

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

IS THE REFORMATION RELEVANT?

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Have you ever heard of “white noise”? Dictionary.com defines it as “a steady, unvarying, unobtrusive sound, as an electronically produced drone or the sound of rain, used to mask or obliterate unwanted sounds.” It is possible to get a “white noise machine” that produces such sounds.

There are voices within Reformed circles that say we need a new Reformation. I can’t disagree with that idea, but I do take issue with their rationale. We need a new Reformation, they say, because the Protestant Reformation of the 1500’s is irrelevant.

Along the same lines, they say we need new confessional documents because the Westminster Standards are no longer relevant for our postmodern world. Let’s set aside those historic statements of faith like so many relics of long-dead saints. Instead, let us come up with new, trendy, contemporary definitions of what the Bible teaches, they contend.

My question is this: what is really the ‘white noise’ of this debate? Is it the tried and true testimonies of the Protestant Reformation, or is it the droning disparagements by the modernizers?

That last paragraph tipped my hand. I believe that the criticisms of the critics are being used to mask and obliterate the unwanted sounds of Reformation orthodoxy. The Reformation is surely relevant, despite what many smarter-than-

you people want to suggest.

But how is the Reformation relevant some 500 years after Martin Luther visited the church door in Wittenberg to post his Theses? How does the work of John Calvin influence us today? What light do past centuries shed on our day and age?

Our fourth annual Reformation Conference will tackle this question – the relevance of the Reformation. Our speaker is Mr. James “Bebo” Elkin. Bebo is a dear friend of mine – one of my mentors from many years ago. He introduced me to Presbyterianism in a deeper way than I had ever experienced it. He shaped me, challenged me, encouraged

me as a friend and an advisor over many years.

Bebo studied at Belhaven College and Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He has worked in Christian Education and served for a long time as the director of Reformed University Ministries in Mississippi. He is also a ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

Because of his theological expertise and his giftedness in teaching, he has taught courses for Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, and Greenville Theological Seminary in South Carolina.

As an added bonus, Bebo’s wife Jan will be accompanying him to our conference. Jan is among the most gracious ladies I’ve ever encountered, and has been...

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Mnemonics...

- *Worldview Movie Night, 5th*
- *Hospitality Sunday, 14th*



A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts

Chapter 2

by Richard Steele

The Kinds of Distractions—Section 1

Their Several Fountains

Our second duty will be to take a view of the kinds or sorts of distractions; and they are diversified: 1. From the fountain whence they flow. 2. From the matter whereof they consist. 3. From their adjuncts. For the first of them, you will find,

1. That our distractions may justly be fathered on the Devil. He is a spiritual substance, and is most properly conversant in spiritual sins; he is completely skilled in all thoughts whatsoever, and therefore what he imparts here is of his own. The high-priest Joshua could not be at his prayers for the Israel of God, but as Christ the angel of the covenant was on one hand, Satan was standing on the other, Zech. 3:1, and he was got at the readier hand,* the right hand, the hand of action, that he might hinder him more dexterously in his devotion. And when Satan stands on the right hand, the prayer is in danger to become sin. Psalm 109:6, 7. When we are most serious before the Angel, the Devil is whispering at our elbow; and who can be dull and watchless, when God is on one hand, and Satan on the other?

The Devil is afraid of a serious lively prayer at his heart; he knows that can pull down in a minute what he hath been contriving for a thousand years; and therefore, if he cannot withhold us from holy duties, he will do his utmost to disturb us in them. Hence the vision of that holy man who in the whole market saw but one devil busy (for where Self was at hand, Satan had no need to bestir him;) but in the congregation there were multitudes of them: all their skill and power being little enough to ward off' poor souls from Jesus Christ. Alas! we pray, and hear, and live as securely, as if there were no Devil at all.

And his suggestions in religious duties are usually more violent and impetuous,* more dreadful and impious, than those which are of our own breeding; called therefore darts, and fiery darts of that wicked one. Though he lay these suggestions of his at thy door, yet they will be counted in the number of his sins and of thy afflictions.

