

# REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

## THE INEVITABLE WORD

*By Pastor Brian De Jong*

During the weekend of April 20-22, my family and I attended the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. One reason that I wanted to attend this conference was for my own spiritual refreshment. (Preachers need to be preached to, so that their hearts remain encouraged.)

This conference held many encouraging moments, but none more heartening than a sermon by Dr. Mark Dever of Capital Hill Baptist Church. Dr. Dever spoke on a pair of parables in Mark 4 - one familiar and one unfamiliar. We would all remember the familiar one- the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed ... But I had never paid much attention to the other scenario.

In the less familiar story, the kingdom of God is compared to a man who casts seed upon the soil and then he goes to bed.

Whether he sleeps or wakes, something is happening in the field. All by itself, the seed sprouts and grows. How it happens is beyond the farmer's comprehension. Yet gradually the soil produces a crop - all by itself. First the blade, then the head, then the mature grain. Finally, the farmer becomes active again. Seeing that the crop has reached maturity, he puts in the sickle and harvests the crop.

From this ordinary story from the world of agriculture, Jesus makes a powerful point about the word of God. As the seed is sown, it grows. Not because of anything the farmer does, but only because God "makes things grow." (I Cor 3:7) The growth is imperceptible and gradual, but constant and inevitable. It moves toward harvest with certainty and predictability that makes the outcome inescapable.

So too in the spiritual realm. Here at Grace Church we are sowing the word in the soil of your hearts. And despite our weaknesses and occasional inattention, God causes growth. That growth in the hearts of God's people moves toward a harvest of thirty, sixty and even sometimes a hundredfold.

How did this edify me? It reminded me first of all that God will do His good work, and nothing but nothing can stand in His way. He can make His word fruitful in your hearts and lives (and in mine too.) This passage also made me think about the vital importance of the ministry of the word. We may not have the glitzy gimmicks of modern marketing, or the proven strategies of advertising agencies. You'll see neither dogs nor ponies in our worship services at Grace. But the Bible is enough. Reading and preaching the word of God sows good seeds that will produce a crop, in due time.

Finally, it is refreshing and humbling to recall a verse I memorized years ago: "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow." The farmer and the preacher deserve no ultimate glory for a good harvest. That honor belongs to our God, who makes things grow!

So as I sat and listened to Dr. Dever, I was learning and I was experiencing the truth at the same moment. Mark 4:26-29 was sown in my heart, and while Dr. Dever slept that night, the seed he sowed was already sprouting and growing. How very refreshing!



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### Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, 3rd*
- *Men's Bible Study, 5th*
- *Church Workday, 12th*
- *Ladies' Banquet, 18th*

# JUSTICE ROLLING LIKE A RIVER

by Pastor Brian De Jong

*"Let justice roll down like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

*Amos 5:24*

In a recent Sunday School class, our junior high age children had a lively discussion with their teacher, Mark Berenschot, about the concept of justice. At Mark's encouragement, I decided to pen an article on this topic.

Justice is a concept from which we tend to shy away. That reticence may come from a knowledge of our own sin - a fear that we haven't gotten what we deserve, and so we don't care to think about the subject. It may also arise from "guilt by association." In both the religious and political worlds, self-proclaimed liberals have frequently employed the language of justice to advance their own agendas. "Justice" has become a loaded term that some prefer to avoid. And this avoidance of justice may also flow from a modern view of God. People of our day consider God's justice to be "harsh" and "unloving." Some would even claim that "My God is too loving to punish anyone."

For whatever reason, the concept of justice is slipping away, and needs to be regained. Yet the idea of justice is vital for a proper understanding of God, and for a healthy view of the Christian life. Without justice, human beings drift toward idolatry, injustice and outright evil.

