

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

GRATITUDE

By Pastor Brian De Jong

With the arrival of November, our minds naturally turn toward the annual Thanksgiving Day celebration. Beyond family, food, and football, this day gives us an opportunity to dwell on gratitude. Undoubtedly gratitude to God for His grace and favor is far more significant than who wins the game, what we eat and even whom we see on November 24.

Webster defines gratitude as “an emotion of the heart, excited by a favor or benefit received; a sentiment of kindness or good-will toward a benefactor; thankfulness.” This helpfully reminds us that true thankfulness has an emotional aspect to it – it is a response from our innermost being. It is also true that gratitude is excited by a favor or benefit received. God gives us good gifts, and as we consider how very generous He has been, we find our emotions stirred up with these feelings of thanks.

The active aspect of true thankfulness is in the sentiment of kindness or good will toward our benefactor. As we feel grateful for God’s goodness to us, we then want to express or show our goodwill back toward Him.

Paul exhorts us to this holy duty in Colossians 2:6-7, where he writes, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.” Because we

have been firmly established and rooted in Christ, and are now being built up in Him, we should overflow with gratitude.

David often calls for the same response from Israel, such as his words in Psalm 97:12 “Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name.” Likewise Psalm 106:1 “Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”



So if you want to really get more out of your annual Thanksgiving Day ritual, here are some suggestions for how to thoughtfully prepare: Spend some significant time over the next three weeks pondering how God has shown you favor, and what benefits you have enjoyed from Him. Make a list – you’ll be surprised at how quickly it adds up. As you think on God’s goodness to you, don’t limit yourself to physical, tangible, earthly and temporal benefits (i.e. food, clothes, transportation, health, etc). Expand to think of spiritual blessings (i.e. forgiveness, growth, new understanding, victory over temptation, joy, peace, etc.) Also consider the relational blessings you’ve enjoyed with family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayerfully review your list, letting your heart swell with love and gratitude to God. As you ponder over these things, meditating on God’s abundant kindness to you, begin cultivating that active expression of your gratitude. Consider how you can ‘overflow with gratitude.’...

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Mnemonics...

- *Harvest Home Supper, 12th*
- *Session Meeting, 15th*

Of Prayer

by John Calvin

11.

The fourth rule of prayer is, that notwithstanding of our being thus abased and truly humbled, we should be animated to pray with the sure hope of succeeding. There is, indeed, an appearance of contradiction between the two things, between a sense of the just vengeance of God and firm confidence in his favour, and yet they are perfectly accordant, if it is the mere goodness of God that raises up those who are overwhelmed by their own sins. For, as we have formerly shown (chap. iii. sec. 1, 2) that repentance and faith go hand in hand, being united by an indissoluble tie, the one causing terror, the other joy, so in prayer they must both be present. This concurrence David expresses in a few words: “But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy, and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple” (Psalm 5:7). Under the goodness of God he comprehends faith, at the same time not excluding fear; for not only does his majesty compel our reverence, but our own unworthiness also divests us of all pride and confidence, and keeps us in fear. The confidence of which I speak is not one which frees the mind from all anxiety, and soothes it with sweet and perfect rest; such rest is peculiar to those who, while all their affairs are flowing to a wish are annoyed by no care, stung with no regret, agitated by no fear. But the best stimulus which the saints have to prayer is when, in consequence of their own necessities, they feel the greatest disquietude, and are all but driven to despair, until faith seasonably comes to their aid; because in such straits the goodness of God so shines upon them, that while they groan, burdened by the weight of present calamities, and tormented with the fear of greater, they yet trust to this goodness, and in this way both lighten the difficulty of endurance, and take comfort in the hope of final deliverance. It is necessary therefore, that the prayer of the believer should be the result of both feelings, and exhibit the influence of both; namely, that while he groans under present and anxiously dreads new evils, he should, at the same times have recourse to God, not at all doubting that God is ready to stretch out a helping

hand to him. For it is not easy to say how much God is irritated by our distrust, when we ask what we expect not of his goodness. Hence, nothing is more accordant to the nature of prayer than to lay it down as a fixed rule, that it is not to come forth at random, but is to follow in the footsteps of faith. To this principle Christ directs all of us in these words, “Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). The same thing he declares in another passage, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). In accordance with this are the words of James, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:5). He most aptly expresses the power of faith by opposing it to wavering. No less worthy of notice is his additional statement, that those who approach God with a doubting, hesitating mind, without feeling assured whether they are to be heard or not, gain nothing by their prayers. Such persons he compares to a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Hence, in another passage he terms genuine prayer “the prayer of faith” (James 5:15). Again, since God so often declares that he will give to every man according to his faith he intimates that we cannot obtain anything without faith. In short, it is faith which obtains everything that is granted to prayer. This is the meaning of Paul in the well known passage to which dull men give too little heed, “How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:14, 17). Gradually deducing the origin of prayer from faith, he distinctly maintains that God cannot be invoked sincerely except by those to whom, by the preaching of the Gospel, his mercy and willingness have been made known, nay, familiarly explained.