2. Our distractions proceed from the mind and understanding. The vanity of the mind alienates us from the life of God, and from communion with him. When a present and seasonable petition or instruction is conveyed through the ear into the understanding, it wantonly plays therewith, and takes occasion to run out on some contiguous notion; and from that to another and at length rests and dwells on some alien and unseasonable point, till the gales of the good Spirit, and the present matter be overpast. And thus by a default in the understanding, we seek not God, Psalm 53:2, nor find him as we might; and that excellent faculty, which would penetrate into the divine mysteries, and should guide the will and heart unto God, by the ignis fatuus of its unmortified vanity, misleads us from the chief good, and entangles us in distractions. We read "of a filthiness of the spirit," 2 Cor. 7:1, whereof surely this is a part, and must be cleansed in them that will * "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

3. Some distractions proceed from the fancy, a most busy faculty, which is most unruly and least sanctified in a holy man. Sometimes by the help of memory, stepping back into things past, she brings into the most solemn worship a thousand passages that are past and gone, and rolling them in the head, carries soul and all quite away from God: hence it is, you often hear them say, "such a thing came into my mind at sermon or prayer," that was forgotten weeks or months before: yea, daring to react former sins by contemplative wickedness in the very sight of God, which doubles the guilt by repetition, and makes your former sins exceeding sinful. In this sense that is true, "Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of desire;" Eccles. 6:9; there is something more of evil in these second contemplations, than in the first commissions. Sometimes the fancy will create a world of figments or notions out of nothing, and multiply impertinent thoughts upon no ground, and to no purpose; and can sally out of the present matter to every adjacent business, and make a great ado to bring nothing to

Wandering Continued...

pass. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen," Job 27:8; the fancy can find out such a way; thus God is not in all, hardly in any, of our thoughts, when we pretend to treat him with the greatest solemnity.

And sometimes the fancy breeds distractions by forecasting things to come; so many a man can most easily, on the Sabbath, contrive his business for all the week after; and the poor woman in the corner of a prayer order the business of all the house for a day. Hence many an affair is cursed in our hands, by our unhappy contrivance thereof in the time of worship.

Thus we have some saying (in their hearts no doubt), "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Amos 8:5. And it is well if they have no companions in this assembly, who are making their hay, measuring their corn, counting their coin, if not providing for their lusts, while they seem earnest with the Lord negotiating for eternity.

4. Our distractions in God's house of worship are sometimes occasioned by our outward senses. Most frequently by the eye; a wandering eye mostly hath a wandering heart; for when the eye discovers any new, pleasing, or ridiculous object, it presently brings news thereof unto the heart; and that debates and studies upon it, to the grieving of God's Spirit, and cooling of our own: and when that is over, a fresh sight presents itself, and the eye is ready for that again, and leads the heart into a maze of follies. We read, "My eye affecteth my heart, because of all the daughters of the city," Lam. 3:51, that is with grief for their calamity. There is a reciprocal working it seems; the heart at first affects the eye, and the eye can affect the heart with grief: even in like manner, when the sons or daughters of the city enter the assembly, the eye affects the heart; stirs, diverts, kindles the heart; and the heart corrupts, stains, and transmits its follies by the eye; the precious soul meanwhile suffering between them, and the holy God and his services

being woefully slighted.

You resolve in this duty, I will not swerve from God, nor step aside into the least distraction; but you bolt the door and let your enemy in at the window. The thoughts that are shut out at the street-door steal in at the back door, if you do not as well "make a covenant with your eyes, as keep your feet, when you enter into the house of God." In this sense the woman and man also have need of the covering of a holy and constant watch, "because of the angels," the wicked children of hell, that ride abroad in the air, to carry away our hearts from God.

*"...so many a
man can
most easily
on the Sab-
bath, contrive
his business
for all the
week after."*

Section 2

The Matter of Distractions

Secondly: Distractions are distinguished by the matter whereof they consist; which is sometimes

1. Good. It is Satan's ambition and triumph, when he can affront God with his own matters; as to bring in shreds of sermons in the heat of prayer; and long passages which you have read, to keep out material points, that you should be hearing: he will hold your husband's picture before you, while you should look on your husband's face, and at length delude you with shadows instead of substance. A good thing in its nature, may become a bad thing in its use, when it is out of season. Jewels misplaced may grow worthless; a diamond on the finger is an ornament, but in the bladder a torment; and God dislikes his own things in the Devil's way, little less than the Devil's things themselves.