First, justice is crucial for rightly understanding the God of the Bible. Abraham understood this when he was pleading for God to spare Lot and his family. In his intercession with God, Abraham says in Genesis 18:25, "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

Abraham understood God's office and

God's character. The Patriarch knew that God is 'the Judge of all the earth' - that is God's office. He also understood that God the Judge is just. God would judge justly, and it was far from God to treat the righteous and the wicked alike. To close His holy eyes to the innocence of the righteous and to the guilt of the wicked would be incomprehensible - it could not happen. If it did happen, God would no longer be God, and He would forfeit His place as the Judge of all the earth. But of course, it could never happen. God is just to the very core of His essence.

Paul also understood this, and said so when he told the Romans that God is 'just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.' (Romans 3:26) Indeed, God's justice is an important aspect of Paul's understanding of salvation. God does not simply close His eyes to our sin, as if He could forget about it. Rather, to maintain His perfect justice, God must punish the sin of the sinner. Either He punishes that sin in the sinner himself, or He punishes a willing substitute who freely offers to take the place of the sinner. And that is precisely why Jesus had to die upon the cross - to suffer the punishment due for the sins of His people. In so doing, God is just. Guilt has been punished and righteousness has been rewarded. So the justice of God is crucial for our salvation.

But justice is also important for believers - if we love God, we must share God's love of justice. Consider the following verses:

Micah 6:<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

Amos 5: 15 Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Deuteronomy 16:<sup>20</sup> "Justice, and only justice,

## De Jong Continued...

you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 24: 17 "You shall not pervert the **justice** due an alien *or* an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge.

Proverbs 21: 3 To do righteousness and **justice** Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

Proverbs 21: 15 The exercise of **justice** is joy for the righteous, But is terror to the workers of iniquity.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; Seek **justice**, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

Hosea 12:<sup>6</sup> Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and **justice**, And wait for your God continually.

How then should we apply this concept of justice in our life? I would suggest that several applications exist - each equally important. First, we should love justice by praising and worshipping God for His impeccable justice. In Psalm 101, David begins his praise by saying, "I will sing of lovingkindness and justice, To You, O LORD, I will sing praises." David understood that righteousness and justice were the foundations of God's throne, and David frequently praised God for the divine attribute of justice. How it enriches our worship, not to mention our appreciation for the gospel, when we focus on God's justice in worship. And how horrible it would be if God were anything but just. What kind of cosmic tyrant punishes the innocent and rewards the wicked? Could such a

'god' be worshiped? On feared, and avoided, if possible. But our God is just, and His justice is worthy of our worship.

We also apply this concept by practicing justice in our day-to-day dealings with others. We should treat them fairly and never take advantage of them. If we hire a worker to mow our lawn, we should pay him his wages (James 5:4-6). If our neighbor's donkeys get loose and come wandering across our fields, we ought to tie them up and call the neighbor to come fetch his donkeys. In a thousand little ways, we can and should act justly - protecting the innocent and reproofing the guilty.

*"...we should love justice by praising and worshipping God for His impeccable justice."*

This especially important in how we speak. If we represent what someone else has said or done, we should tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We should never exaggerate so as to increase their condemnation, nor underestimate in order to shield their crime. We can commit injustice even in how we speak to others, and about others.

This matter of justice also has formal aspects that should not be overlooked. Whether in the courts of the church, or in the secular judicatories, justice is essential. That is why the ninth commandment forbids us from "bearing false witness against our neighbor." Hence in any matters of formal judicial importance, we ought to defer to the authorities that God has appointed to handle such matters. Church elders and civil magistrates alike are "ministers of God" for establishing and maintaining justice in their respective areas of jurisdiction. They must follow the principles of justice in all their dealings, lest they acquit the guilty or condemn the innocent. And we should pray that the just Judge of all the earth would make His justice roll like a river through this world He has made.

