

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

REFORMATION

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Five hundred years ago Europe was coming to a full rolling boil. Medieval Catholicism left much to be desired, and the common people hungered for change. In those days they looked more to the church than to the state for change. Yet the church seemed hopelessly corrupt – was change possible in those circumstances?

In Noyon, France a baby boy was born named John Calvin. Though brought up in the shadow of medieval Catholicism, John would abandoned the traditions handed down to him by his forefathers. He would lead many back to the Bible as their only authority for faith and for life.



Meanwhile, in Germany a troubled monk was struggling with God. Though he punished his body, he could not be free from his sin. God’s wrath hung heavily upon Dr. Martin Luther, until he rediscovered the gospel through his study of Scripture. Especially through the book of Romans, Luther came to see that the just shall live by faith. Justification was by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

The countries of England, Holland and Scotland also became actively involved, each making unique contributions to this great spiritual revival. Through men like Guido de Bres, John Knox and Thomas Cramner the gospel spread like wildfire through Europe. God

was doing a great work and it was amazing to behold.

As we approach the 491st anniversary of Luther’s bold act of nailing the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenburg, it is good to remember again the Reformation.

Spiritual Giants roamed the earth in those times, the likes of whom are rarely seen in our era.

Yet we should not blithely live in the past – as if we were 16th century people. We live in a century that desperately needs the gospel again. Moreover, our culture needs a truly Reformed church that will boldly and clearly declare the word and will of God. We require ministers who will trumpet

the old gospel of the Reformation to a skeptical and cynical generation.

To quote the always quotable Spurgeon, “*The old truths that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, is the truth that I preach today, or else I would be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. And that gospel which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.*”

Let us, dear people, purpose together to pray that the God of Luther, Calvin and Knox would renew His great work in our day. Let us daily plead for God to graciously grant repentance, revival and a new reformation to our land.

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Mnemonics...

- *Hayride & Bonfire, 3rd*
- *Session Meeting, 23rd*
- *Worldview Movie Night, 31st*

The Happiness of Drawing Near to God

By Thomas Watson

“But it is good for me to draw near to God.”

Psalms 73:28

...How we are capable of drawing near to God. By nature we stand in opposition to God, ... alienated and enemies. How then can we approach nigh to God? – Ans. It is through a mediator. But Jesus Christ is the screen between us and divine justice. Christ as our High Priest assumes our flesh. Christ’s flesh is called a ‘veil,’ Heb. 10:20. As Moses when his face shone so exceedingly bright put a veil upon it, and then Israel might approach near to him and look upon him: so Christ having veiled himself with our human nature, we may now draw nigh to God and behold him.

And as Christ makes way for us into the Holy of Holies by his incarnation: so by his crucifixion, he died to make God and us friends. The divine law being infringed, God’s justice was provoked, and satisfaction demanded, before we could approach to God in an amicable way. Now here Christ as our Priest shed his blood for our sins, and so made the atonement, Col. 1:20. “Having made peace through the blood of his cross.” As Joseph being so great at court, made way for all his brethren to draw near into the king’s presence, Gen. 47:2 so Jesus Christ is our Joseph, that doth make way for us by his blood, that we may now come near into God’s presence. Through Christ, God is pleased with us; he holds forth the golden scepter, that we may draw near, and touch the top of the scepter.

Where we draw near to God. Ans. In the use of his ordinances. In the word...in the sacrament... Besides, we also in a special manner draw near to God in prayer. ... Prayer whispers in God’s ears, Psalm 18: 6. “My prayer came before him, even into his ears.” In prayer we draw so nigh to God that we “take hold of him,” Isaiah 64:6. God draws nigh to us by his Spirit, and we draw nigh to him in prayer.

The *modus*, or manner of our drawing near to God. God’s special residence is in Heaven and we draw near to God, not by the feet of our bodies, but with our souls. The affections are the feet of the soul; by these we move towards God. David drew

nigh to God in his desires, Psal. 73: 25. “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee....”

