

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

COPING WITH CRISIS

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Unless you live in a cave, you're probably aware that we live in increasingly troubled times. The economic woes of the last six months are inescapable, as are the governmental changes underway. Whether you look to Wall Street or to Washington, everything seems to be up in the air. Uncertainty has bred pessimism, which in turn has spawned fear. "What shall become of us?" we wonder.

It is equally evident that no one really has solid answers for the current crisis. Proposals fly from left and right, but no one seems to know what will turn our society around. The ever-present media can diagnose the disease but cannot prescribe a cure.

All of which leads us to ask, "How shall we live as Christians in the midst of a culture-wide crisis?" What should be our posture in this hour of trial? I find the words of Paul to be exactly on target. Writing to his friends in Corinth, Paul says this: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)*

In writing these words, Paul reminds them that we are "beloved brethren." I don't think that Paul merely referenced his own human affection for them, but was thinking of God's great love for all His children. Yes, we are beloved by our

fellow Christians, but how much more love has the Father shown to us, that we should be called His children! That love of God was manifest when Christ died upon the cross, and that same love has been shed abroad in our hearts by the



Holy Spirit. So as beloved children of God, how should we live? We should be steadfast and immovable. In other words, strongly committed to the truth of the gospel! We have taken our stand and we will not be moved. Though everything around

us trembles and quakes, we remain unshaken in our belief that Christ is King and that His word is true! In times of crisis, we must hold fast to the truth – that is the first duty.

Our second duty, according to this verse, is to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." Seek God's kingdom and His righteousness! Carry out the holy calling which God has given you. Be busy in kingdom labors and in ministering God's grace in its various forms. This is no time to withdraw from service to Christ and to his people. Resist the temptation to "hunker down" until the storm is past. Keep holding forth the good news of Christ – people need this message now more than ever before!

Finally, Paul says, remember that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Whatever you do for Christ will bear fruit in due season. Don't grow weary,...

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Mnemonics...

- *Worldview Movie Night, 6th*
- *Men's Breakfast & Study, 7th*
- *Presbytery in St. Louis, 20th-21st*
- *Taco Supper & Game Night, 27th*

Bearing the Cross

By John Calvin

The pious mind must ascend still higher, namely, whither Christ calls his disciples when he says, that every one of them must “take up his cross,” (Matt. 16:24) Those whom the Lord has chosen ... must prepare for a hard, laborious, troubled life, a life full of many and various kinds of evils; it being the will of our heavenly Father to exercise his people in this way while putting them to the proof. Having begun this course with Christ the first-born, he continues it towards all his children. For though that Son was dear to him above others, the Son in whom he was “well pleased,” yet we see, that far from being treated gently and indulgently, we may say, that not only was he subjected to a perpetual cross while he dwelt on earth, but his whole life was nothing else than a kind of perpetual cross. The Apostle assigns the reason, “Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered,” (Heb. 5:8)

Why then should we exempt ourselves from that condition to which Christ our Head behaved to submit; especially since he submitted on our account, that he might in his own person exhibit a model of patience? Wherefore, the Apostle declares, that all the children of God are destined to be conformed to him. Hence it affords us great consolation in hard and difficult circumstances, which men deem evil and adverse, to think that we are holding fellowship with the sufferings of Christ; that as he passed to celestial glory through a labyrinth of many woes, so we too are conducted thither through various tribulations.

For, in another passage, Paul himself thus speaks, “we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God,” (Acts 14:22); and again, “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,” (Romans 8:29.) How

powerfully should it soften the bitterness of the cross, to think that the more we are afflicted with adversity, the surer we are made of our fellowship with Christ; by communion with whom our sufferings are not only blessed to us, but tend greatly to the furtherance of our salvation.