Of Prayer—A Perpetual Exercise of Faith. The Daily Benefits Derived From It. (11.) By John Calvin.

Harvest Home Supper

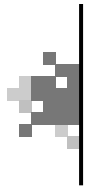
Everyone's invited to the Harvest Home Supper, which will be held at the church on Saturday, November 12th. Dinner will start at 5:30 p.m. and a presentation by Rev. Jonathan Falk will follow. A sign-up sheet is located on the bulletin board at church.



Pine Haven Bake & Craft Sale

The Pine Haven Women's Auxiliary Bake Sale will be held Friday, December 2nd at Oostburg State Bank from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you have a baked good or craft item to donate, please have them at the Bank that Friday morning. Thank you.







Grace OPC

November 2011

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	3	4	5
6	7 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	8	9 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	10	11	12 Harvest Home Supper, 5:30 p.m.
13 Missions Sunday	14 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i> Theology, 3:30 p.m.	15 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	16 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	17	18	19
20	21 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	22	23 Thanksgiving Service, 7:00 p.m.	24 Thanksgiving Day Football Game	25	26
27 Lord's Supper (a.m.)	28 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study,</i> <i>1:30 p.m.</i> Theology, 3:30 p.m.	29	30 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.			

Book Review on The Valley of Vision

A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions

Edited by Arthur Bennett (The Banner of Truth Trust)

by Carla De Master

Dr. Strange mentioned The Valley of Vision in his sermon on prayer. This book has been a blessing to me. I discovered it in Maine in the church library and used it until we left and when we were in Stillwater, the pastor had a copy in his study. Now I have my own copy, as well as 2 cds of music (hymns: www.bradkelleymusic.com; contemporary: www.SovereignGraceMusic.org) based on the prayers and meditations therein.

Quoted from the back cover of the book: "The strength of Puritan character and life lay in prayer and meditation. Too often our prayer lacks variety, order and definiteness. This book has been prepared not to "supply" prayers but to prompt and encourage the Christian as he treads the path on which others have gone before."

The first poem/prayer:
The Valley of Vision

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou has brought me to the valley of vision,

where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.
Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest
wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
thy life in my death, thy joy in my sorrow,
thy grace in my sin, thy riches in my poverty,
thy glory in my valley

Thanksgiving Service

A service of thanksgiving will be held
on Wednesday evening, November 23rd
starting at 7:00 p.m. Come joyfully to bring
thanks to our Lord & Savior!