Why we must draw near to God. Because he is our maker, “in him we live.” He hath given us bodies; they are his curious “needlework,” Psal. 89:15. And as he hath wrought the cabinet, so he has put the jewel in it, the precious soul; and surely if we have our being from him, we cannot breathe without him. There is good reason we should draw near to Him in a way of homage and observance. God is our benefactor; he crowns us with a variety of blessings: he gives health and estate; every bite of bread we eat is reached to us by the hand of Divine bounty. Is there not great reason we should draw near to him who feeds us? Give a beast provender and he will follow you all the field over. Not to draw near to Him who is our benefactor, is worse than brutish.

...See the right genius and temper of a gracious soul; it is ever drawing near to God; it loves to converse with him in private. A person truly regenerate is not able to stay away long from God, Psalm 108:8 “My soul followeth hard after God.” A pious soul cannot but draw near to God.

...A gracious soul cannot but draw near to God, because of the intimate relationship between God and him. God is a father, Isai. 64:8. “Doubtless Thou art our father.” -- Doth not the child delight to draw near to his father? There is no father like God for love; his children shall never want; he hath land enough to give to all his heirs. He loves his children so entirely, that he will never disinherit them. How then can believers keep away from their father? they do not know how to be long out of his presence.

A gracious soul cannot but draw near to God, because he hath found so much sweetness and content in it. While he hath drawn near to God, he hath drawn virtue from him. Never did Jonathan taste so much sweetness when he dipped his rod in the honey-comb, 1 Sam. 15:27. as the soul finds in communion with God. In drawing near to God a Christian’s heart has been warmed and melted; the Lord hath kindled his sacrifice from Heaven. ... no wonder then

Watson Continued...

he is so frequent in his approaches to the divine majesty; he hath found the comfort of drawing near to God.

... to draw near to God is a good thing. "It is good for me." That it is good appears in several ways.

To draw near to God, is our wisdom. -- "The price of wisdom is above rubies." Job 28:18. No jewel we wear doth so much adorn us as wisdom; and wherein is our wisdom seen more than in our appropriation to God? It is judged wisdom to keep in with great men, Prov. 19:6. "Many will entreat the favour of the Prince." A prince's love is mutable. How often doth the sunshine of his royal favour set in a cloud. -- But it is wisdom to draw near to God; he is the sweetest friend, and the sorest enemy.

To draw near to God is our honour. It is counted an honor to converse with noble personages. What high dignity is it, that the great God will suffer sinful dust to draw near to him! Surely the apostle did speak of it with an holy boasting, 2 John 1:3. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus:" ... That the King of kings will hold forth a *golden scepter* to us, invite and welcome us into his presence, and bid us draw near; this is no small favor, 1 Sam. 22:2. "Every one that was distressed and in debt drew near to David, and he became a captain over them." So that we who are distressed and in debt, may draw near to God; and that he will not only be our *captain*, but our *husband*, Isaiah 54:5. What transcendent dignity is this! It is a wonder God doth not kick us out of his presence; but that we should be admitted to see the king's face and that he should send us dainties from his own table, is an honour fitter for angels than men.

To draw near to God is our safety. God is a "strong tower," Prov. 18:10. It is good in times of

danger to draw near to a fort or castle, Hab 3:4. "He had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power." The horns coming out of God's hands, are to push his enemies, and the hiding of his power is to safeguard his people. God is an impregnable stronghold. Indeed there is no safety,

but in drawing nigh to God. If the sheep wanders from the fold, it is in danger of the wolf; if we straggle and wander from God, we are in danger of Satan.

To draw near to God is our peace. The only thing which breaks our peace is, when we do not keep close to God: but what harmony, yea Heaven is in the soul when it draws nigh to God! Psalm 119:165. "Great peace have they which love thy law." This peace, like pearl in broth, is cordial. David drew nigh to God, for he was "ever with him," Psalm 139:17. And this made his pillow soft when he went to sleep, Psalm 9:8. "I will lay me down in peace;" as the honey, dew falls upon the leaf: O that sweet serenity which drops as honey upon the soul while it is drawing nigh to God! How comfortable it is to draw near to the sun! and how sweet is it to approach nigh to the Sun of Righteousness.

