and a petted child are two very disagreeable companions even as next-door neighbors; but unless we look well to it, our children will be a nuisance to others and a torment to ourselves. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." If we never have headaches through rebuking our little children, we shall have plenty of heartaches when they grow up. Strict truthfulness must rule all our dealings with the young; our yea must be yea, and our nay be nay," and that always. Never promise a child and then fail to perform whether you promise him a bun or a beating. Be obeyed at all costs—disobedient children are unhappy children; for their own sakes, make them mind you. If you yield up your authority once, you will hardly ever get it again, for he who says A must say B. and so on. We must not provoke our children to anger, lest they be discouraged; but we must rule our household in the fear of the Lord, and in so doing we may expect a blessing.

Since John Ploughman has taken to writing, he has had a fine chance of showing his firmness and his gentleness too, for he has received bushels of advice for which he begs to present his compliments, as the squire's lady says. He does not mind either returning the advice or some of his own instead, by way of showing his gratitude; for he is sure it is very kind of so many people to tell him so many different ways in which he

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Ploughman Continued....

might make an idiot of himself. He means to glean as many good hints as he can from the acres of his friends' stubble; and while sticking to his own style, because it suits his hand, he will touch himself up a bit if he can. Perhaps if the minister will lend him Cowper or Milton, he may even stick a sprig of poetry into his nosegay, and come out as fine as the flowers in May. But he cannot promise, for the harvest is just on and reaping leaves no time for rhyming. The worst of it is, the kind friends who are setting John to rights contradict one another: one says it is very poor stuff and all in an assumed name, for the style is not rough enough for a plowman; another says the matter is very well, but the expressions are so coarse that he is amazed the editor put it in the magazine. John means to pay his advisers all the attention which they deserve, and as some of the mice have been bold enough to make a nest in the cats ear, he means to be after them and write a paper upon giving advice gratis, in which they will be likely to get a flea in their ear in return for their instructions.

Congregation and Corporation Meetings



Our annual Congregation and Corporation Meetings will be held on Wednesday, January 23rd at 7:00 pm. In the event of weather, we will meet the following Wednesday, January 30th.

Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast

The first Men and Boys Leadership Breakfast of the new year will be Saturday morning, January 5th from 7:00-8:30 am. Join us for delicious food, and a good study from God's word.



January Birthdays

Mark Friberg 1st
Brady Froh 3rd
Debbie Boss 7th
Eyob Kaeiser 9th
Clara Will 14th
Rachel Taggart 15th
Jared Oliver 19th
Alyssa Arndt 22nd



Tom Ver Velde 23rd
Inga Fester 26th
Marge Ten Pas 31st

January Anniversaries

Jared and Becca Oliver
~January 19th, 1 year~

Steve and Megan Boss
~January 28th, 13 years~

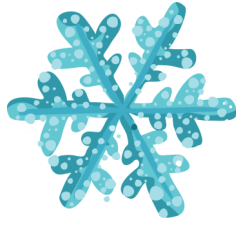


Grace Orthodox
Presbyterian
church's

*Showing forth the
excellencies of
Jesus Christ*



January 2019



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
6		1	2	3	4	5 Men and Boys' Breakfast
	7	8 Session Meeting, 6:30pm	9 Prayer Meeting	10	11	12
13 Appetizer Fellowship Night	14	15	16 Prayer Meeting	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Congregation & Corporation Meetings	24	25 Pastors and Wives Dinner	26
27	28	29	30 Prayer Meeting	31		

Li'l Cheddar Meat Loaves

Ingredients:

- 1 large egg
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 pound ground beef
- 2/3 cup ketchup
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1-1/2 teaspoons prepared mustard

Instructions:

- In a large bowl, whisk egg and milk. Stir in the cheese, oats, onion and salt. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into eight loaves; place in a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. In a small bowl, combine the ketchup, brown sugar and mustard; spoon over loaves.
- Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until no pink remains and a thermometer reads 160°.



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty
soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*

Appetizer Fellowship Night



An appetizer fellowship night is being planned for the evening of Sunday, January 13th. Anticipate more details to follow.



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

*Spurgeon
Corner*

“Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.”

Ezekiel 33:22

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In the way of *judgment* this may be the case, and, if so, be it mine to consider the reason of such a visitation, and bear the rod and him that hath appointed it. I am not the only one who is chastened in the night season; let me cheerfully submit to the affliction, and carefully endeavour to be profited thereby. But the hand of the Lord may also be felt in another manner, strengthening the soul and lifting the spirit upward towards eternal things. O that I may in this sense feel the Lord dealing with me! A sense of the divine presence and indwelling bears the soul towards heaven as upon the wings of eagles. At such times we are full to the brim with spiritual joy, and forget the cares and sorrows of earth; the invisible is near, and the visible loses its power over us; servant-body waits at the foot of the hill, and the master-spirit worships upon the summit in the presence of the Lord. O that a hallowed season of divine communion may be vouchsafed to me this evening! The Lord knows that I need it very greatly. My graces languish, my corruptions rage, my faith is weak, my devotion is cold; all these are reasons why his healing hand should be laid upon me. His hand can cool the heat of my burning brow, and stay the tumult of my palpitating heart. That glorious right hand which moulded the world can new-create my mind; the unwearied hand which bears the earth's huge pillars up can sustain my spirit; the loving hand which incloses all the saints can cherish me; and the mighty hand which breaketh in pieces the enemy can subdue my sins. Why should I not feel that hand touching me this evening? Come, my soul, address thy God with the potent plea, that Jesus' hands were pierced for thy redemption, and thou shalt surely feel that same hand upon thee which once touched Daniel and set him upon his knees that he might see visions of God.

Evening, January 6th, C.H. Spurgeon