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

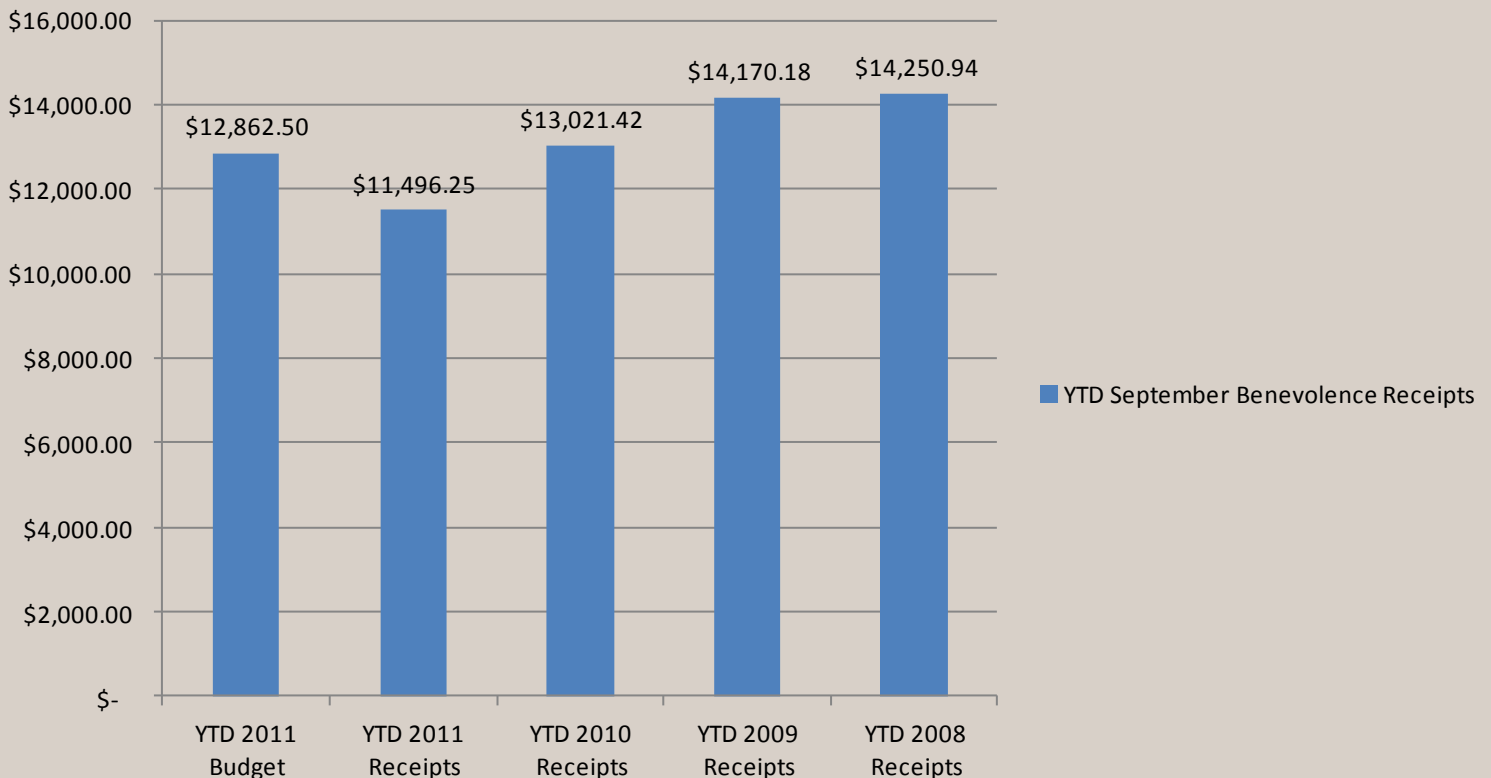
General Fund receipts for September totaled \$11,960.00 as compared to the budget of \$11,709.61, while General Fund disbursements for September totaled \$11,283.08. September year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$114,830.80 as compared to the budget of \$114,168.75 (an excess of \$662.05), while September year to date disbursements of \$106,935.03 were \$7,233.72 below budget. Through the end of September, the General Fund has increased by \$8,116.90. The increase in the General Fund was mostly due to a shortfall in disbursements as compared to the budget. General Fund receipts through September were 4.0% above last year's total while disbursements were 0.5% above the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for September totaled \$1,225.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,483.33. Year to date benevolence receipts through September totaled \$11,496.25, while the budget amount was \$13,350.00 (a shortfall of \$1,853.75).

Please refer to the graph that shows the shortfall from budget through September as well as the declining receipts for Benevolence Funds over the last few years. Each month, \$475.00 is sent to Worldwide Outreach for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In addition, \$200.00 is sent each month to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee. During October, \$250.00 was disbursed to AMG to be used in Peru for Bundles of Love.

Giving for the Capital Expansion Project through September has reached \$55,105.41 for the year. The outstanding Mortgage and Promissory Notes balance was \$87,140.50 as of the end of September 2011. Assuming that mortgage payments continue to be made as scheduled, the mortgage will be paid off near the end of 2012. The promissory notes have specific terms of repayment for each particular note and we plan to pay those back accordingly.

YTD September Benevolence Receipts



Thank You

By Rev. Ivan De Master

I want to thank everyone for their prayers and their concern during my recent eye surgery. I am grateful that the Lord has answered prayers and has granted a good measure of healing. In the next few weeks I will know for sure just how much improvement there has been. I will be getting glasses and expect to be able to get back to some more ministry including preaching.

We often greet each other with “Hello, how are you? Or how are you doing?” Many times this is said without real concern. In recent weeks many have asked how I was doing or how are my eyes. I have seen this as more than just a casual greeting. I appreciate your concern.