# May Birthdays

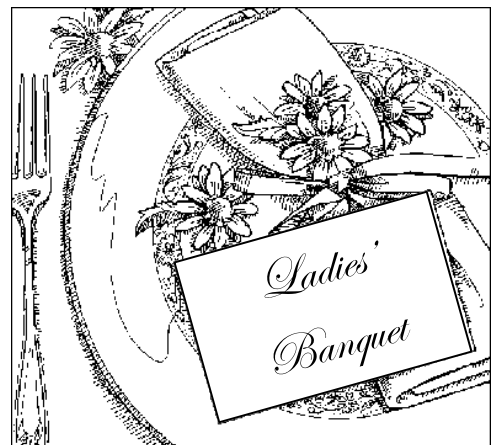


*Happy Birthday!!!*

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## *Ladies Banquet*

Ladies, come for an evening of “sweet friendship, sweet fellowship, and the sweetness of the Lord”! Sign up on the bulletin board to come to our annual spring banquet, Friday, May 18, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. For each guest you bring, you will receive \$100 Grand.





Grace OPC

# May 2007

*Showing forth the  
excellencies of  
Jesus Christ*



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Pine Haven Study 1:30 p.m.	2 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	3 Session Meeting 6:30 p.m.	4 Pine Haven Spring Bake Sale 9:30-5	5 Men's Bible Study, 7:30 a.m.
6 Youth Group	7 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology 4 p.m.</i>	8	9 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	10	11	12 Church Workday
13 Missions Sunday	14 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	15 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	16 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	17	18 Ladies' Banquet 6:30 p.m.	19
20	21 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology 4 p.m.</i>	22 Building & Grounds Mtg. 7:00 p.m.	23 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	24	25 Catechism Class 8:45 a.m.	26
27 Lord's Supper (a.m.)	28 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	29	30 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	31		

## Southwest Cuisine Recipes

### Taco Casserole

- 1 ( 12 to 16 oz.) Bag cheese flavored or nacho chips
- 1 1/2 lb. Hamburger
- 1 pkg. Taco seasoning mix
- 2 cans Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 cup Milk
- 1 medium onion (diced)
- 2 tomatoes (diced)
- 3 cup Lettuce (chopped)
- 2 cup Cheddar cheese (shredded)

Crush chips in bag and put 3/4 of the bag on bottom of greased 9x13 inch pan. Brown hamburger and drain. Mix with taco seasoning. Sprinkle hamburger mixture over the chips. Mix soup with milk and pour over the hamburger mixture. Then layer onions, tomatoes, and lettuce over hamburger mixture. Top with shredded cheese and then top with rest of chips. Bake at 350 for about 15 minutes or until bubbly.

Enjoy.

*Phyllis Nyhof*

### Aunt Pam's Famous Taco Salad

- 1 head of lettuce (we added green leaf lettuce also)
- 1 - 1.5 lbs. browned hamburger meat mixed with taco seasoning (using packet directions)
- Grated cheddar cheese - whatever amount you want to add-just however much seems right
- Tomatoes - chopped
- Black Olives - sliced

- Onions - chopped (optional)
- Doritos - broken up in small pieces
- Whatever other things you want to add!
- Henri's French Dressing - usually about 1/2 - 3/4 bottle is right.. again it depends on how much you need to cover all the ingredients.

Break up lettuce in very large bowl or two smaller bowls. Add Hamburger mixture. Add the rest of the toppings as late as possible. Add dressing right before serving.

This recipe is enough for a large group.

*Shary De Troye*



### Mexican Pizza

- 2 (8 oz.) crescent rolls
- 1 Can refried beans
- 1 1/2 cup shredded cheese
- 1/2 cup sliced black olives
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1 cup chopped green peppers
- 2 Tbsp. Taco seasoning
- 1 cup sour cream

Spread crescent rolls on jelly roll pan or 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 375 for about 15 minutes. Do not overcook. Cool. Spread beans on crust. Mix sour cream and taco seasoning in small bowl. Spread sour cream mixture on cooled crescent rolls, then cover top with remaining ingredients: black olives, tomatoes, green onion & green pepper. Top with shredded cheese.

P.S. I made this in a 11 x 17 pan and double all

## ...Recipes Concluded

ingredients except for the crescent rolls.