To draw near to God is our riches. It is good drawing near to a gold mine. If we draw near to God, he will enrich us with promises, and divine consolations; he will enrich us with the "pearl of great price," Ephes. 3:8. He will reward us as a king, yea as a God. He will make over his land and jewels to us; he will give us the spring flowers of joy here, and the harvest of glory hereafter.

If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us. If we draw near to him in duty, he will draw near to us in mercy. When the prodigal approached to his father, his father drew near to him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, Luke 15:20. If we draw near

*"If we
draw near
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near to
us."*

Watson Concluded...

to God with repenting hearts, he will draw near to us with a compassionate heart. -- David prayed, Psalm 69:18. "Draw nigh unto my soul." It is good to have God draw nigh to us. How sweet is his presence! he is light to the eye and joy to the heart. How happy was it for Zacchaeus, when Christ drew near to him! "This day is salvation come thy house," Luke 19:9. When God draws near to the soul, Heaven and salvation draw near.

There is a time coming, when we shall wish we had drawn near to God. We are shortly drawing near to our grave, Psalm 107:18. "They draw near unto the gates of death." The wicked who care not for God, yet at death they would draw near to him. Then they cry as Matt. 8:25. "Lord, save or we perish;" then mercy, mercy. They run to God in distress, as in a storm men run to a tree for shelter. But God will not shelter his enemies. The Lord gives the sinner abundance of mercy in his lifetime, (as you have seen a loving father bribing a prodigal son with money to see if he can reclaim him), but if the sinner be not wrought upon with mercy, then at death the sun of mercy sets and a dark night of wrath overtakes the sinner. They who would not draw nigh to God as a friend, will experience that God will draw nigh to them as an enemy.

How shall we do to draw near to God?

Let us contemplate the excellencies of God. He is the "God of glory," Psalm 29:3 full of orient beauty: in comparison of whom both angels and men are but as the "small dust of the balance." He is the "God of love," 2 Cor. 13:11 who triumphs in acts of mercy. Well may this encourage us in our approaches to him who delights to display the banner of free grace to sinners. If we should hear of a person of honour who was of a lovely disposition, obliging all that came to him by acts of kindness and civility, it would make us ambitiously desirous to ingratiate ourselves with him and to obtain his acquaintance. God is the most sovereign good, the wonder of love, ready to diffuse the silver streams of his bounty to indigent creatures. This, if anything,

will make us willing to draw near to him and acquiesce in him as the centre of felicity.

If we would draw near to God, let us study our own wants. Let us consider in what need we stand for God and that we cannot be happy without him. The prodigal never drew near to his father, until he "began to be in want," Luke 15. A proud sinner, who was never convinced of his want, minds not to come near God; he hath a stock of his own to live upon, Jer 2:31. "We are Lords; we will come no more unto thee." -- A full stomach despises the honey-comb. -- It is the sense of want which brings us near to God. Why did so many lame and paralytical resort to Christ, but because they wanted a cure. Why doth the thirsty man draw near to a fountain but because he wants water. Why doth a condemned man draw near his prince but because he wants a pardon. -- When a poor soul reviews its wants; I want grace; I want the favour of God, I am damned without Christ; this makes him draw near to God, and be an earnest supplicant for mercy.

If we would draw near to God, let us be careful to clear our interest in God, Heb. 10:22. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." When we know him to be our God, then we draw near to him. The spouse, by virtue of the conjugal union, draws near to her husband, Psalm 48:14. "This God is our God."

Let us beg the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God hath a magnetical virtue. Corruption draws the heart from God; the Spirit draws it to him, Cant. 1:4. "Draw me, we will run after thee." The Spirit, by his omnipotent grace, draws the heart to God not only sweetly, but powerfully.

Let us get our hearts fired with love to God: whichever way love goes, that way the heart is drawn. If God be the treasure delighted in, our hearts will be drawn to him. Servile fear makes the soul fly from God; sacred love makes it fly to him.

