

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

ALL FOR GOOD

By Pastor Brian De Jong

At this moment of history, we are experiencing what is sometimes called “a perfect storm.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines a perfect storm as “*A particularly violent storm arising from a rare combination of adverse meteorological factors.*” They offer a secondary definition as follows: *A particularly bad or critical state of affairs, arising from a number of negative and unpredictable factors.*”

Here are some of the negative and unpredictable factors we are witnessing: (1) a political cycle where both parties are imploding, (2) a cultural shift toward unprecedented perversions being labeled ‘the new normal’, (3) escalating violence, including racially oriented violence, (4) the eclipse of serious theology in most Christian denominations, (5) the capitulation of evangelicals to the pressures of society all around them, (6) the glaring lack of sober and courageous leaders who speak the truth, (7) the complete unraveling of marriage and family life for a majority of Americans, (8) activist judges who legislate from the bench, with little or no restraint imposed.

The list could go on, and on, and on, but you get the idea. Almost everything seems adverse to basic sanity. This rare combination of negative factors is producing a critical state of affairs. Despair seems like a very natural option for those who value Christian truth, conservative ideals, and the dignity of human life. It looks like the foundations are crumbling around us.

So what should we think? Is it all

insanity? Has the universe lost its direction? Is everything careening toward an inevitable and destructive crash? So it would seem, to the casual observer.

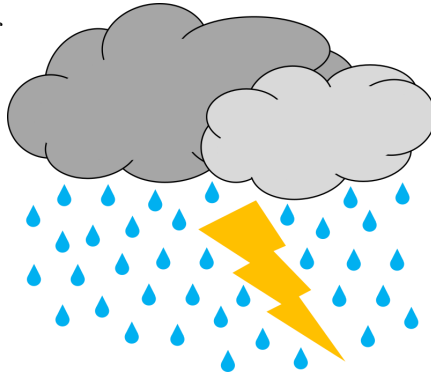
Into the maelstrom we hear the clear voice of God reminding us of this one fact: *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

Romans 8:28 is our life-ring. It keeps us from drowning in despair. “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Think about that - all things, as in every single thing. Good things and bad things alike. Righteous and holy things, and evil acts of iniquity. The entire order of this world is under God’s almighty and sovereign control. He alone can direct them to their appointed ends, so that they end up glorifying Him and serving the good of His called and chosen people.

This verse doesn’t give us the assurance that “everything works out for everyone.” It is a promise for those who love God, not for His enemies. Indeed, the current affairs of this world will converge together for the downfall and destruction of evildoers. It will come to a terrible end for them. They have no assurance that “everything’s going to be OK.” Unless they repent, it will not be OK for them.

Consider too the fact that God can and does orchestrate and choreograph the entire flow of events to produce exactly and precisely the results that He has ordained



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Mnemonics...

- *Emile Doro Shower, 9th*

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Help for the Weak

By Richard Sibbes

By meditation on these rules and signs, much comfort may be brought to the souls of the weakest. That it may be in greater abundance, let me add something to help them over some few ordinary objections and secret thoughts against themselves which, getting within the heart, oftentimes keep them low.

TEMPTATIONS WHICH HINDER COMFORT

1. Some think they have no faith at all because they have no full assurance, whereas the fairest fire that can be will have some smoke. The best actions will smell of the smoke. The mortar wherein garlic has been stamped will always smell of it; so all our actions will savor something of the old man.

2. In weakness of body some think grace dies, because their performances are feeble, their spirits, which are the instruments of their souls' actions, being weakened. But they do not consider that God regards the hidden sighs of those that lack abilities to express them outwardly. He that pronounces those blessed that consider the poor will have a merciful consideration of such himself.

3. Some again are haunted with hideous representations to their imaginations, and with vile and unworthy thoughts of God, of Christ, of the Word, which, as busy flies, disquiet and molest their peace. These are cast in like wildfire by Satan, as may be discerned by the strangeness, the strength and violence, and the horribleness of them even to corrupt nature. A pious soul is no more guilty of them than Benjamin was when Joseph's cup was put into his sack. Among other helps recommended by godly writers, such as detestation of them and diversion from them to other things, let this be one, to complain to Christ against them, and to fly under the wings of his protection, and to desire him to take our part against his and our enemy. Shall every sin and blasphemy of man be forgiven, and not these blasphemous thoughts, which have the devil for their father, when Christ himself was molested in this way so that he might succor all poor souls in this condition?