*Ellen Me Neese*

1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/2 tsp. salt  
3/4 cup cold butter  
1 egg, lightly beaten

### *Mexican Pizza*

1/4 cup vegetable oil  
1 cup light brown sugar  
1 egg  
2 tsp. vanilla  
3/4 cup flour  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 cup granola cereal (any kind)

Preheat the oven to 350. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine the oil, brown sugar, egg and vanilla. Beat until well mixed. Add the flour, baking powder and granola and stir just until the dry ingredients have been incorporated into the batter. It will be thick.

Spread batter in the prepared baking pan and bake for 25-30 minutes. Cut into squares while still warm.

Makes 25 blondies.

(I doubled this recipe and baked it in a 13 x 9 pan. I also squirted on some powdered sugar, vanilla, milk and butter frosting.



*Moni Doro*

### *Rustic Nut Bars*

2 + 1/3 cups all-purpose flour

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Line a 9x13 pan with foil, grease the foil thoroughly, and set pan aside. In a large bowl, combine the dry ingredients, cut in butter to resemble coarse crumbs. Stir in egg until blended (mixture will be dry). Press firmly into prepared pan. bake at 375 for 18-20 minutes, or until edges are golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.

2/3 cup honey  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
1/4 tsp. salt  
6 Tbsp. butter, cubed  
2Tbsp. heavy whipping cream  
1 cup chopped hazelnuts  
(sometimes called Filberts),  
toasted  
1 cup roasted salted almonds  
1 cup salted cashews, toasted  
1 cup pistachios, toasted

In a large sauce pan, combine honey, brown sugar, and salt. bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Boil without stirring for 2 minutes. Add butter and cream. Bring back to a boil; cook and stir for 1 minute. Remove from heat, stir in hazelnuts, almonds, cashews, and pistachios. Spread over crust. Bake at 375 for 15- 20 minutes or until topping is bubbly. Cool completely on a wire rack. Use foil to lift bars out of the pan. Discard foil and cut bars into squares.

Yields: about 3 Doz.

*Samantha De Jong*

# Donations

*from Carla De Master*



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# Thank You





# LEARNING TO LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE

by Don Schlernitzauer

*"The LORD looks down from heaven: He sees all the children of man; from where He sits enthroned He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds .... Behold the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name. "* Psalm 33:13-15, 18-21

In reference to God's attributes, we usually speak of His omnipotence, His omniscience, and His omnipresence. These verses in Psalm 33 take a different tack and refer to His "omnivision". Nothing is hidden from the sight of God, as Jesus observed, not even a sparrow falling to the ground. Yet, do you and I live in the awareness of His all-seeing? God is very conscious of the presence of all men, but His eye, according to v. 18, is especially on those who both fear Him and whose hope is in His steadfast love.

If you have ever had the experience of someone watching you, whether it was your parent, your teacher, or your employer, you know such visual scrutiny makes one both conscious of and careful of his behavior. It is at such times, as they say, that we watch our "p' s and q's."

But God means for the knowledge of His eye always being upon us, to be a blessing to us, not only helping us to live rightly before Him, but also in the knowledge of His Fatherly love. As we mature as Christians, our awareness of

our fellowship with God grows, and we find ourselves more and more able to live in the knowledge of His presence. David speaks as a mature believer in the 23rd Psalm when he testifies that he does not want or fear for he knows the LORD is right there with him. David is very aware that God's eye is on him. In practicing the presence of God being with us, we also have a responsibility. In Ps 16, David says, "I have set the LORD always before me." As God has His eye upon us, so must we set God before us that our eyes rest on Him. Hebrews 12 describes living the Christian life as "running with endurance the race set before us," but it also tells us we are to do so with our "eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." To a large extent, it is our knowing that God always has His eye on us, and that we need to keep our eyes on Him that enables us, no matter where we are or what we are doing, to live that moment in His presence. And that is meant to change us, to sanctify us.

In Psalm 33, v. 20 talks about our waiting for God and v. 21 speaks of our trusting in Him, but how much better we can do these things when we are, moment by moment, aware of His presence, knowing there is One who has His eye on us. To think in this way, as I believe God desires of us, is like unto Jesus bodily coming into our worship service, our home, or wherever we are. If He did that, I have no doubt that the thoughts and behavior of everyone of us would be changed. Such awareness is to bring about the best in us, so that we might better glorify Him and enjoy Him, wherever we are, whatever we are doing. May God help us to know such blessedness.