2. We may add, that the only thing which made it necessary for our Lord to undertake to bear the cross, was to testify and prove his obedience to the Father; whereas there are many reasons which make it necessary for us to live constantly under the cross. Feeble as we are by nature, and prone to ascribe all perfection to our flesh, unless we receive as it were ocular demonstration of our weakness, we readily estimate our virtue above its proper worth, and doubt not that, whatever happens, it will stand unimpaired and invincible against all difficulties. Hence we indulge a stupid and empty confidence in the flesh, and then trusting to it wax proud against the Lord himself; as if our own faculties were sufficient without his grace. This arrogance cannot be better repressed than when He proves to us by experience, not only how great our weakness, but also our frailty is. Therefore, he visits us with disgrace, or poverty, or bereavement, or disease, or other afflictions.

Feeling altogether unable to support them, we forthwith, in so far as regards ourselves, give way, and thus humbled learn to invoke his strength, which alone can enable us to bear up under a weight of affliction. Nay, even the holiest of men, however well aware that they stand not in their own strength, but by the grace of God, would feel too secure in their own fortitude and constancy, were they not brought to a more thorough knowledge of themselves by the trial of the cross. This feeling gained even upon David, “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,” (Psalm

*“...transfer
your
confidence
to God,
reclining
on Him...
trust
in His
aid...”*

Calvin Concluded...

30:6,7). He confesses that in prosperity his feelings were dulled and blunted, so that, neglecting the grace of God, on which alone he ought to have depended, he leant to himself, and promised himself perpetuity. If it so happened to this great prophet, who of us should not fear and study caution?

Though in tranquillity they flatter themselves with the idea of greater constancy and patience, yet, humbled by adversity, they learn the deception. Believers, I say, warned by such proofs of their diseases, make progress in humility, and, divesting themselves of a depraved confidence in the flesh, betake themselves to the grace of God, and, when they have so betaken themselves, experience the presence of the divine power, in which is ample protection.

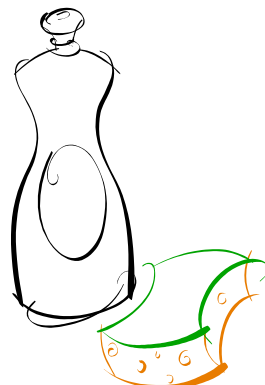
3. This Paul teaches when he says that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience. God having promised that he will be with believers in tribulation, they feel the truth of the promise; while supported by his hand, they endure patiently. This they could never do by their own strength. Patience, therefore, gives the saints an experimental proof that God in reality furnishes the aid which he has promised whenever there is need. Hence also their faith is confirmed, for it were very ungrateful not to expect that in future the truth of God will be,

as they have already found it, firm and constant. We now see how many advantages are at once produced by the cross. Overturning the overweening opinion we form of our own virtue, and detecting the hypocrisy in which we delight, it removes our pernicious carnal confidence, teaching us, when thus humbled, to recline on God alone, so that we neither are oppressed nor despond. Then victory is followed by hope, inasmuch as the Lord, by performing what he has promised, establishes his truth in regard to the future. Were these the only reasons, it is surely plain how necessary it is for us to bear the cross. It is of no little importance to be rid of your self-love, and made fully conscious of your weakness; so impressed with a sense of your weakness as to learn to distrust yourself—to distrust yourself so as to transfer your confidence to God, reclining on him with such heartfelt confidence as to trust in his aid, and continue invincible to the end, standing by his grace so as to perceive that he is true to his promises, and so assured of the certainty of his promises as to be strong in hope.

*Taken from On the Christian Life Ch. 3,(1-3)
“Of Bearing the Cross-One Branch of Self-Denial”,
by John Calvin.*

Church Cleaning

A big thank you is extended to everyone who pitched in to help clean the church these past weeks! There are still more opportunities to share your cleaning



skills in the weeks to come. If you would be interested in helping out in this area, just speak with or call Steve or Megan Boss at (920) 946-2904.

March Birthdays



Happy Birthday!!!