But there is a difference between Christ and

us in this case. Because Satan had nothing of his own in Christ his suggestions left no impression at all in his holy nature, but, as sparks falling into the sea, were presently quenched. Satan's temptations of Christ were only suggestions on Satan's part, and apprehensions of the vileness of them on Christ's part. To apprehend ill suggested by another is not ill. It was Christ's grievance, but Satan's sin. But thus he yielded himself to be tempted, that he might both pity us in our conflicts, and train us up to manage our spiritual weapons as he did. Christ could have overcome him by power, but he did it by argument. But when Satan comes to us, he

“God regards the hidden sighs of those that lack abilities to express them outwardly.”

finds something of his own in us, which holds correspondence and has intelligence with him. There is the same enmity in our nature to God and goodness, in some degree, that is in Satan himself. Therefore his temptations fasten, for the most part, some taint upon us. And if there were no devil to suggest, yet sinful thoughts would arise from within us, though none were cast in from without. We have a mint of them within. These thoughts, if the soul dwell on them so long as to suck or draw from and by them any sinful delight, then they leave a more heavy guilt upon the soul, hinder our sweet communion with God, interrupt our peace, and put a contrary relish into the soul, dis-

posing it to greater sins. All scandalous actions are only thoughts at the first. Ill thoughts are as little thieves, which, creeping in at the window, open the door to greater. Thoughts are seeds of actions. These, especially when they are helped forward by Satan, make the life of many good Christians almost a martyrdom. In this case it is an unsound comfort that some minister, that ill thoughts arise from nature, and what is natural is excusable. We must know that nature, as it came out of God's hands in the beginning, had no such risings out of it. The soul, as inspired of God, had no such unsavory breathings. But since it betrayed itself by sin it is, in some sort, natural to it to forge sinful imaginations, and to be a furnace of such sparks. And this is an aggravation of the sinfulness of natural corruption, that it is so deeply rooted and so generally spread in our nature.

It promotes humiliation to know the whole

breadth and depth of sin. But the fact that our nature now, so far as it is unrenewed, is so unhappily fruitful in ill thoughts, ministers this comfort, that it is not our case alone, as if our condition in this were different from others, as some have been tempted to think, even almost to despair. None, say they, have such a loathsome nature as I have. This springs from ignorance of the spreading of original sin, for what can come from an unclean thing but that which is unclean? 'As in water face answereth to face, so the [polluted] heart of man to man' (Prov. 27:19), where grace has not made some difference. As in annoyances from Satan, so here, the best way is to lay open our complaints to Christ, and cry with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. 7:24). On giving vent to his distress, he presently found comfort, for he breaks into thanksgiving, 'I thank God.' And it is good to profit from this, to hate this offensive body of death more, and to draw nearer to God, as that holy man did after his 'foolish' and 'beastly' thoughts (Psa. 73:22 and 28), and so to keep our hearts closer to God, seasoning them with heavenly meditations in the morning, storing up good matter, so that our heart may be a good treasury, while we beg of Christ his Holy Spirit to stop that cursed issue and to be a living spring of better thoughts in us. Nothing more abases the spirits of holy men that desire to delight in God after they have escaped the common defilements of the world than these unclean issues of spirit, as being most contrary to God, who is a pure Spirit. But the very irksomeness of them yields matter of comfort against them. They force the soul to all spiritual exercises, to watchfulness and a more near walking with God, and to raise itself to thoughts of a higher nature, such as those which the truth of God, the works of God, the communion of saints, the mystery of godliness, the terror of the Lord, and the excellency of the state of a Christian and a conversation suitable to it, do abundantly minister. They discover to us a necessity of daily purging and pardoning grace, and of seeking to be found in Christ, and so bring the best often upon their knees.

Our chief comfort is that our blessed Saviour, as he bade Satan depart from him, after he had given way awhile to his insolence (Matt. 4:10), so he will command him to be gone from us, when it shall be good for us. He must be gone at a word. And Christ

can and will likewise, in his own time, rebuke the rebellious and extravagant stirrings of our hearts and bring all the thoughts of the inner man into subjection to himself.

4. Some think, when they become more troubled with the smoke of corruption than they were before, therefore they are worse than they were. It is true that corruptions appear now more than before, but they are less.

