

REVIEW: R.C. SPROUL'S ARE WE TOGETHER? BY CAMDEN BUCEY

# New Horizons

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUNE 2013



# PRAY

Allen Harris | Eric Hausler | William Kessler | John Van Meerbeke

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## NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Editorial Board:** The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

**Editor:** Danny E. Olinger

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Articles previously published may be slightly edited.

*New Horizons* (ISSN: 0199-3518) is published monthly except for a combined issue, usually August-September, by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215-830-0900; fax 215-830-0350.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They should deal with an issue the magazine has recently addressed. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offense. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor.

Send e-mail correspondence to the editor at [olinger.1@opc.org](mailto:olinger.1@opc.org).

Send address changes to [CCEsec@opc.org](mailto:CCEsec@opc.org). Allow six weeks for address changes.

The digital edition (PDF, ePub, mobi) and an archive of previous issues are available at [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org).

Views expressed by our writers are not necessarily those of the editors or official positions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Copies are distributed free to members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Nonmembers are asked to donate \$20.00 annually. Foreign subscribers must remit USD 40.00 annually to receive the magazine (USD 30.00 in Canada), or they may request a free e-mail PDF subscription.

Requests for a subscription should be sent to [CCEsec@opc.org](mailto:CCEsec@opc.org) or the address below.

Periodicals postage is paid at Willow Grove, Pa., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.



Pictured here are the participants in the OPC Timothy Conference at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana. To learn more about the conference, which was held in April, and especially to see reactions from the young men who attended, go to the Christian Education pages. Kneeling (from the left): D. Hoisington, P. du Plessis, J. Chupp, D. Siebold, J. Henreckson, J. Vincent, B. Zuck. Sitting: B. De Jong, B. Hollister, D. Olinger, D. VanDrunen, J. Hilbelink. Standing: W. Rubingh, S. Mansor, J. Yee, E. Hoffman, T. Detrick, A. Urban, J. Cruse, Z. Siggins, C. Chick.



WILLIAM B. KESSLER

# A Prayer with a View

**R**eading the obituaries, quickly scanning the pictures, curiously determining the cause of death, and thoughtfully calculating the ages of those who died, I am sobered as I count up my own years, hesitantly comparing my own age with the age of those who have passed.

Simone de Beauvoir, a twentieth-century French existentialist, recounts her mother's painfully drawn out death by cancer in a memoir ironically entitled *A Very Easy Death*. She writes, "Although I was not with Maman when she died, and although I had been with three people when they were actually dying, it was when I was at her bedside that I saw Death, the Death of the dance of death, with its bantering grin, the Death of fireside tales that knocks on the door, a scythe in its hand, the Death that comes from elsewhere, strange and inhuman: it had the very face of Maman when she showed her gums in a wide smile of unknowingness." Sobering obituaries, ironic memoirs of dying loved ones, and grave smiles of unknowingness: how depressing! Or is it?

David's prayer in Psalm 39:4 is an intriguing prayer. He prays, "LORD, make me to know my end." Why would the singer of Israel, the king of Yahweh's covenant people, pray, "Make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am"? Why should we pray to know about our approaching death?

## LIFE IS SHORT

David is troubled by many things. He vows to remain silent (verses 1–2), but he cannot remain silent. He is struck by the brevity of life. Using graphic imagery, David describes how life is transient and brief. Consider his images: My life is a handbreadth, measured by inches. A lifetime is as nothing, compared to the stream of time, the ocean of eternity. At his best, man is a mere breath, evaporating in a moment. He is a

## Psalm 39:4–11

- 4 LORD, make me to know my end,  
And what is the extent of my days;  
Let me know how transient I am.
- 5 Behold, You have made my days as hand-  
breadths,  
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;  
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.  
Selah.
- 6 Surely every man walks about as a phantom;  
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;  
He amasses riches and does not know who  
will gather them.
- 7 And now, Lord, for what do I wait?  
My hope is in You.
- 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions;  
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
- 9 I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,  
Because it is You who have done it.
- 10 Remove Your plague from me;  
Because of the opposition of Your hand I am  
perishing.
- 11 With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;  
You consume as a moth what is precious to  
him;  
Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.

phantom, a shadow, a ghost. His life, if it is precious to him, is consumed as a moth attracted to a flame. He is “a stranger” here, “a sojourner” before God (verse 12), rootless, wandering about through a single pixel pilgrimage. There is a note of futility: “He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them,” and “They make an uproar for nothing” (v. 6). Furthermore, David stresses the universality and certainty of the brevity of this life with his “Surely every man” statements in verses 5, 6, and 11.

What do we make of this language? What is the meaning of these expressions? The psalm is given to the choir director to be sung in worship; the desire to know the short duration of our earthly life places us before the majesty of God. In worship, praying about the brevity of life, singing about the transiency of human existence, meditating upon our short sojourn as strangers, there is a strong effect upon the sincere worshipper’s mind, producing truth, humility, and fear.

During worship, as we ask to know our end, truth penetrates the deception of our hardened hearts to call into question the false conviction that this life, somehow, will continue ad infinitum. During worship, as we ask to know the extent of our days, humility bends the stand-up soul to recognize that God is sovereign, holding our breath in his hand. During worship, even in the face of fierce adversity, we understand, and feel, as we sing of our transiency, that no power on earth, including death itself, is the object of our fear. God is the one we fear.

## WISDOM IS GAINED

We pray for the Lord to “make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am,” so that wisdom might be a deep well in our soul. If we have a perspective on our troubles that the prospect of “the end” can give, then problems that seem so absolute are truly relativized. If we are able to evaluate adversity from a postpartum position, we are able to measure whether our illnesses, harassments, injustices, and indignities have any real significance. If we arrive at this insight, our whole lifetime is put in its proper context. If we are given discernment to see the cross intersecting with the final chapter of our life, we can see that a fountain of grace greater than our sin flows to us from the infinite, eternal, unchangeable goodness of God. In all of this, we have gained the wisdom that a knowledge of our mortality can communicate.

To read a good story well, it should be read at least twice. Only when we know the end of the story, having read it several times, can we truly appreciate and reasonably evaluate the characters, plot, themes, and symbols. Only then can we give wise interpretation. The wise approach to life is like reading a good story well; it should be read in light of the end. David prays that he might know his end in order to evaluate his

present circumstances. He is asking for wisdom. Moses prays a similar prayer in Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”

We live in a foolish generation that worships youth and avoids old age. It prizes the experience of sensuality and suppresses the knowledge of mortality. However, the more we suppress the knowledge of our mortality, paradoxically, the less we truly live. The more we silence the whispers of our brevity, the louder the shrill voice of vanity becomes. The more we listen to the story of our end, the deeper our insight grows, and the richer our lives become. Pray that the Lord would make us to know our end and what is the extent of our days, that he would teach us to number our days, and that we might present to him a heart of wisdom.

## HOPE IS GROUNDED

But with the knowledge of our end, knowing the extent of our days, the transiency of our life, we should not be left with a feeling of futility. David looks to the Lord and prays in verse 7, “And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.” This is the hope that does not disappoint. And with our sight more clearly focused on the source of our hope, a clearer focus than David had, and with our assurance more deeply resting in the object of our hope, a deeper rest than David knew, let us trust in Christ for “our end.”

Jesus Christ has come, lived, died, risen again, and ascended to the Father’s right hand. In his death we have died, and in his resurrection we have been raised. He has inaugurated a new creation, of which we are a part. Clearly, the knowledge that David prayed for has been answered for us in Christ. We know “our end,” in him. We know the extent of our days, in him. We know our transiency ending in eternity, in him. Our hope is triumphantly declared by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:54–55: “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’” With the hope of the resurrection, we can courageously pray to know our end.

Is life blown out like a brief candle? Is it a walking shadow? Is it a bad actor who struts and frets on a stage for an hour and then is soon forgotten? Is life a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing? The apostle John responds, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And he placed His right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades’” (Rev. 1:17–18). □

*The author is the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio. He quotes the NASB.*



ERIC R. HAUSLER

# Pray without Ceasing?

**E**very now and then, you may breeze by a familiar passage in the Bible without seriously considering its implications. And then, if you *do* stop to consider it, the duty sounds so daunting that you feel inadequate and overwhelmed!