# Young Reflections

*A page designed especially for the children of Grace Church (by Samantha De Jong)*



Do you ever have trouble really loving your brothers and sisters? Sometimes I do. Even when we don't actually argue or fight, hard feelings may grow up, when one person looks out only for himself or herself. 1 John 4:20 seems written for just such a situation. *"If anyone says 'I love God' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."* Next time you are tempted to fight with a brother or sister, show your love for God by putting the other first and yourself second.

## ATTENTION: YOUNG ARTISTS



Are you feeling creative? Well, get your crayons and markers ready, because this month your artistic skills may win you a prize! Just ask Samantha De Jong for a page, take it home, and color the picture as neatly as you can. When you're done give Samantha your masterpiece, and pick out a treat from the Treasure Chest. Happy coloring!

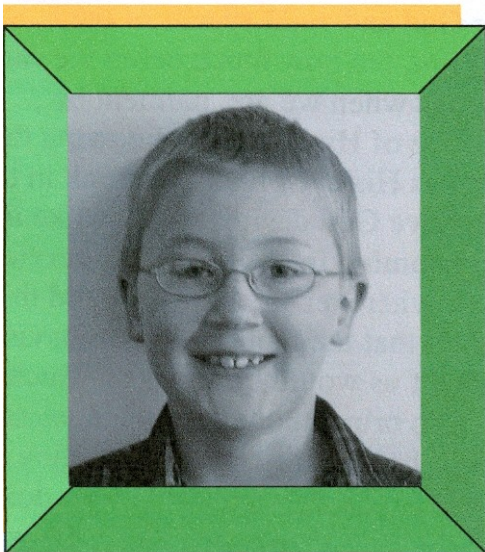


## GETTING TO KNOW CONNOR FROH

**Did you know...? "Froh" is the German word for "happy."**

***How old are you?***

*I just turned eight .*



***What is your favorite subject in school?***

*I love studying Science; it's really fun, especially when we study animals.*

***What do you like to do in your free time?***

*I enjoy playing football and basketball.*

***What kind of books do you like to read?***

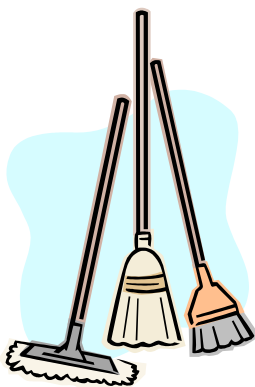
*I like any book about animals.*

***What are you looking forward to most about summer?***

*I can hardly wait to go swimming in my friend's pool!*

## *Church Workday*

Come help at the Church Workday. We will be spring cleaning the inside of the church and doing a variety of outdoor projects around



the church grounds on Saturday, May 12.

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CASTING THE SEED— HOME MISSIONS

*from Don & Pam Schlernitzauer*



Proclaiming the  
Excellencies of our  
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter  
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:

**OPC.ORG**

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★ Did you know that the hymn “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” was written by Augustus Motague Toplady?

★ Toplady was born in 1776 A.D.?

★ This hymn was written by Toplady while he was waiting out a thunder-

storm?

★ According to Sir William Henry Wills, Toplady had taken refuge between two rocks of limestone during that time?

★ This hymn was sung for Prince Albert of Britian on his deathbed?

★ “Rock of Ages” was chosen for the funeral of President Benjamin Harrison?

★ Other hymns include “A Debtor to Mercy Alone” and “How Vast the Benefits Divine”?

*Information found at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/r/o/rockages.htm> and <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/t/o/p/toplady.am.htm>*

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## Hymn Trivia

*This is a trivia question which will be answered in the next issue of Reflections...*

### WHAT HYMN...

Did Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson have sung at their funerals?

*And...*

Was the favorite of General Robert E. Lee?