For, first, the more sin is seen, the more it is hated, and therefore it is less. Dust particles are in a room before the sun shines, but they only appear then.

Secondly, the nearer contraries are one to another, the sharper is the conflict between them. Now, of all enemies the spirit and the flesh are nearest one to another, being both in the soul of a regenerate man, in the faculties of the soul, and in every action that springs from those faculties, and therefore it is no marvel that the soul, the seat of this battle, thus divided within itself, is as smoking flax.

Thirdly, the more grace, the more spiritual life, and the more spiritual life, the more antipathy to the contrary. Therefore none are so aware of corruption as those whose souls are most alive.

Fourthly, when men give themselves up to self-indulgence, their corruptions do not trouble them, as not being bound and tied up; but when once grace suppresses their extravagant and licentious excesses, then the flesh boils, as disdainful to be confined. Yet they are better now than they were before. That matter which yields smoke was in the torch before it was lighted, but it is not offensive till the torch begins to burn. Let such know that if the smoke be once offensive to them, it is a sign that there is light. It is better to enjoy the benefit of light, though with smoke, than to be altogether in the dark.

Nor is smoke so offensive to us as light is pleasant to us, since it yields an evidence of the truth of grace in the heart. Therefore, though it is cumbersome in the conflict, yet it is comfortable as evidence. It is better that corruption should offend us now than, by giving way to it to gain a little peace, to lose comfort afterwards. Let such therefore as are at variance and odds with their corruptions look on this text as their portion of comfort.

“The
more sin
is seen,
the more
it is hat-
ed.”

Help for the Weak Concluded

WEAKNESS SHOULD NOT KEEP US FROM DUTY

It should encourage us to duty that Christ will not quench the smoking flax, but blow on it till it flames. Some are loath to do good because they feel their hearts rebelling, and duties turn out badly. We should not avoid good actions because of the infirmities attending them. Christ looks more at the good in them which he means to cherish than the ill in them which he means to abolish. Though eating increases a disease, a sick man will still eat, so that nature may gain strength against the disease. So, though sin cleaves to what we do, yet let us do it, since we have to deal with so good a Lord, and the more strife we meet with, the more acceptance we shall have. Christ loves to taste of the good fruits that come from us, even though they will always savor of our old nature.

A Christian complains he cannot pray. 'Oh, I am troubled with so many distracting thoughts, and never more than now!' But has he put into your heart a desire to pray? Then he will hear the desires of his own Spirit in you. 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought' (nor how to do anything else as we ought), but the Spirit helps our infirmities with 'groanings which cannot be uttered' (Rom. 8:26), which are not hid from God. 'My groaning is not hid from thee' (Psa. 38:9). God can pick sense out of a confused prayer. These desires cry louder in his ears than your sins. Sometimes a Christian has such confused thoughts that he can say nothing but, as a child, cries, 'O Father', not able to express what he needs, like Moses at the Red Sea. These stirrings of spirit touch the heart of God and melt him into compassion towards us, when they come from the Spirit of adoption, and from a striving to be better. 'Oh, but is it possible', thinks the misgiving heart, 'that so holy a God should accept such a prayer?' Yes, he will accept that which is his own, and pardon that which is ours. Jonah prayed in the fish's belly (Jon. 2:1), being burdened with the guilt of sin, yet God heard him. Let not, therefore, infirmities discourage us. James takes away this objection (James 5:17). Some might object, 'If I were as holy as Elijah, then my prayers might be regarded.' 'But,' says he, 'Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.' He had his passions as well as we, or do we think that God heard him because he was without

fault? Surely not. But look at the promises: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee' (Psa. 50:15). 'Ask, and it shall be given you' (Matt. 7:7) and others like these. God accepts our prayers, though weak, because we are his own children, and they come from his own Spirit; because they are according to his own will; and because they are offered in Christ's mediation, and he takes them, and mingles them with his own incense (Rev. 8:3).

There is never a holy sigh, never a tear we shed, which is lost. And as every grace increases by exercise of itself, so does the grace of prayer. By prayer we learn to pray. So, likewise, we should take heed of a spirit of discouragement in all other holy duties, since we have so gracious a Saviour. Pray as we are able, hear as we are able, strive as we are able, do as we are able, according to the measure of grace received. God in Christ will cast a gracious eye upon that which is his own.