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) is probably one of those. *Never* stop praying? How is that even possible? What does it mean, and why would the Lord command it? By taking a closer look at Paul’s directive and seeing its parallels in Scripture, you will see it is an essential part of Christian living.

“Pray without ceasing” is a short imperative, translating just two words in the Greek text, and follows instructions about life in the church: “Be at peace among yourselves. . . . Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted. . . . Always seek to do good to one another” (1 Thess. 5:13–15). Paul then addresses the Thessalonians’ inner attitude: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (5:16–18).

Certainly the Thessalonians would have initially rejoiced in having their sins washed away, but how could they maintain a joyful and thankful demeanor in the midst of the suffering and affliction that they experienced? How could they rejoice *always*, and give thanks in *all* circumstances? Without God’s help, it would have been impossible! They had to pray.

The Greek word Paul uses here for “prayer” is a broad term, which includes all kinds of expressions before the Lord. It means “prayer” in the widest sense and is the same word Paul uses elsewhere: “Be constant in *prayer*” (Rom. 12:12), “*praying* at all times in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18), and “continue steadfastly in *prayer*” (Col. 4:2). Paul combines it with a word that means “without intermission” or “incessantly,” arriving at our translation, “Pray without ceasing,” or “Pray all kinds of prayers . . . incessantly.”

Now, my hunch is that many Christians have no idea what that means—but whatever it means, it sure sounds unachievable! I asked a teenager in our church what he thought it

means. He replied, “Well, I don’t think it means all day long we have to have our heads bowed, hands folded, praying ‘Dear God’ and ending with ‘Amen.’” Of course! The Christians in Thessalonica were ordinary people, who had work to do—which, in fact, Paul commanded them to do faithfully (1 Thess. 4:11). So what could it mean, besides abandoning all our responsibilities and devoting ourselves to a monastic life of prayer? As we use Scripture to interpret Scripture, two ways of understanding this command become clear.

## NEVER STOP PRAYING

First, it means you never abandon your life of prayer. You never call it quits and say, “Forget it! I’m done praying.” You might stop running because it hurts your knees, or stop drinking caffeine because it bothers you, but you must never come to a point in life where you abandon prayer. Rather, we say with David, “I will bless you as long as I live” (Ps. 63:4).

Examples of this are found throughout God’s Word. Certainly, when Jesus teaches us to pray for our “daily” bread, he implies that we are to pray daily. The parables of the persistent friend and the persistent widow teach that we are to keep asking God and never give up. Christ’s own example—rising early to pray, slipping away to pray, and praying on all occasions—shows us how he prayed without ceasing. Paul’s writing shows he lived this out: “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers” (Eph. 1:16). “We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face” (1 Thess. 3:10). “We always pray for you” (2 Thess. 1:11).

There are numerous other examples of those who never stop praying. Paul writes about Epaphras, “He is always wrestling in prayer for you” (Col. 4:12 *NIV*). Samuel tells

God's people, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23).

Throughout their wilderness journey, Moses prayed to God while the Israelites faced one trial after another, as seen in the battle with the Amalekites, when Aaron and Hur helped him to pray without ceasing (Ex. 17:8–13). And consider Daniel, when it became illegal to pray to anyone other than King Darius. Daniel kept on praying: "He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had previously done" (Dan. 6:10).

## MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF PRAYER

Secondly, "Pray without ceasing" means that you are always in an *attitude* of prayer. Again, Paul does not command you to spend your day with your hands folded and your head bowed, beginning and ending each prayer with a certain formulaic expression. Rather, you delight in the presence of God all day long with all kinds of prayers: praising God, as his attributes come to mind; thanking God for his blessings; confessing your sins, as the Spirit convicts you; and crying out to him: What should I do, Lord? O Lord, watch over my son. Give me wisdom in this next conversation. Lord, guard my tongue. Help me to stay awake. Help me to go to sleep. Change my attitude. Restore my joy. Show me what to do, Lord!

To pray without ceasing means having the Lord in our thoughts all day long. But don't just think about him, wondering, "Is this pleasing to God?" Rather, address him directly: "I need you, Lord!" "Does this please you, Lord?" Acknowledge every day, "You are with me, Lord!"

In essence, this is what it means to "walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8), just as Enoch and Noah walked with him. It means that instead of saying to others before some new undertaking, "Okay, wish me luck," you say to God, "O Lord, help me." Do as Nehemiah did when pressed by King Artaxerxes to explain why he looked so sad: "Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king" (Neh. 2:4–5 NIV). Praying without ceasing means always being aware that we are in the presence of the Lord and remembering that "the LORD is near . . . to all who call on him in truth" (Ps. 145:18).

## REASONS TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Although I'm sure you could come up with more of your own, allow me to suggest some reasons why the Lord commands us to pray without ceasing:

1. *This is what brings peace and joy.* It's no accident that "rejoice always" is linked to "pray without ceasing" and "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:16–18). Prayerfully remembering God's blessings defeats a grumpy spirit and a nervous heart: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which

transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6–7 NIV).

2. *This is how we are called to fight spiritual battles.* Paul saw prayer as vitally connected to being clothed with spiritual armor: "Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18 NIV). Samuel Chadwick said, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray." Why? Because "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

3. *This protects us from sin and discouragement.* Jesus taught, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). And David said, "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken" (Ps. 16:8). Disaster comes when we stop praying. John Bunyan picked up on this: "Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer."

4. *This helps us to be fruitful Christians.* One of the qualities of a productive disciple is that he or she prayerfully meditates on the Word of God day and night (without ceasing). God promises that you will be "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season" (Ps. 1:3).

5. *This leads to godly choices.* A practical benefit of praying without ceasing is wisdom in decision making. As the familiar proverb says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In *all your ways* acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov. 3:5–6).

6. *This keeps us prepared for the Lord's return!* Jesus said, "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. . . . Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes" (Luke 12:35, 37). As Peter wrote, "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers" (1 Peter 4:7).

God designed you to pray without ceasing, every day, all through your life. It's a vitally important means of grace to give you joy and peace through all the seasons of life. He leads you beside quiet waters, restores your soul, and comforts you through dark valleys, as you praise him, thank him, confess your sins, and call on him for help, walking with the risen Savior, Jesus Christ, and abiding in his word.

Perhaps you needed this reminder today. Yes, Lord, I do need to walk with you! I need to pray without ceasing. Help me, Lord, "so I will bless you as long as I live" (Ps. 63:4). And remember the Lord's faithful promise to you: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). □

*The author is the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Ada, Mich. He will soon be doing church planting in Naples, Fla. (see [naplesopc.com](http://naplesopc.com)). Unless otherwise indicated, he quotes the ESV.*



JOHN D. VAN MEERBEKE

# How the Spirit Helps Us to Pray

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). With these words, the apostle Paul gives encouragement to the saints in first-century Rome.

He makes a broad assumption about Christians here. He does not suggest that it’s a rare thing to struggle with prayer. He says, rather, that “we do not know what to pray for as we ought.” But in Romans, chapter 8, Paul writes these things not to disturb or discourage us, but to set the stage for the ministry of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

The Christian should be well-acquainted with the doctrine of our adoption, “an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God” (Shorter Catechism, 34). In Romans 8:15–17, Paul offers the divinely inspired words of assurance that, having received the Spirit of adoption as sons and heirs with Christ, “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Similarly, 1 John 3:1 says, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”

## BACKGROUND

The Lord works his assurance in our hearts in two ways. There is the external witness of the sacred Scripture and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is a multifaceted ministry. In John 14–16, Jesus promised the near-future arrival of the Holy Spirit, directly associated with the ascension of our Lord. It is precisely the earthly “absence” of our Lord that makes possible the range of the Spirit’s activity in our life.<sup>1</sup> We can be strengthened in the assurance of grace and salvation because of the testimony of the Spirit of adoption that we are the

very children of God, mystical members of the body of Christ. With that assurance also comes the Spirit’s work in increasing our faith and our obedience of faith. Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit would come to them as another Helper, “to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17). In the same discourse, Jesus promised, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (14:26).

## THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To Paul, an important and integral feature of the work of the Spirit is to “help us in our weakness” by interceding for us. Even as the ascended Son intercedes for his church before the Father, so the descended Spirit ministers on our behalf by intercession. Even more basic, as Sinclair Ferguson explains: “No-one can call Jesus ‘Lord’, or God ‘Father’ except by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6).”<sup>2</sup> The “weakness” mentioned in Romans 8:26 is that the Christian does not know how to pray or specifically what to pray for. The Spirit is our divine Helper in this respect. “Likewise” seems to refer to the hope to which we are called and entitled as God’s children, in verse 25. Our hope “of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2) in Christ—because of his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension—is a certain hope. The hope is in what is unseen, because it is eternal. And because it is eternal, it is more firm than the earthly ground

on which we now stand. But because it is unseen, it is also something that requires (and deserves!) patient endurance. For the Roman believers, there will be very difficult times ahead, especially in the form of oppression and persecution by the government. Rome was a city of great power and wealth, and unspeakable cruelty.<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit is sent upon the church to strengthen her faith and hope.

## TWO QUESTIONS

There are a number of questions that may come to mind at this point, but there are two questions in particular that seem to get at the heart of the matter in that verse. The first question is about the Christians. Just what does it mean that believers—including, apparently the apostle himself—do not know what to pray for? The explanation may be found in verse 27, in that the Holy Spirit's intercession for the saints is according to the will of God. The mind of God so transcends the mind of men that "the totality of God's will is hidden from them."<sup>4</sup> The weakness, then, lies in the believer's inability to know the entire will of God, especially in prayer. This is most especially true in time of trial and affliction. Whether it be the persecution of our brothers and sisters under anti-Christian regimes, or the personal pain that attends the loss of loved ones, or the hard trial of physical pain and mental anguish, the Christian may often wonder what God's will is, especially for the purposes of prayer. What do I pray for? The Spirit knows the mind of God, and so the Spirit intercedes for us.

The second question is about the Holy Spirit. Just what does it mean that he helps us? And what are these unspeakable "groanings" with which he intercedes? Some have taken this to mean that when we have no words to say, but moan like the creation (8:22), it is then that the Holy Spirit intercedes. Others have attempted to connect these verses with the rather modern idea of speaking in tongues. And still others have argued that believers are groaning because their entreaties are too deep for words, and are somehow translated by the Spirit. But the believers in verses 26–27 are bracketed by references to the helping activity of the Holy Spirit. The groanings are *his*, not because he cannot articulate the will of God, but precisely because what the Spirit communicates to the Father is gloriously transcendent. What he communicates to the Father is wholly incomprehensible to us, but perfectly in keeping with the Father's promises and purposes for us, that we should be conformed to the image of his Son.

The mind that is set on spiritual things will hunger more and more for spiritual things. The Holy Spirit bears witness within you that you who are united with Christ by faith are the children of God. He comes alongside you to bring gospel comfort. He brings to your remembrance the things that Jesus has taught you. And he brings to the mind of the Father words that cannot be spoken by anyone but himself.

## CONCLUSION

This promise of the Spirit's help reaches back in time to the prophets of old, even to eternity. We should be reminded of the words of the Lord, speaking of the church in Old Testament terms: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy" (Zech. 12:10). By the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are assured of the outpouring of the Spirit of our adoption at Pentecost, upon the church and within our hearts. The Holy Spirit may bring to mind the will of God and words of Christ in the Scriptures, but not with man's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:11).<sup>5</sup>

Christians are not left with the inability to pray according to the will of God. The Spirit's help is for every believer in every age. He works in us and with us to be more and more conformed to the image of God's Son, and so we grow in our praying. Prayers become less superficial and more doxological, less worldly and more biblical. There is no shortage of the testimony of Scripture in this regard. "And it cannot be denied but that the work and actings of the Spirit of grace in and towards believers with respect unto the duty of prayer are more frequently and expressly asserted in the Scriptures than his operations with respect unto any other particular grace or duty whatever."<sup>6</sup> □

*The author is pastor of Living Hope OPC in Gettysburg, Pa. He quotes the ESV.*

<sup>1</sup> By "absence," I do not suggest anything other than Jesus' ascension into heaven, ensuring the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the church at Pentecost. In John 14:23, in fact, Jesus promised that the Father and the Son would also come and "make our home with him," along with the Holy Spirit. While he is the emissary of the Father and the Son, the Spirit is present within us, indicating a Trinitarian presence. See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 505. Sinclair Ferguson writes: "Jesus goes to the Father in order to prepare a dwelling-place (*monē*, Jn. 14:2) for the disciples, while the Paraclete comes from the Father in order to prepare a dwelling-place (*monē*, Jn. 14:23) for the Father and the Son." *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 187.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 188.

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 226–27.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 443.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 618–19.

<sup>6</sup> John Owen, "A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer," in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 4 (1682; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), 253.





ALLEN H. HARRIS

# Why Pray When You Can Fret Out Loud?

**A** thirtyish man from Provincetown, whom I will call Mark, happened into the Sunday worship service of the tiny mission church we are part of on outer Cape Cod. He had not been to church for ten years. He had felt a need in his life and had decided to try a few churches to see if they had anything to offer.

Our small church has a sharing and prayer time as part of each worship service. Requests are offered, and people volunteer to pray for them.

I was surprised when I saw Mark back the next Sunday. We have many unbelieving visitors, but few return. So I asked him why he came back. He said he was intrigued to see people talk to God as if he were in the room—so much so that he went out on the beach that Sunday afternoon to try for the first time in his life to pray. He said it was a bit like going out on a first date. After a few pleasantries, he experienced an awkward silence because he didn't know what to say. I was moved afresh as I heard him express such wonder at the idea of actually talking to the Creator of the universe and believing he was listening to him!

I am afraid that after years as a Christian, I have lost much of that wonder. I easily drift into some safe, pious repetitions, and I “heap up empty phrases,” thinking I will be heard for my “many words” (Matt. 6:7). I repeat over and over, “Help me to ...” or “Lead me ...”

We are told to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). The constant access that we have to God through Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross can make prayer seem trivial and occasionally almost a chore. I find that at times what I am calling “prayer” is really nothing more than fretting out loud. I tell God my concerns and find I am getting more depressed because I am simply reminding myself of all my problems and anxieties. I lack a sense of his presence or that he is really listening to me. I am simply fretting. I have found two antidotes to such faithless, self-centered jabbering.

## FOLLOWING THE LORD'S PRAYER

The first antidote is to model my prayers after the pattern that the Lord Jesus gave us in what we call “the Lord's Prayer” (Matt. 6:9–13). The seven parts of this prayer give me an outline to get outside of myself, become more God-centered in my thinking, and thus build my faith and shape my requests in a way that pleases him.

First there is the address: “Our Father.” This reminds me that God is *close*. I have the privilege of calling him Father, or, more accurately, Daddy. It also reminds me that he is the *Creator*. He is in heaven, above and beyond his creation. He is able to do all things. So I am talking to the one who is infinitely wise and powerful, but who also loves me and cares for me because he has adopted me through his eternal Son. I feel *cared for* because he is my Father; I feel *confident* because he is in heaven with all power.

Then there are six requests. Three are focused on him and his glory: (1) that *his name* and reputation would be exalted above all—in all things, but particularly in my life and in the requests I am now making, (2) that *his kingdom* would come—more fully in my life, as well as in the near and far world in which I live, and (3) that *his will* would prevail in my life and world as fully as it does in heaven.

The other three requests are focused on me and my needs. I pray these after my thoughts and emotions have been shaped by centering my prayers on him. These three requests cover all my basic needs: (1) *material*: all that I need (bread,

[Continued on page 19]

# Timothy Conference

## 2013

DANNY E. OLINGER

**S**ixteen young men from Orthodox Presbyterian congregations travelled to the Chicagoland area in torrential rain on April 17 to participate in the OPC Timothy Conference hosted by Covenant OPC in Orland Park and Mid-American Reformed Seminary. The young men heard talks about gospel ministry in the OPC from the Revs. Bruce Hollister, Brian De Jong, John Hilbelink, David VanDrunen, Iain Wright, and Danny Olinger, and classroom lectures from the Revs. Alan Strange and Marcus Mininger. Here are testimonials from some of the participants:

**Jonathan Cruse, 20 (Westminster, Hollidaysburg, Pa.)**

After seven hours of delays getting into Chicago, I was already fed up with the conference. As I was picked up at the airport in the pouring rain, I doubted that anything this conference could have to offer would make up for the torture I had just experienced with a hundred other grumpy (and smelly) Southwest Airlines passengers. I humbly admit that I was wrong.