As when one is playing in concert, as Mr. White remarks, if we stay on any note, while they who play the other parts go on, that which at first made excellent harmony, becomes now harsh, and spoils the music: so those thoughts that were sweet and musical, while they were suitable and pertinent to thy prayer, become harsh by dwelling unseasonably upon them.

2. Sometimes our wanderings are made up of things indifferent in themselves; and these things

Wandering Concluded...

by mistiming them, are debauched, and made very evil and offensive unto God. As to talk with, or to see a friend, is in itself indifferent; but to perform this in the heat of harvest may be folly. There are a hundred harmless thoughts both of things and persons, which crowding into the sacred presence of God, and interposing between the soul and its Maker, while the matters of eternity are debating and concluding, are a great offence, and deserve to be whipped, and posted and sent away.

3. The matter of them sometimes is absolutely bad, proud, wanton, malicious thoughts: blasphemous thoughts, as whether God is, when we are praying to him, and the like. Able to sink us at any time, but sins of a double dye in the worship of God; because there the special and piercing eye of God is upon us: as theft therefore is penal in all places, by reason of its intrinsic evil, much more criminal is it before a judge in the court: even so are these thoughts guilty and base any where, but when they shall dare to intrude into the presence of the Judge of Heaven and Earth, as it were daring a jealous God, this is prodigious sin and greatly provokes him. So “They come unto me as the people cometh, and they sit before me as my people; with their mouths they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” Ezek. 33: 31. What more sweet than a religious mouth? What more bitter than a covetous heart? Especially when the heart goeth out after covetousness, pursues and follows it in the sight of God. Oh, dreadful! God is pursuing and following the sinner with Christ and mercy in his arms, and the sinner the while, with his very heart, is going after sin. And thus that house which God calls “the house of prayer,” we make a den of lust, malice, covetousness, and sin.

* “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand.” Eccl. 10:2. i.e. His heart is ready and prepared to every good work. — Anno. in loc.

* Joab could hinder David from weeping for Absalom, not from numbering the people, to which Satan stirred him up. — D. Arrows.

Presbyterialponderings

from September 22, 2012

by Carla De Master

Five of us women drove to Menominee Falls for the fall meeting of the Presbyterial of the Midwest. The conversation in the car was a prelude to the fellowship with the other 30 participants from various churches. It was a beautiful day with beautiful women. Plan to go to Wheaton IL next fall, fourth Saturday, to join in the next presbyterial. You will be glad you did.

Following a super delicious lunch, we had a brainstorming meeting. Officers for next year are: Jennifer DeRu, President (from Hanover Park); Carmen McKenna, Vice President (from Wheaton), and Julie DeArmitt, secretary treasurer. Next fall we plan to go the day before and shop or see sights the first day. Would you like to join us?

Hospitality Sunday

Hospitality Sunday is coming soon! On Sunday, October 14th we'll have our fall Hospitality Sunday. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board to either host or be



hosted. Groups will be assigned and notified the week prior. This is a good way to get to know other folks in the church, and to practice and enjoy Christian hospitality.

October Birthdays



Pine Haven Communities Thank You

Rooted and built in him, strengthened in faith as you were taught, and overflowing in thankfulness. Colossians 2:7.

Our roots continue to grow, spread through the generations and have blossomed into a rich 63 year history. We have been very blessed as our faith in the Lord has allowed Pine Haven's mission and foundation strengthen, so our current residents and future generations can experience the mission we strive for through Christ's love.

All of us involved with Pine Haven Christian Communities would like to express our deep appreciation and thankfulness for your past support towards our mission. Almost three years ago, we began the Resident Assistance Fund campaign in an effort of helping those less fortunate residents. This campaign will become a constant due to continued and already projected future cuts to government programs. As we know, our population is living longer which means many of our seniors are outliving

their funds, despite proper planning. Annually, Medicaid alone leaves us a shortfall in excess of \$1.5 million dollars. With your support and prayers, in the last two years we have been able to help support some residents with close to \$200,000 in donations.