Taken from "The Happiness of Drawing Near to God," by Thomas Watson (ca. 1620-1686).

Into The Deep By Robert Rogers

reviewed by Dan TenPas

Into the Deep is the true story of Robert Rogers, who in 2003 lost his wife and four young children in a flash flood in Missouri. It is a powerful story of one man's enduring faith in a sovereign God. The book takes readers through the accident and the extremely painful week that followed, while inserting memories of his family along the way. Rogers' does well to recall times spent with his family that we often take for granted. Into the Deep is a vivid account of not only trials and testing, but of God's grace reaffirmed.



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

General Fund receipts for August totaled \$14,254.19 as compared to the budget of \$13,491.42. General Fund disbursements for August totaled \$8,478.47 as compared to the budget of \$13,491.42. August year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$96,207.39 as compared to the budget of \$94,439.46 (an excess of \$1,767.93), while August year to date disbursements of \$90,125.96 were \$4,313.50 below budget. Through the end of August, the General Fund has increased by \$7,870.77.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for August totaled \$1,811.70 as compared to the budget of \$1,429.17. Year to date benevolence receipts through August totaled \$11,100.94, while the budget amount was \$11,433.33. Each month, \$450.00 is

sent to Worldwide Outreach for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In addition, approximately \$192.00 is sent each month to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee. For October, a disbursement of \$900.00 will be made to Sheboygan Co. Christian High School and \$600.00 to Pine Haven. Please remember to pray for the ministries that our church helps to support.

Gifts directed towards the Capital Fund/ Church Expansion Project totaled \$26,938.45 through the end of August. Included in that total are gifts of \$3,598.45 received for the Kings Men Gifts from several churches within the Midwest Presbytery. The Capital Fund balance as of the end of August stands at \$64,089.69.

October Birthdays



Happy Birthday!!!

Right to Life- Days to Remember!!

Life Chain will be held on Sunday, October 5th from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the four corners of Erie Ave. and 14th St. in Sheboygan for silent and non-violent prayer for our nation and for an end to abortion. There will be some signs available.

Bowlathon (bowl for the cause) will be held on Friday, November 7th from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Odyssey Lanes in Sheboygan Falls. Bowlers of all ages are welcome. Contact Russ

Otten at russo@sheboyganchristian.com or 912-3967 for entry forms & information.

Respect Life Rally will be held Sunday, March 22th, 2009.

Rummage Sale will be held on April 4th, 2009.

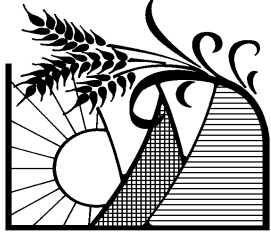
Wisconsin Right to Life Annual Convention in Sheboygan (Blue Harbor) will be held on April 18th, 2009.



Grace OPC

October 2008

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	2	3 Hayride & Bonfire, 6:30 p.m.	4
5	6 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	7	8 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	9	10	11
12 Missions Sunday	13 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	14	15 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	16	17	18
19	20 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	21 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	22 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	23 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	24	25
26 Lord's Supper (p.m.)	27 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	28	29 Prayer Meeting, 7p.m.	30	31 Worldview Movie Night, 7 p.m.	

ARE YOU REJOICING BUT STILL YEARNING?

by Don Schlernitzauer

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possessions—to the praise of His glory.” —Eph 1: 13-14 (NIV)

Rightly understood there is nothing better than being a Christian, for God not only saves His people from their sins, but as Paul notes in the above text. He guarantees them an inheritance. Concerning this inheritance, Peter wants us to know how certain and secure it is, writing that God “has given us new birth into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for {us}” (1 Pet 1: 4). Further, Paul wants us to know how magnificent it is, adding, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18).