The very first talk proved this to me. Rev. Hollister emphasized the importance of caring for others, namely the congregation, which really struck a chord with me. It was made clear to me that it's not all about knowing your Calvin and your Van Til and having a polished sermon with pithy one liners every week. No, when it comes down to it, it's all about caring for



your people. The most important thing a minister can do for his congregation is to pray for them. It's about putting them above yourself. If you are not feeding the flock, you are feeding off them.

I can't say enough about how much I appreciated how approachable all these men were. They did not treat me like an infant or an inferior. They were pastoral. They were fun. I loved it.

**Jonas Chupp, 17 (Harvest, Wyoming, Mich.)**

I think one of the most crucial yet basic things that by God's grace was pounded into my head on this trip is that my biggest problem is not that "I need to do better" or "I need to try harder" or even "I need to apply myself more," but that I need to rely on Christ more! There I was, worrying that I wasn't doing well enough in my walk with Jesus to be a pastor or even a Christian. I needed a reminder that it's not about me; it's about what God has done.

**Tyler Detrick, 19 (Redeemer, Beavercreek, Ohio)**

I will take home with me the impression of seeing 2 Timothy 2:1–2 in action. The overseers who instructed us during the conference have a passion for God's Word. This love for truth flowed into their instructing us on the gospel ministry. They want to

see God's truth perpetuated, and during the conference they showed us that they love us as brothers in Christ, but also as those who will potentially carry on the gospel ministry in the next generation.

**Jonathan Henreckson, 17 (Grace Reformed, Reedsburg, Wis.)**

I had never before realized just how daunting the task of being a minister is. I have gained a greater appreciation of my pastor, as well as other pastors I know. I entered the conference mostly for fun, but I left it with a feeling that God may be calling me to his service.

**Ethan Hoffman, 18 (New Hope, Green Bay)**

The diligent preparation for a life of glorifying Christ, the avoidance of conformity to the world, the progression of sanctification, and the development of Christian character are all vital in my walk with Christ. I have been convicted, reminded of the grace of the Lord, and encouraged to live for his glory.

**Zach Siggins, 21 (Resurrection, State College, Pa.)**

This gathering felt less like a conference than it did a family reunion (not surprising, considering we are all part of the family of God!). There was such a familial spirit among our group, and I believe it reflected the character of the OPC as a whole. Not having grown up in the Reformed faith, I appreciate more and more the Reformed teaching and practice found in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The culmination of the whole event was the night of fellowship at Rev. Hollister's home. The love that we had for one another was on full display and was a tremendous blessing from the Lord.

**Joshua Vincent, 16 (Christ Presbyterian, Janesville, Wis.)**

I learned how consistent the OPC is when it comes to doctrine and teaching. My roommate and I came from two totally different parts of the country, and yet we have been taught the same things in our separate churches. There is a brotherhood and fellowship that we all share because we come from the same denomination. I appreciate the OPC more now than I did before.

**Pierre du Plessis, 17 (Grace, Vienna, Va.)**

I had not known what to expect at the conference and was a little apprehensive about it, but the lectures were eye-opening, and it was wonderful to meet so many like-minded young men. Yesterday in church I looked at our minister in an entirely new light, realizing how much work and effort he had put into his sermon. During the pastoral prayer, he prayed for a young man who is "com-

ing under care of the presbytery," and thanks to the Timothy Conference it made sense to me.

**Anthony Urban, 18 (Covenant, Reading, Pa.)**

My immediate reaction to the conference is one of deep reverence for those who are leaders of the Reformed faith—not just because of their diligence in going to seminary and the amount of work necessary to preach God's Word, but also because of the humble spirit that they have while doing so.

**Jonathan Yee, 17 (Providence Presbyterian, Pflugerville, Tex.)**

Perhaps one of the best things about the conference was getting to know and fellowship with other guys close to my age. I spent this past week with fifteen godly young men from all over the country, none of whom I had met before, but in the span of two days, I formed close friendships with them and I strongly consider them my brothers in Christ.

Listening to a lecture during the OPC Timothy Conference



I quickly developed a bond with all of them, and I'm thankful for the time we were able to spend together. This conference has been a huge eye-opener.

**Rev. John Hilbelink (Providence, Rockford, Ill.)**

I was impressed with the maturity that these young men demonstrated at the conference as well as in the free time, in both their speech and their behavior. I don't know of too many situations in which I would be singing "The Church's One Foundation" with six young men riding in my van, but that's what happened when one of them asked me what my favorite hymn was. After answering, I asked him the same question and got the same answer. So we sang the hymn.

## Congratulations

**The Shorter Catechism has been recited by:**

- Jediah English (Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.)
- Elijah English (Matthews, N.C.)
- Brandon Knott (Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.)

### Nominations Sought by June 7, 2013, for Executive Director of Great Commission Publications

After the recent unexpected death of Executive Director Tom Patete, GCP's Board of Trustees elected a Search Committee to look for a replacement. It now seeks nominations for possible candidates. The desired attributes for candidates include: (1) is either a minister or a ruling elder in the OPC or PCA, (2) has demonstrated experience working well with either or both denominations, (3) has gifts/graces that will suit him to work well with either the OPC or PCA, (4) has experience in and/or commitment to Christian Education and/or Christian publishing, (5) has experience on GCP's Board of Trustees or on other denominational agencies/committees, (6) has demonstrated administrative ability, including supervising an array of personnel, (7) has excellent communication skills, (8) is a humble, godly servant.

**The deadline for nominations is June 7, 2013.** All nominations, if possible including a C.V. (and, for ministers, a copy of the denominational ministerial data form), should be sent to the Secretary of the Search Committee, the Rev. Dr. Don K. Clements, at [don@metokos.org](mailto:don@metokos.org).

# Another Train to Catch

JEROME A. FARNIK

**A**s a young boy, I had a certain fascination with trains. Although we lived on a farm in Montana, many miles from the railroad tracks, I could often hear the sound of freight trains reverberating across the plains, as freight cars of wheat made their way to market. I always longed to ride a passenger train, but had to wait until college for my first train ride.

Here in the Czech Republic, we travel by train quite frequently. Trains bring us to the locations where we teach God's Word and provide training for Czech nationals. Each setting provides an opportunity to meet with believers from various church denominations and point them to the doctrines of grace found throughout the Scriptures.

Marilyn, my wife, travels by train once a month to several locations to teach and encourage younger women in the faith, following the model found in Titus 2:3–6. The women's program includes courses on the attributes of God, how to study the Bible, foundations of the Christian life, evangelism and discipleship, women's ministry, marriage, child rearing, and biblical counseling. They are designed to help women grow in godly character and biblical knowledge, and also develop ministry skills, so they can invest in the lives of other women.

I travel monthly by train to three locations in order to train pastors and elders. Currently, I am teaching courses on solving marital problems and foundations of the Christian life. One destination is about five hours away from Prague, so I usually stay overnight with a pastor or elder's family and return home the next day. These frequent trips have provided



many opportunities for me to meet and converse with people. This has also led to many conversations about Christianity. Whenever we travel, we try to keep Paul's exhortation in mind: "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (Col. 4:5–6).

On a train to Silesia a few years ago, an older woman noticed my teaching notes and asked me if I was a pastor. That launched a lengthy dialogue about Christianity. We were not alone in the compartment, so a number of other travelers heard our lively exchange. Toward the end of the trip, she leaned toward me, so the other passengers couldn't hear, and whispered, "I have a friend who is a

Muslim. He recently asked me, 'What kind of religion requires a father to sacrifice his own son?'" That question brought us to the heart of the gospel, and we were able to discuss how essential it was to our salvation that God the Father gave his only Son to atone for the sins of his people.

## MIREK, THE GYPSY

Last month, I hurried aboard a train headed for Pardubice, which is about an hour from Prague. I quickly searched for an open seat, hoping to have an opportunity to review my notes during the trip. I found a place in a compartment with a young man in his twenties and an older, much rougher-looking gypsy man, who was covered with tattoos. Perusing the older man out of the corner of my eye, I started to have second thoughts about my seat selection. Then I received a telephone call from an English-speaking colleague.