Would Paul do nothing because he could not do the good that he would? No, he 'pressed toward the mark'.

Let us not be cruel to ourselves when Christ is thus gracious. There is a certain meekness of spirit whereby we yield thanks to God for any ability at all, and rest quiet with the measure of grace received, seeing it is God's good pleasure it should be so, who gives the will and the deed, yet not so as to rest from further endeavors. But when, with faithful endeavor, we come short of what we would be, and short of what others are, then know for our comfort, Christ will not quench the smoking flax, and that sincerity and truth, as we said before, with endeavor of growth, is our perfection.

What God says of Jeroboam's son is comforting, 'He only shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel' (1 Kings 14:13), though only 'some good thing'. 'Lord, I believe' (Mark 9:24), with a weak faith, yet with faith; love thee with a faint love, yet with love; endeavor in a feeble manner, yet endeavor. A little fire is fire, though it smokes. Since thou hast taken me into thy covenant to be thine from being an enemy, wilt thou cast me off for these infirmities, which, as they displease thee, so are they the grief of my own heart?

Sibbes, Richard, The Bruised Reed, Chapter 7, Help for the Weak



June Birthdays



Wedding Anniversaries



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

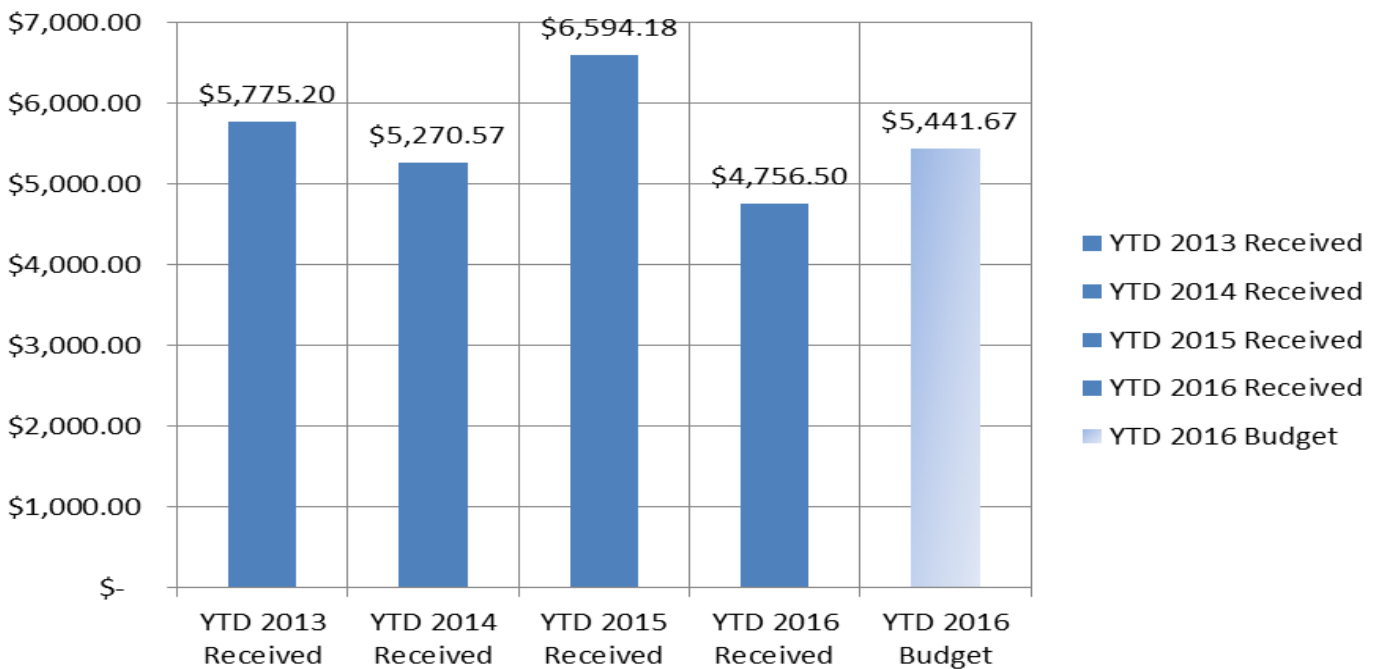
General Fund receipts for April totaled \$13,551.58 as compared to the budget of \$12,893.70, while General Fund disbursements for April totaled \$10,966.92. April year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$58,004.35 as compared to the budget of \$54,798.20 (an excess of \$3,206.15), while April year to date disbursements of \$55,015.91 were \$217.71 above budget. Through the end of April, the General Fund has increased by \$3,021.54. Year to date General Fund receipts for April were 21.5% above last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 0.4% above the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for April totaled \$1,137.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,360.42 (shortfall of \$223.42). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through April totaled \$4,756.50 and were below budget by \$685.17. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During April, \$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