The assets of Warren Buffet or Bill Gates can’t begin to compare with those of the lowliest Christian. In our forgiveness and our inheritance God has indeed done in us and set before us that which should rightly thrill our souls each day as we praise God for being included in Christ. But in Eph 1: 4 Paul has included another reason, not so obvious in English translations of the text, which should make our hearts both rejoice and yearn. The Holy Spirit’s presence in us is the guarantee of our inheritance until our “redemption” by God. The usual Greek word for redemption is “lutrosis” which means

deliverance or redemption, as in buying back an article from a pawn shop. But in Eph 1:14 the word translated “redemption” is “apolutrosis” with the prefix “apo”, which means “from”, being added to shift the emphasis from the deliverance itself to that which we are being released or delivered from.

God has indeed in Christ forgiven each believer every sin, but that which He has yet to deliver us from is our old fleshly natures which cause us to continue to sin though we have already become new creatures in Christ. The Apostle Paul in Rom 7:24 cried out for this deliverance or release saying, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

It is indeed wonderful to be forgiven; it is indeed wonderful to meditate on the inheritance laid up for us in heaven. But if we are to receive all of God’s word, should we not also be yearning and crying out with Paul for our release from the presence and power of sin within us? Else how can we say we have a healthy appreciation for what God has done for us in Christ if we are not also earnestly looking forward to that which He has pledged Himself yet to do that our redemption might be complete?

As we wait upon the Lord, we can take much encouragement from God’s promise in Ps 130:7: “O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with Him is FULL redemption.”





Worldview Movie Night

Everyone is invited to come to **Worldview Movie Night!**

We're going to be watching the 2003 movie entitled "Luther". The evening for this is Friday, October 31st. This is the exactly 491 years after Luther first nailed his 95 theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany.

Everyone is asked to bring "Reformation Refreshments" to enjoy while the movie is playing. You may also dress up as your favorite Reformer, if you so choose!

A lively discussion will follow the movie – bring your thinking caps along!!! Also, a short pop-quiz will be given on the 95 theses.

Mark your calendar for this exciting evening!

Oliebollen

- ★ 3 cups flour
- ★ 4 tsp. baking powder
- ★ 1 tsp. salt
- ★ 3/4 cup sugar
- ★ 4 Tbsp. corn oil
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 1 cup milk
- ★ 1 tsp vanilla
- ★ 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- ★ 1 cup raisins

Sift all dry ingredients. Add other ingredients. Blend. Add raisins. Drop by tsp. in oil (350° - 375°). Shake in bag with sugar.

(This recipe was in the 1974 Oostburg Christian School Circle Favorite Recipes Cookbook.)

Ellen Mc Neese



“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?”

Volunteer Opportunity!

On Thursday, October 2nd there is an chance to help tear out the carpet in the fellowship hall at church starting at 6:00 p.m. This is an excellent opportunity to help with the building expansion project! Volunteers are welcome and there are no special skills required! Call Steve Boss.



Building Expansion Project Pictures

from Ken Koehler





Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

SERMONAUDIO.COM/

GRACESHEBOYGAN

CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:

OPC.ORG



★ Did you know that our fellowship hall will not be usable in 2-3 weeks?

★ Did you know that Sunday School for adults will be held in the sanctuary after that?

★ That coffee and cookies will be moved outside during nice weather and in the

nursery classroom during rainy weather?

★ That the giving for this project totaled \$26,938.45 by the end of August and envelopes can be found in the bulletin the first Sunday of every month to contribute?

★ Did you know that there will be a variety of opportunities to lend a hand, such as tearing up carpet in the Fellowship Hall on October 2nd?

★ That there will be help needed to clean on Saturdays and some evenings as the project progresses and you can volunteer by contacting a member of the building committee?

★ That much prayer is needed as things move forward in the weeks ahead?

Hayride & Bonfire

Everyone is welcome to come to the Hayride & Bonfire, which will be held at the Gartman farm on Friday, October 3rd. It will start at 6:30 p.m. with the Hayride starting promptly at 7:00 p.m. Hot dogs, chips, smores, and drinks will be provided. Everyone is invited to bring their own lawn chairs. There is a sign up sheet with directions located on the bulletin board in the hallway at church.