After I hung up, the young man, a Slovak, asked me where I was from and what I did. I told him that I was an American and a Protestant pastor planting a church in Prague. When the older man heard the words "Protestant pastor, planting a church," everything in him seemed to spring to life. In rapid fire, he directed an intense series of questions at me. "Are you really a Protestant preacher? Do you believe in the triune God of the Bible? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Are you born again?" I answered everything in the affirmative, but he pressed on with more questions to check

out my orthodoxy. “You’re not a Mormon, are you? Or a Jehovah’s Witness?” I assured him I was neither of these.

Mirek then proceeded to tell us his life story. Before coming to faith in Christ, he had lived an adulterous life, been involved in the local mafia, and sold drugs. All of this landed him in prison. His wife eventually divorced him, and he found himself quite alone in life. One day Mirek noticed a Bible on a table, but didn’t pick it up. About a week later, however, he couldn’t resist any longer and began reading the Scriptures. In his own words, he was born again through the living Word of God. And he was not the only one to place his faith in Christ! A number of his fellow inmates soon became followers of the Savior as well.

Mirek also described the many changes that Christ had brought about in his life. The younger man in our compartment listened intently, but confessed that he himself was not a believer. I was impressed, not only by Mirek’s knowledge of the Bible, but also by how clearly he was able to explain the gospel, using both Old and New Testament texts. His testimony was filled with gratitude to God for mercifully rescuing him, but also with concern for those who do not yet know the Savior.

I had to exit the train to teach that evening, but Mirek and the young Slovak still had two hours of travel time together before they reached their destination. When I left, Mirek was still going strong,



and I would not be surprised to learn that he continued to witness throughout the whole trip. I hope and pray that all three of us will meet again in heaven!

Evangelism, of course, does not take place only on trains. In a country that has the second lowest number of believers per capita in all of Europe, we try to speak of Christ wherever we go. Generally, Czechs lack trust in Christians and the church. Having lived under both fascist and communist totalitarianism, they tend to resist any effort made to speak into their lives, which makes the evangelistic task all the more difficult. We need a lot of wisdom as we combine love and truth while proclaiming the gospel.

Evangelism is an expression of our love for God and for our unbelieving

neighbors (Matt. 22:37–39). This love is demonstrated by our willingness to explain to people the hope we have in Christ. Ernest Reisinger writes, “The greatest good that has ever been done to me, or for me,

in this world was done by the man who brought me the message of salvation, the message we call the gospel. He loved me; he was concerned for my good in this world and in the world to come. The Christ of this message changed my life, my home, and thank God, my destination” (*Today’s Evangelism*, pp. 3–4).

## PRAYER FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC

An evangelistic English camp will be held July 13–20 in the Šumava Mountains. Please pray that God will use his Word during the evening messages, class discussions, and individual conversations to help Czechs understand the gospel and put their faith in Christ. Pray also for the American team and for us as we prepare for the camp.

A team of high school and college-age students (Team Praha) will again come to the Czech Republic for three weeks in late July and early August. Please pray that God would bless their efforts as they help with a vacation Bible school in Prague and provide a children’s program at a biblical counseling conference for families. George and Eileen Scipione will be teaching at this conference. Special outreach events are also planned for youth, including a five-day mountain trip to northern Moravia. Please pray that many Czechs will be reached with the gospel through all these events.

Czech Men with Jerry in Silesia



# Fear, Sovereignty, and Evangelism

JOHN S. SHAW

**H**ave you ever found yourself in a conversation with a clear opportunity to present the gospel, but said nothing? You knew you should say something, but your tongue was suddenly frozen.

Fear presents one of the greatest threats to a vibrant, evangelistic ministry. No doubt every one of us remembers a moment when we missed an opportunity to speak the truth of the gospel because of fear.

Perhaps our fear of evangelistic conversations grows from overestimating the courage of those whom the Lord has used to bless the church in the work of missions. We imagine that men such as Charles Spurgeon or David Livingstone never trembled at the thought of speaking the good news. We tell ourselves, “Clearly, Christ called and sent them as evangelists, but I lack that gift.”

Indeed, the Lord has set apart certain men as evangelists (Eph. 4:11), and therefore we call some ministers to serve as evangelists in order to plant new churches. Yet that doesn’t mean that only such men are called to share the gospel. The Lord calls every believer “always” to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). But that certainly doesn’t mean that Spirit-gifted evangelists have no fear.

Maybe it would

help to consider how the Lord bolstered the apostle Paul in the midst of fear and trembling. Yes, even Paul struggled with fear, but the Lord gave strong encouragement to the apostle to put fear away and go on speaking.

Paul describes himself as ministering in Corinth “in weakness and in fear and much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). The apostle had reasons to tremble. Due to Jewish opposition, he was forced to shake off his garments and leave the synagogue behind, taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Refusing to give in quietly, his opponents brought charges against Paul before the tribunal. They were nothing if not persistent in their resistance to the gospel.

“Fear and much trembling” is a very human response to such opposition, and Paul struggled under the weight of it. So the Lord addressed the apostle in a unique manner, speaking to him in a night vision (Acts 18:9–10).

## THE LORD’S ANSWER TO FEAR

First, the Lord begins with a gentle rebuke: **“Do not be afraid.”** These familiar words call to mind the many times in biblical history when the Lord comforted his children with the same refrain. For example: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine” (Isa. 43:1). The Lord tells his servants to put fear away, because fear stands contrary to our position as his prized possession. Calvin also notes that “nothing is more contrary to the pure and free preaching of the gospel than the straits of a faint heart” (*Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2, p. 187).

Second, the Lord gives a stirring mandate: **“Go on speaking and do not be silent.”** Aren’t you encouraged to know that the apostle needed this kind of instruction? This is the same man who wrote letters to congregations and

ministers urging them to be ready to preach the word in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2). Yet he needed the same instruction. So the Lord urges Paul to put away the fear that produces silence. Rather, he is to speak the gospel consistently and boldly.

Third, the Lord offers three strong promises:

### 1. “I am with you.”

Here the Lord reiterates another common biblical promise. The Lord made the same promise to Joshua as he led the

Conversation about Christ in Queens, N.Y.



people into the Promised Land, saying, “I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (Josh. 1:5). The people of God carried that promise with them as the Lord extended his kingdom throughout the land of Canaan. The Lord makes the same promise to his church today as he extends his kingdom to the ends of the earth: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” God guarantees his presence with the church in the Great Commission and at Pentecost (Matt. 28:20; John 14:15-18; Acts 1:8).

2. **“No one will attack you to harm you.”** Notice what he *doesn't* promise. He doesn't say, “No one will attack you.” Rather, “No one will attack you *to harm you*.” They might attack, but I will preserve you. The Lord fulfilled that promise to Paul in Corinth. His opponents attacked him, dragging him before the tribunal. Yet the Lord delivered the apostle from harm. The proconsul refused to judge the apostle and released him to go on speaking the good news. The Lord never promises his church freedom from opposition, but he certainly promises preservation. Although some believers have died for their service to the gospel (including Paul), the Lord always cares for his people. Nothing, neither tribulation nor death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35–39).

3. **“I have many in this city who are my people.”** Paul's night vision closes with the truth of God's sovereignty. Many people in Corinth already belong to the Lord, although neither they nor Paul know it yet. The Lord utilizes the truth of his sovereignty to bolster the witness of the apostle. Isn't that wonderful, and perhaps surprising? Many people argue that sovereignty and predestination discourage evangelism, but in this passage the Lord places sovereignty at the foundation of

## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: **June 5, 19.**



Bill Welzien (left) giving evangelism training

effective evangelism.

## SOVEREIGNTY AND EVANGELISM

J. I. Packer picks up on the connection between God's sovereignty and vigorous evangelism:

So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility—indeed, the certainty—that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel. (*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, p. 106)

As members of a denomination that celebrates the sovereign power of God in salvation, we should be greatly encouraged by this. This biblical truth—that God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4)—serves as a rallying cry to the church. We serve a God who is powerful to save, and he sends us out as witnesses. What a glorious privilege!