New Address

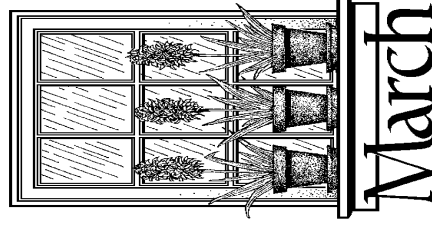




Grace OPC

March 2009

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	3 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	4 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	5	6 Worldview Movie Night, 7:00 p.m.	7 Men's Breakfast & Study, 7:30 a.m.
8 Missions Sunday	9 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	10	11 Prayer Meeting	12	13	14
15	16 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class, 3 p.m.</i>	17 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. <i>Session Mtg, 6:30 p.m.</i> Sam Folta at Falls OPC, Menomonee Falls, WI 6:30 p.m.	18 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	19	20 Presbytery Meeting in St. Louis	21 Presbytery Meeting in St. Louis
22 Lord's Supper (a.m.) <i>Meadowview Manor, 2 p.m.</i>	23 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	24	25 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	26	27 Taco Supper & Game Night	28
29	30 Theology Class, 3 p.m.	31				

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Ranch Dip

- ★ 2 Tbsp. dry parsley flakes
- ★ 1/2 tsp. pepper
- ★ 1 Tbsp. onion salt
- ★ 2 cups mayo
- ★ 1 cup sour cream (add more to texture/taste)
- ★ 1 tsp. garlic salt
- ★ 1 tsp. salt

Combine all. Let blend overnight. Chill for a few weeks.
Great with carrots, broccoli, chips or crackers!

Megan Boss



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

Mark Your Calendars!

For those who may be interested in attending Camp Westminster, please mark your 2009 calendars. Camp will be held Monday, August 3 to Friday, August 7.



Missions Presentation

Missionary to China Sam Folta will be at Falls Presbyterian Church on Tuesday evening, March 27th, at 6:30 p.m. Join us for a power point presentation on Sam's ministry in China and Korea. Enjoy a time of fellowship and refreshment following the program. Don't miss out on his only area visit before his return to China.

For more information or directions to the church: *email* - fallsopc@sbcglobal.net *or call* - 262-255-1111.



Front Page Concluded...

...don't lose heart. Don't believe the lie of Satan that your toil is vain, empty and meaningless. Keep serving in the joyful anticipation of God's victory and your reward!

If Christians at this hour will take up this challenge we can shine as stars in the midst of a dark and depraved generation. We can shine the light of Christ and show the way to men who are floundering in despair. We can bring the hope of Christ to hopeless people who have nowhere to turn. For the church of Jesus Christ, the hour of crisis can become an hour of opportunity. Will see redeem the opportunity that Jesus has given us?





Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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OPC.ORG



★ Did you know that the name “Orthodox Presbyterian Church” was first coined for our denomination at the 5th General Assembly of the then titled “Presbyterian Church of America” in February of 1939?

★ Did you know that the decision to change the name occurred because the PCUSA (the old

church that we left) brought a case in civil court to force us to change the name, and that the judge ruled in favor of the PCUSA?

★ That this was a weighty decision for us and a conclusion was reached only after 12 long hours of hashing out the matter?

★ That examples of other possibilities for the title included the Presbyterian Church of Christ, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and the Seceding Presbyterian Church (of America)?

★ Did you know that, “By one vote ‘Orthodox’ prevailed over ‘Evangelical’”¹ and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church became the new name?

★ Did you know that orthodox means “straight, correct, true” in doctrine or worship?²

Taken from http://opc.org/today.html?history_id=6¹ (quote by Mark Knoll) and ² http://opc.org/qa.html?question_id=39.

Taco Supper & Game Night

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Taco Supper & Game Night to be held on Friday, March 27th starting at 6:30 p.m. Bring your favorite games as well as a taco ingredient and a beverage or dessert. There will be a sign up sheet on the pastor’s door.