The pictures we shared with you are candid experiences in our residents' lives. From children who visit Pine Haven to those of us who strive to achieve faith, hope and love through our... jobs, volunteering, prayerful or financial support of Pine Haven to those who look to each of us for ministering these gifts to them as their needs grow. The seeds for many of us were planted at young age. Many of us came to know Pine Haven through visiting relatives who were residents or coming here to sing for school or church groups. Some of us may have worked here. However we have been involved with Pine Haven, the roots are supporting and strengthening our mission.

We are overflowing with thankfulness and pray for God's blessing to you.



Grace OPC

October 2012

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	2	3 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	4	5 Worldview Movie Night, 7:00 p.m.	6
7	8 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Theology, 3:30 p.m.	9	10 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	11	12	13
14 Missions Sunday Hospitality Sunday	15 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	16	17 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	18	19	20
21	22 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Theology, 3:30 p.m.	23	24 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	25	26	27 Reformation Conference, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
28 Lord's Supper, (p.m.) Reformation Conference	29 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	30	31 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.			

Comments on Finances

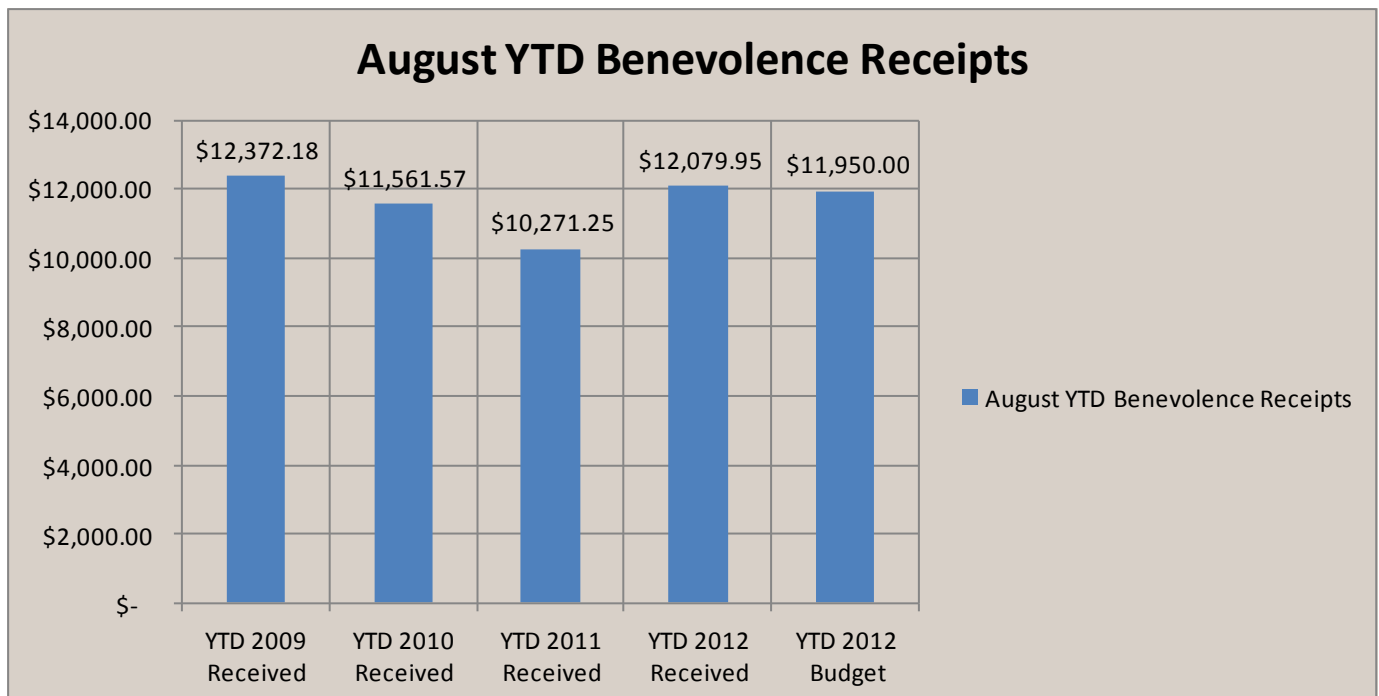
by Joel Moody

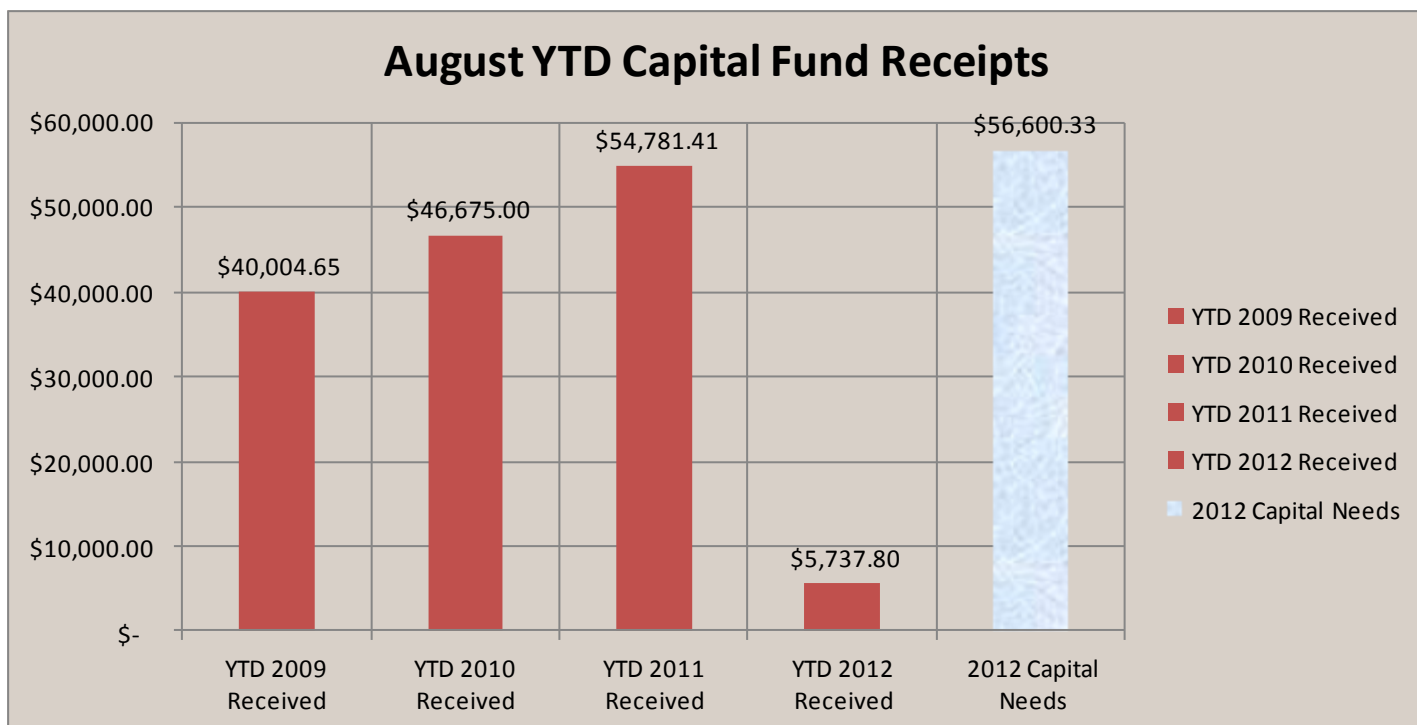
General Fund receipts for August totaled \$12,448.52 as compared to the budget of \$12,538.40, while General Fund disbursements for August totaled \$14,527.59. August year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$109,336.62 as compared to the budget of \$109,710.85 (a shortfall of \$374.23), while August year to date disbursements of \$100,145.21 were \$9,565.64 below budget. Through the end of August, the General Fund has increased by \$9,343.18. The increase in the General Fund was due to a shortfall in disbursements as compared to the budget. Year to date General Fund receipts for August were 6.3% above last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 4.7% above the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for July totaled \$891.54 as compared to the budget of \$1,493.75 (a shortfall of \$602.21). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through August totaled \$12,079.95 and exceeded budget by \$129.95. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts.

August Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$5,737.80. The outstanding Promissory

Notes balance was \$48,000.00 as of the end of August 2012. During the remainder of the year, \$43,000.00 is yet scheduled to mature on these notes. Please refer to the Capital Fund Graph that shows the historical giving through August for the years indicated in the graph as well as the 2012 Total Capital Fund needs for the year in the last column. 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 past indebtedness on the building and equipment of the local church as well as current and future needs that may exist to purchase additional equipment (such as the sound system, tables and chairs, etc.) or building-type items (such as a parking lot, driveway, furnace boiler, etc.)





Worldview Movie Night

When? Friday evening, October 5th
at 7:00 p.m.

Where? At the church.

What? Viewing and discussing...
“The Scarlet and the Black” starring
Gregory Peck and Christopher Plummer.

Bring? Yourself! Popcorn & drinks will
be provided but you are welcome to
bring any additional snacks!

*Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church's 4th Annual
Reformation Conference 2012*

IS THE REFORMATION RELEVANT?

Saturday, October 27th

9:00 a.m. Session 1 – “Rise, George! God’s Blessing at the Westminster Assembly”

10:30 a.m. Session 2 – “Products of the Reformation”

Sunday, October 28th

9:00 a.m. Psalm 107—Prayer, Providence, & Praise

5:00 p.m. Luke 18:9-14—The Sinner

About Our Guest Speaker...

- **Mr. James “Bebo” Elkin** has served as Mississippi area coordinator for Reformed University Ministries (PCA)
- Has taught at Covenant Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary and Greenville Theological Seminary.
- Serves as a Ruling Elder at First Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Jackson, MS
- Married to Jan with three grown children – Amanda, Jamie and Emily



Banana Split Torte

- ★ 2 cups graham crackers, crushed
- ★ 2 sticks margarine, divided
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 2 cups confectioners sugar
- ★ 3 bananas, sliced
- ★ 1 no. 2 can crushed pineapple, drained
- ★ Large carton Cool Whip
- ★ 1/2 cup chopped nuts
- ★ Cherries for decoration

Melt one stick of the margarine and mix with the crumbs. Spread evenly in a 9x13-in. dish. Beat together for no less than 15 minutes the eggs, confectioners sugar and remaining one stick of margarine. Spoon mixture over the crumb layer, and arrange sliced bananas on it. The next layer is the drained, crushed pineapple, then the Cool Whip. Sprinkle with chopped nuts and decorate with cherries. Place in refrigerator overnight. (Makes 12 servings)

Phyllis Nyhof



“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

*“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”
(John 4:14)*

He who is a believer in Jesus finds enough in his Lord to satisfy him now, and to content him for evermore. The believer is not the man whose days are weary for want of comfort, and whose nights are long from absence of heart-cheering thought, for he finds in religion such a **spring** of joy, such a **fountain** of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, he will eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will meet the “friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the Rock of Ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. The heart is as insatiable as the grave till Jesus enters it, and then it is a cup full to overflowing. There is such a fullness in Christ that he alone is the believer’s all. The true saint is so completely satisfied with the all-sufficiency of Jesus that he thirsts no more—except it be for deeper draughts of the living **fountain**. In that sweet manner, believer, shalt thou thirst; it shall not be a thirst of pain, but of loving desire; thou wilt find it a sweet thing to be panting after a fuller enjoyment of Jesus’ love. One in days of yore said, “I have been sinking my bucket down into the **well** full often, but now my thirst after Jesus has become so insatiable, that I long to put the **well** itself to my lips, and drink right on.” Is this the feeling of thine heart now, believer? Dost thou feel that all thy desires are satisfied in Jesus, and that thou hast no want now, but to know more of him, and to have closer fellowship with him? Then come continually to the **fountain**, and take of the water of life freely. Jesus will never think you take too much, but will ever welcome you, saying, “Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”



Morning, October 6, Morning & Evening, by C. H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded

...a suitable helper to Bebo throughout their marriage.

Bebo and Jan will be with us on Saturday, October 27th through Sunday, the 28th. He will speak twice on Saturday morning, and then preach on Sunday morning and Sunday evening.

Please be praying about our conference, and think about inviting a friend to join us.