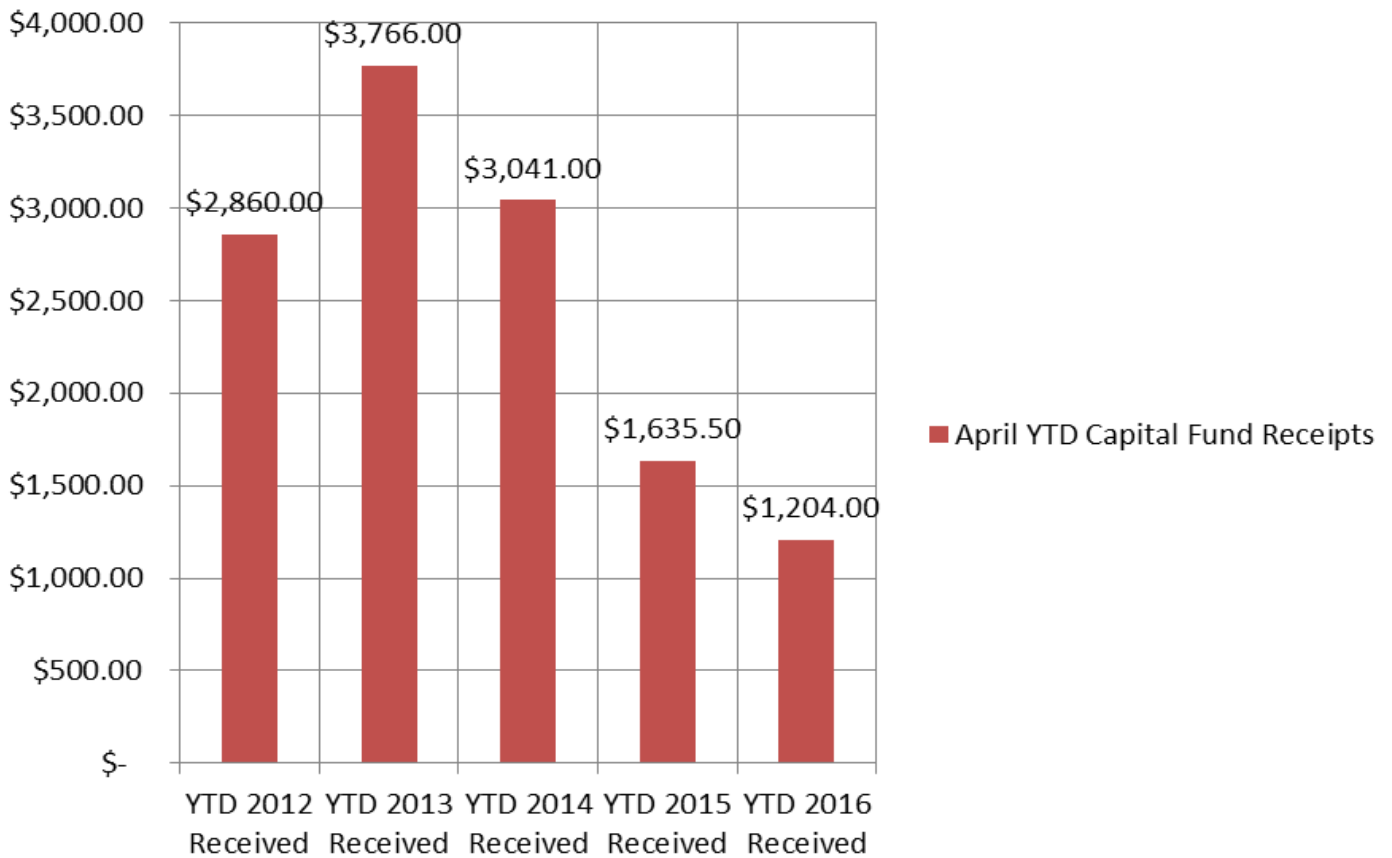
(CHEX). During June, we plan to disburse funds of \$600.00 for several seminaries and also send a gift to Reformed University Fellowship at UW Milwaukee.

April Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$1,204.00. 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.

April YTD Benevolence Receipts Actual vs. Current Budget



April YTD Capital Fund Receipts

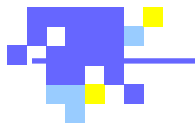


Bridal Showers

Emile Doro's bridal shower will take place at the church at 6:30 p.m. on June 9th! All the ladies in the church are invited to attend. Emile is registered at Target and Relish Kitchen Store (on N. 8th street in Sheboygan.)

Also, save the date for Alyssa Mork's shower on Thursday, August 6th at 6:30 p.m.! She is registered at Bed, Bath & Beyond, and Target. Mark your calendars and join us!





Grace OPC

June 2016

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



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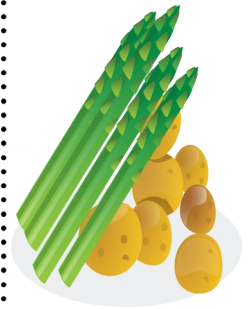
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Emile Doro Shower, 6:30 p.m.	10	11
12	13	14 Session Meeting 6:30 p.m.	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Lord's Supper, p.m.	27	28	29	30		

Cucumber Onion Salad

- ★ 7 medium cucumbers, sliced
- ★ 1 small onion, sliced
- ★ 1 small green pepper, cut into thin rings
- ★ 2 Tbsp. salt
- ★ 1 Tbsp. celery seed
- ★ 2 cups sugar
- ★ 1 cup white vinegar

In a large serving bowl, combine the cucumbers, onion and green pepper. Sprinkle with salt and celery seed. Combine the sugar and vinegar; pour over cucumber mixture. Cover and refrigerate at least 8 hours .

Taste of Home



“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.”

Marinated Asparagus with Blue Cheese

- ★ 1 lb. fresh asparagus, trimmed
- ★ 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- ★ 1/4 cup olive oil
- ★ 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- ★ 1 garlic clove, minced
- ★ 1/2 tsp. salt
- ★ 1/4 tsp. pepper
- ★ 1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese

In a large saucepan, bring 6 cups water to boil. Add asparagus; cook, uncovered, 2-3 minutes or just until crisp-tender. Remove asparagus and immediately drop into ice water. Drain and pat dry.

In a large plastic bag, combine green onions, oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper. Add asparagus and seal bag. Refrigerate at least 1 hour.

Drain asparagus, discarding marinade. Place asparagus on serving plate; sprinkle with blue cheese.

Taste of Home



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon Corner

“Continue in the faith.”
(Acts 14:22)

Perseverance is the badge of true saints. The Christian life is not a *beginning* only in the ways of God, but also a *continuance* in the same as long as life lasts. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, “Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me.” So, under God, dear brother in the Lord, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, “Excelsior.” He only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war’s trumpet is blown no more. Perseverance is, therefore, the target of all our spiritual enemies. The *world* does not object to your being a Christian for a time, if she can but tempt you to cease your pilgrimage, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair. The *flesh* will seek to ensnare you, and to prevent your pressing on to glory. “It is weary work being a pilgrim; come, give it up. Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare.” *Satan* will make many a fierce attack on your perseverance; it will be the mark for all his arrows. He will strive to hinder you *in service*: he will insinuate that you are doing no good; and that you want rest. He will endeavour to make you weary of *suffering*, he will whisper, “Curse God, and die.” Or he will attack your *steadfastness*: “What is the good of being so zealous? Be quiet like the rest; sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as the other virgins do.” Or he will assail your *doctrinal sentiments*: “Why do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are removing the old landmarks: fall in with the times.” Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armour, and cry mightily unto God, that by his Spirit you may endure to the end.

Evening, May 26th, by C. H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded

from eternity past. Nothing catches him by surprise, but it is all according to His plan.

He will not fail to do exactly as He has announced in this verse, and so we are joyful for His great love and care for us! So the next time you are tempted to worry or fret, to throw in the towel and quit, come back to this comforting and reassuring promise. God is doing His will, and that will is good. Just watch it unfold, and give Him the praise for His glorious work!