Yet a question remains. We celebrate

the sovereign power of God in salvation, but how are we responding to that truth? Are we zealous in the work of evangelism? Are we tireless in speaking the gospel, so that those who belong to God might be found and gathered? Are we confident that the sheep will follow the voice of Christ wherever he is heard? If so, are we speaking boldly as instruments of the Lord?

There remains much work to be done in the gathering of the elect into the church of Jesus Christ. The Lord sends us as his emissaries in that mission, and he sends us with words of encouragement. He offers a gentle rebuke: do not be afraid. He gives a stirring mandate: go on speaking and do not be silent. He offers three strong promises: I am with you; no one will attack you to harm you; I have many in this city (and these cities) who are my people.

We may not have the evangelistic gifts of the apostle Paul, or even those of Spurgeon or Livingstone. Yet the Lord gives us the same assurances of his continuing presence and his sovereign power in salvation. Armed with these certain promises, let us go on speaking the plain truth of the gospel with boldness. May the Lord use us as instruments in his advancing kingdom and produce in us a zeal to plant new churches throughout North America toward that end.

# What Does Love Have to Do with It?

NEIL TOLSMA

**P**aul opens his letter to the Christians at Philippi with a word of thanks for their partnership gift, only to interrupt his thank you to share a deep concern. In a prayer, he indicates a lack in the love that prompted the gift—a deficiency that stifles a mutual experience of the fullness of joy. Their love needs to grow in wisdom and depth of insight, so that when they are judged by Christ, they will be found blameless. This prayer set the tone for the letter.

In order to encourage change, Paul shares his personal testimony with the Philippians, showing them his own desire to live a Christlike life. His imprisonment is a matter of concern to them, but he assures them that what is happening

to him is for the good of the gospel. The testimony of Timothy and Epaphroditus highlights the letter. They are also humbly living lives of self-sacrificial love for the Lord and others. But the paramount example that Paul presents is the self-sacrificing love of Christ (Phil. 2:6–8).

The Philippian Christians are directed to consider the comfort they have found in the Lord's love, and tailor their love after the pattern of his love: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (2:5 niv). They are to consider others better than themselves (v. 3). Here is the truth that provides the knowledge and depth of insight to produce an abounding love. The deep love of Christ led him to humbly give himself to death on the cross in order to save his people. This sacrifice was judged favorably by God, who exalted Christ and called him Lord (2:9–11).

Paul is confident that in Christ this same God is accomplishing a good work

in them (1:6). Meanwhile, shining as lights in this dark world, they are to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. This calls for Christlike love, a humble giving of oneself in love for God and others. To this end, Paul directs them to get rid of all complaining and arguing, with a goal of being found blameless when they are judged by God (2:12–16).

Paul concludes that such faithfulness in love means complete joy for those who give and those who receive. Only then does Paul complete his thank you by expressing the great joy their gift gives him.

May the joy of the Lord characterize our church in today's dark world as we remember to please God by living lives of humble, self-giving love in all our giving and receiving. If I give away all I have, "but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3 esv).

*The author is a retired OP pastor. He is the author of This Is Love (P&R, 2012).*

## Loan Fund Rates

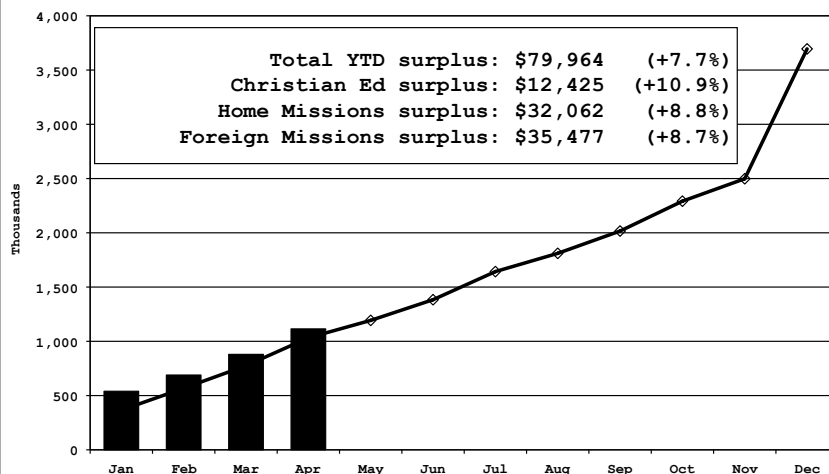
The OPC Loan Fund may offer its fixed-rate Notes to OPC members (and a "limited class" of investors) residing in thirty-two states. Its Board grants loans to help OP churches buy or build worship facilities.

### CURRENT INTEREST RATES:

1 year maturity.....	0.75 %/yr.
2 years .....	1.25 %
3 years .....	1.75 %
4 years .....	2.25 %
5 years .....	2.75 %
10 years .....	3.75 %

To learn more, contact David Haney at haney.1@opc.org or Kathy Bube at kathybube.1@opc.org. Sale is only by Offering Circular, where permitted by state authorities. Rates for new Notes are subject to change.

**Worldwide Outreach Year-to-Date  
2013 Receipts with 2013 Goal**



WORLDWIDE OUTREACH



# June

1. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Thank God for their desire to serve his people in Uruguay. / **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Davenport, Iowa, Pray that God would send several more core families to Sovereign Grace OPC. / Pray for stated clerk **George Cottenden** as he handles details of the 80th General Assembly, convening on June 5.
2. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray for Hillsdale OPC as they make new contacts in the community this summer. / Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C.** and **T. L. L.**, Asia. Pray that they will have opportunities to present the gospel to seekers. / Pray for productive service for the men serving as **summer interns** in churches.
3. Pray for **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia, as they prepare to return to the U.S. to begin a yearlong furlough. / **Todd and Julie Wagenmaker**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray for continued growth and spiritual development at Gateway OPC. / Pray for **the OPC.org staff** as they provide live General Assembly reports on the website.
4. **Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray for new Christians at Cornerstone OPC and new people moving to the area. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M.'s work with translation and printing projects. / **Alan Strange**, president of Great Commission Publications' Board of Trustees.
5. Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, attending General Assembly this week. / **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine. Pray for growth at Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church and for successful outreach in the summer. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he presents the work of Christian Education to the General Assembly.
6. **Stephen and Catalina Payson**, Mifflinburg, Pa. Pray that the ministry of the pastor, the elders, and the congregation to Providence OPC's regular attenders will yield the fruit of membership. / Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**. / **Geoff (and Heather) Downey**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
7. Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Janet Birkmann**. / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray that connections will develop between the congregation of Resurrection OPC and the community. / **Michael (and Rachel) Borg**, summer intern at Community OPC in Kalamazoo, Mich.
8. **Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Pray for visitors to come to Trinity Presbyterian Church as a result of recent Facebook ads. / Missionary associates **E. C., T. D.**, and **E. H.**, Asia. Pray that their time in the classroom will be productive. / **David (and Amanda) Franks**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill.
9. **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan (on furlough). Pray that their furlough will be a refreshing and rewarding time. / **Daniel and Jill McManigal**, Seattle, Wash. Pray that God would bless Hope OPC with additional families. / **Mark (and Karissa) Soud**, yearlong intern at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, Ariz.
10. **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that God's elect will be brought in to Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for Edie's witness to the university students she teaches. / **David (and Karen) Koenig**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill. / Army chaplain **Kyle (and Laurel) Brown**.



At the recent Executive Committee meeting of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, Dr. George W. Knight III indicated that he does not wish to stand for reelection to the Committee. The Committee gave "thanks for the wise and godly leadership of Dr. Knight, who has served this Committee during two different intervals (1963-1976 and 1995-2013).... He also served on the Board of Directors of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Loan Fund (1999-2013). Dr. Knight has provided gentle and wise counsel that has proved valuable during a period of increased church-planting activity in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We should give thanks to the Lord for preparing and providing such a man to serve in this capacity."