One can take eyesight for granted. I have thanked the Lord for my health but I don’t know if I have specifically given thanks for eyesight. We assume that most of our senses will continue to function and are generally grateful. When I developed a hole in the retina of my second eye I realized that something needed to be done. It was possible that I would be no longer able to read or see as I had before. If that would be the Lord’s will I could accept

that. I am grateful that God has answered prayer and restored much of my eyesight.

Psalm 119:18 says “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” The prayer is not for physical eyesight but for spiritual sight and understanding. Such sight is more important than physical sight. This sight too is a gift of God. We are dependent on him for such understanding. We see in his word the truth of the gospel and the wisdom that he provides us. I am thankful for the Holy Spirit and pray that you too will continue to enjoy such sight.

Jesus said, “I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. When the Pharisees asked ‘Are we blind too?’ Jesus said ‘If you were blind you would not be guilty of sin, but now that you claim that you can see, your guilt remains.’” John 9:39-41

May we be faithful in praying for one another in order that we may see the things that God has made known in his word. May our spiritual eyesight be improving as we read and meditate on the scriptures.

Praise the Lord!

The Session wishes to notify the congregation of a generous gift given recently in the amount of \$17000, to be used ‘wherever most needed.’ A significant portion of that gift was designated by the Session to pay down our mortgage, and the remainder is

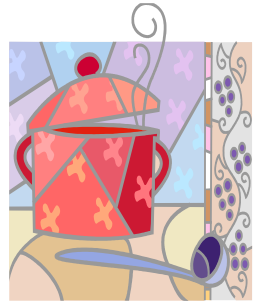
being held for some last minute needs before the end of the year. With the generous giving in the past years, we are on schedule to pay off our mortgage well ahead of schedule – likely before the end of 2012. Praise God with us!

Vegetable Beef Soup

- ★ 3 lbs. beef shank (I used some beef bones and some stew meat)
- ★ 1 pint 2 oz. can tomato juice
- ★ 1/3 cup chopped onion
- ★ 4 tsp. salt
- ★ 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ★ 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- ★ 2 bay leaves (I did not put in bay leaves)
- ★ 1 1-lb. can (2 cups) diced tomatoes
- ★ 1 cup sliced celery
- ★ 1– 8 3/4 oz. can whole kernel corn
- ★ 1 cup sliced carrots
- ★ 1 cup cubed potatoes
- ★ 1 10 oz. pkg. frozen lima beans

Combine meat, tomato juice, onion, seasoning and 6 cups water in soup kettle. Cover and simmer 2 hours. Cut meat from bones in large cubes; strain broth and skim off excess fat. Add meat and vegetables; cover and simmer 1 hour. Serves 8.

Ellen Mc Neese



“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.”



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon Corner

“And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

(Matt. 24:39)

Universal was the doom, neither rich nor poor escaped: the learned and the illiterate, the admired and the abhorred, the religious and the profane, the old and the young, all sank in one common ruin. Some had doubtless ridiculed the patriarch—where now their merry jests? Others had threatened him for his zeal which they counted madness—where now their boastings and hard speeches? The critic who judged the old man’s work is drowned in the same sea which covers his sneering companions. Those who spoke patronizingly of the good man’s fidelity to his convictions, but shared not in them, have sunk to rise no more, and the workers who for pay helped to build the wondrous ark, are all lost also. The flood swept them *all* away, and made no single exception. Even so, out of Christ, final destruction is sure to every man of woman born; no rank, possession, or character, shall suffice to save a single soul who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. My soul, behold this wide-spread judgment and tremble at it.

How marvelous the general apathy! They were all eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the awful morning dawned. There was not one wise man upon earth out of the ark. Folly duped the whole race, folly as to self-preservation—the most foolish of all follies. Folly in doubting the most true God—the most malignant of fooleries. Strange, my soul, is it not? All men are negligent of their souls till grace gives them reason, then they leave their madness and act like rational beings, but not till then.

All, blessed be God, were safe in the ark, no ruin entered there. From the huge elephant down to the tiny mouse all were safe. The timid hare was equally secure with the courageous lion, the helpless cony as safe as the laborious ox. All are safe in Jesus. My soul, art thou in him?

Morning, November 1 Morning & Evening, by C. H. SPURGEON



Front Article Concluded

Be ready to publicly express your thanks to God for all His goodness to you. Psalm 35:18 reads, *“I will give You thanks in the great congregation; I will praise You among a mighty throng.”* At our annual Thanksgiving service on Wednesday, November 23 you will have an opportunity to express your gratitude in the great congregation!