11. Pray for missionary associates **Adam and Sarah Thompson**, Sendai, Japan, teaching English courses at local colleges. / **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that those attending Redeemer OPC Mission's outreach events will hear the gospel. / **Justin (and Hannah) Rosser**, yearlong intern at Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.
12. Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray that seekers attending the Thursday Bible study will respond in faith to the gospel. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray that the OP families still displaced by Hurricane Sandy will be able to return home soon.
13. Affiliated missionaries **Linda Karner** and **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Japan. / **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Pray that God would bring more people to Providence OPC, and that he will raise up officers. / **Jeremy (and Maricruz) Boothby**, yearlong intern at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Amarillo, Tex.
14. **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Praise God for his continued blessing on Keys Presbyterian Church. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for St-Marc Church's session as they seek to meet the needs of the congregation. / **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**, yearlong intern at Faith OPC in Elmer, N.J.
15. Missionary associate **Debra Blair**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for preparations being made for "English for Kids" Bible camps this summer. / **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, PR. Pray for unity and fellowship at Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada. / **Andrew (and Jacqueline Ann) Minatelli**, summer intern at Spencer Mills OPC in Gowen, Mich.
16. **Joseph and Carla Fowler**, Gastonia, N.C. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Reformation OPC. / **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for Tony Curto as he ministers to believers and church leaders in Ethiopia this week. / **Doug Watson**, staff accountant. / Army chaplain **Stephen (and Lindsey) Roberts**.
17. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for Jerry's pastoral ministry as he serves the church in Modřany. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber**. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
18. **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray that the people of Omega OPC will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. / **The Church in the Horn of Africa**. Pray for the safety of believers in this country. / Air Force chaplain **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
19. **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Continue to pray for their participation in the ministry of their local church. / **Christopher and Della Chelпка**, Tucson, Ariz. Pray that visitors to Covenant OPC will desire to join in communicant fellowship. / Pray for the work of **the Psalter-Hymnal Committee**.
20. **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray that the congregation of Trinity OPC will love one another and their neighbors fervently. / **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Al in his preaching and teaching responsibilities. / **Joseph Johnson**, summer intern at Reformation Fellowship in Roseville, Calif.
21. Missionary associate **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the community health outreach, which brings instruction to the villages. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray that God would strengthen and establish Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **Jan Gregson**, office manager and assistant to the director of finance.
22. **Brad Hertzog**, Queens, N.Y. Pray for leaders to be raised up and brought in to Reformation Presbyterian Church. / **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom and physical strength as they face a busy schedule at the clinic. / Navy chaplain **Bryan (and Shelly) Weaver**.
23. **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that new church members will grow in grace and knowledge. / **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that God would continue to bring new growth to Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
24. **Mark and Michele Winder**, Collierville, Tenn. Pray that the Lord would provide a new meeting facility for Wolf River Presbyterian Church. / Missionary associates **Jesse Van Gorkom** and **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Charlene Tipton**, office assistant for the Committee on Coordination.
25. **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Eric as he encourages pastors and elders. / **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray that advertising will draw many visitors to Sovereign Grace Reformed Church. / **Jim Scott**, managing editor of *New Horizons*.
26. **Philip and Jenny Dharmawirya**, Philadelphia, Pa. (Indonesian). Pray for Emmanuel Chapel's monthly home fellowship. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the evangelistic materials distributed in local villages will touch many hearts. / **Ben Gordon**, summer intern at Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.
27. Missionary associate teachers **Erika Bulthuis, Emily Pihl**, and **Christi Zekveld**, Uganda. / **Chad and Katie Mullinix**, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Pray that Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church will grow in grace, the knowledge of Christ, and evangelism. / **Sarah Pederson**, *New Horizons* proofreader.
28. Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Pray for the health and well-being of retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / **Jeff (and Dawn) Scott**, yearlong intern at Covenant Grace OPC in Roseburg, Ore.
29. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for growth in numbers and in zeal to worship God at the Port-au-Prince church. / **Roberto and Marieta Laranjo**, Lowell, Mass. Pray that God would bless Igreja Presbiteriana Brasileira with additional families. / **Pat Clawson**, Christian Education office secretary and editorial assistant.
30. **Sacha and Martina Walicord**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray that God would bless Knox Presbyterian Church's officer training class. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, Lviv, Ukraine. Pray that many will visit the church in Lviv and hear the preaching of the Word. / **Adam (and Amanda) Phillips**, summer intern at Covenant OPC in Kennewick, Wash.

## WHY PRAY?

[Continued from page 9]

not cake) for myself, my family, and others (“our . . . us”), (2) *relational*: peace with others through gospel-driven forgiveness, received from God, and reflected to others, and (3) *spiritual*: resisting the Evil One and obeying the Spirit in all the conflicts I will face this day.

This is a brief summary of the outline that the Lord Jesus gave us to shape our prayers. It sets the agenda for the conversation.

### SIX CELLS FOR PRAYER

But there is also another kind of outline that I have come up with that helps me pour out my heart to the Lord in a more balanced way than if I just start speaking to him whatever comes to mind. Let me first say that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God spontaneously with whatever is on my mind, as a little child to his or her daddy. Paul Miller makes this point in his excellent book, *A Praying Life* (NavPress). He says we pray, not because we ought to, but because we simply can't live life on our own. So prayer is coming to him as a child to our Father because we *need* him and *love* him. That book has affected the prayer lives of my wife and me more than any other book on prayer beside the Bible.

But if I pray only what comes to my mind, I find I drift into fretting out loud and focusing mostly on myself. So after I have read and meditated on some Scripture, before I pray, I take out a small piece of paper and draw a rectangle divided into six cells, with three on the top and three on the bottom. In each cell I put a symbol or letters at the top. Then I jot down *brief* thoughts in each cell.

In the upper left cell, I draw three rays coming down from a point. It depicts God's glory. I write down a couple of word summaries of what I want to *praise God* for, which I saw in my Scripture reading just now. Praise dominates scriptural prayers (Ps. 104:33–34; Pss. 146–150; Heb. 13:15; Matt. 6:9). I might write “Father” from Matthew 6:9 or “in heaven:

power” from the same verse. I then pause and worship him. I try to set aside ten minutes to simply dwell on him in adoration—or fifteen, if I use a hymnal to “tune my heart to sing his praise.” Try it. You may find it is the longest ten to fifteen minutes of your day at first. But soon you will look forward to it as the time that puts the rest of the day into perspective.

In the upper middle cell, I draw a cross to remind me of my need for forgiveness (1 John 1:8–9; Ps. 32:1–5). I jot down a couple of sins that God brings to mind. I use the particulars to focus on the root sins behind them. I confess that and seek a repentant heart. I go to the cross and remember he does not hold those sins against me. I thank him for that and ask for the Spirit's help to recognize and forsake that sin today.

In the upper right cell I write “Th” to remind me to *thank* him for two or three blessings I have recently experienced (Rom. 1:21; contrast Ps. 118:1, 28–29; 1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). I talk to God about them and enjoy his presence.

The bottom three cells are to guide my *intercession*, the last three requests of the Lord's Prayer. In the left one, I write “P” for *personal* requests: for myself and what I am anxious about, for my wife and children, and for my friends, Christian and non-Christian. I write down just a word or two to focus the request, perhaps with a verse of Scripture to claim.

In the lower middle cell, I draw a triangle, representing the three purposes of my *local church*: worship, edification, and witness. Remember, the Lord's Prayer is plural: *our* Father, give us . . . (also see Eph. 6:18). I jot down names of people and ministries. I keep it to just three to five items to focus on each day. Nothing discourages prayer like an endless, unrealistic prayer list that includes people you barely know or care about.

Finally, in the lower right cell, I draw a circle for the *world*. I pray for God's kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10) in my community, my nation, and the world—politics, current events, missionaries. Again I jot down just three to five things, so I can concentrate and focus.

One last suggestion: in your quiet time alone (Matt. 6:6), focus on the top three cells; then take the sheet with you through the day to pray at odd times for the bottom items. The top three are more intimate and personal. If you connect with God on those, the others will be easier to pray for.

This is important: prayer is speaking to God, the one you love more than any other. It is more intimate than any relationship on earth. Never be tied to an outline that will destroy spontaneity. I would never say to my wife, “Don't tell me what you need until you thank me for three or four things I have already given you.” You can imagine what that would do to our intimacy! Use the Six Cells as a helpful guide to give balance and *increase* intimacy, not to become a list to check off. Or don't use it at all if it artificially constrains you. I am *not* suggesting you *should* pray this way. But it has helped me to pray in God-pleasing areas that I might overlook. And if it helps you, that is great.

Recently in our worship service I rejoiced as I heard Mark volunteer and pray a focused, simple, biblical prayer for another member of our body whom he had come to care for. The remarkable thing about prayer is that it is so simple that our children can do it as soon as they are able to stammer out a sentence. A young Christian like Mark can come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy in time of need (Heb. 4:16). Yet prayer is also so mysterious that after my sixty years of praying, I still feel like I am in kindergarten. But God hears me because of Christ. I simply want to expand the conversation, so my heart is connecting to his heart more fully. These two guides, one from Scripture, and one simply a made-up framework, help me to grow in that.

Try them both this week. I hope they help you. Modify my Six Cells as it helps you. But by all means stick with the pattern our Lord taught us in Matthew 6:9–13 as a worthy guide for all of life. □

*The author is a semi-retired OP pastor-teacher available for consulting with churches and for preaching. He quotes the ESV.*

John Shaw (right) answering installation questions from moderator Craig Troxel



**JOHN SHAW INSTALLED**

On Friday, April 19, the congregation of Mission OPC in St. Paul, Minnesota, hosted the installation of John S. Shaw as the new general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE). Those attending the installation service included many members of Mission OPC (John’s former congregation), several members of the Presbytery of the Midwest, and a few visitors from even farther away—including John’s parents, Bill and Mary Shaw (from Providence Presbyterian Church in Pataskala, Ohio).

The Rev. Craig Troxel, as moderator of the Presbytery of the Midwest, presided over the service. The Rev. Richard Gerber, associate general secretary of CHMCE, preached the sermon: “According to Your Faith,” from Mark 9:14–29. The Rev. Jim Hoekstra (Mission OPC’s interim pastor) prayed for Mr. Shaw and the OPC, and the Rev. Ivan DeMaster (retired) gave the charge to the minister. The service concluded with the

singing of “How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place.”

Following the service, everyone enjoyed a reception of cake and punch, served by the ladies of the church, in the fellowship hall.

Mr. Shaw graduated from Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2006, and served as pastor of Mission OPC in St. Paul until called to this new position. He and his family plan to move to the Philadelphia area at the end of June.

**JEREMY JONES INSTALLED**

*Christina Jones*

The Presbytery of Ohio held a special meet-

ing on April 5, 2013, in order to install the Rev. Jeremy C. Jones as the associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pennsylvania.

The Rev. Steven F. Miller, pastor of Nashua OPC in Pulaski, Pennsylvania, conducted the service. The Rev. Douglas B. Clawson, associate general secretary for the Committee on Foreign Missions, preached a sermon entitled “Unity out of Diversity,” from Ephesians 4:11–16. The Rev. Dr. A. Craig Troxel, pastor of Bethel OPC in Wheaton, Illinois, gave a charge to the minister from 1 Samuel 12:23, and Covenant’s pastor, the Rev. Gerald C. Dodds, exhorted the congregation from Ephesians 6:18–20. The sermon stressed the vital importance of the ministry of the Word as a gracious gift from the exalted Christ to his church. The associate pastor and the congregation were called to prayer—one for the other—with faith in the one who ever lives to make intercession for us.

Mr. Jones is a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Prior to his pastorate at Covenant OPC, he ministered for several years as associate pastor of a PCA congregation in Lookout Mountain, Georgia. Please pray for him as he takes up this ministry in Grove City.

At the installation of Jeremy Jones were William Kessler (Columbus, Ohio), Douglas Clawson, Gerald Dodds, Tracey Miller, Craig Troxel, Jeremy Jones, Shawn Ritenour, Steven Miller, Marty Pressau, and Jason Kirkin (Columbus, Ohio). Messrs. T. Miller, Ritenour, and Pressau are Grove City ruling elders.



Ladies at the Women's Retreat in Southern California



## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S RETREAT

Jane Crum

The 31st annual OPC Women's Retreat in Southern California, April 12–14, was a celebration of the Lord's faithfulness from generation to generation. Opportunities abounded for wisdom to be passed on from mature Christians to their younger sisters. At an altitude of 5,500 feet, Camp Maranatha, located in Idyllwild, California, afforded a perfect mountain getaway for the eighty-six women who attended the conference. We had no snow this year (unlike last year), which made traveling to the camp much easier and allowed for more outdoor activities, such as hiking and a bonfire.

Wendy Dugan, Brenda Dempsey, and Kathy Zorn from Faith OPC in Long Beach, California, each taught one session on "Trusting God," using the biblical examples of Gideon, Hannah, and Joseph. Each speaker shared her unique personal experiences of the Lord's faithfulness in difficult circumstances.

Kathleen Winslow, Mary York, and Jana Crum, who have served on short-term missions in Uruguay and the Czech Republic, gave lively updates on the work of Mark and Jeni Richline in Montevideo

and Jerry and Marilyn Farnik in Prague. These three young ladies confirmed that their time serving abroad taught them to pray for the work of our missionaries after seeing firsthand the challenges they face.

Regional home missionary Dave Crum led in worship on Sunday and preached from Jeremiah 17:7, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD," turning our eyes toward Jesus, who trusted his Father perfectly, even unto death. As we left for home, all were encouraged to pray for one another and to love and serve the Savior from a heart filled with gratitude.

## PASSING THE BATON AT THE BOARDWALK CHAPEL

At the February 23 stated meeting of the Presbytery of New Jersey, it was announced that Jon Stevenson would be retiring as director of the Boardwalk Chapel ministry on March 31, and that the Rev. James A. Zozzaro, pastor of Calvary OPC in Wildwood, would become the interim director. Jon and his wife, Marian, will be staying at the Kay House Chapel property through 2013, as Jon completes some remaining tasks assigned by the Home

Missions Committee.

When Jon was a college student in 1967, he gave his testimony on the Chapel stage. Later that summer a certain young lady whom he had recently met traveled with him to Wildwood to attend one of the nightly services. By the end of that July evening on the Boardwalk, it became obvious that their mutual interest in ministry might become a joint effort, and so it has been for forty-six years.

For further information about the Boardwalk Chapel, go to [www.boardwalkchapel.org](http://www.boardwalkchapel.org).

## UPDATE

### Churches

- On February 8, the Presbytery of the Southeast organized **Shiloh Presbyterian Church** in Cary, N.C., as a new congregation in the regional church.

### Ministers

- **Camden M. Busey** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, Ill., on April 26.
- **Dennis L. Disselkoen**, formerly pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, Ill., has retired, effective June 1, 2012.
- **Gabriel N. E. Fluhrer**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Shiloh Presbyterian Church in Cary, N.C., on February 8.
- **Jeremy C. Jones**, formerly a PCA minister, was installed as associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pa., on April 5.
- **John S. Shaw**, formerly pastor of Mission OPC in Saint Paul, Minn., was installed on April 19 as an evangelist by the Presbytery of the Midwest to serve as general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

### Milestones

- After a long battle with lung cancer and emphysema, retired OP pastor and

counselor **Michael D. Stingley**, 78, died on April 2.

- After a period of declining health, retired OP pastor, Christian school teacher, and college professor **Samuel van Houte**, 80, died on April 28.

## LETTERS

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Editor:

I very much appreciated Arthur Fox's article, "Using Communications Technology for God's Glory," in the April issue, particularly his caution about using e-mail. (For serious discussions, where misunderstandings can occur, a phone call or in-person meeting is better than e-mail.)

I am concerned, however, that his discussion of the use of social media may lead people in a direction he doesn't really want them to go. The "compromising" pictures and videos he envisions are not really the root of the problem. These are just electronic records of behavior, and behavior is an expression of where one's heart is.

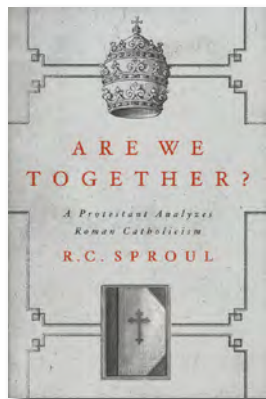
Taken *prima facie*, the article seems to encourage people to hide who they really are and how they really behave. I too have been startled by some of the things I have seen on social media by professing Christians, but it gives me insights into their hearts, helps me to know how to pray for and minister to them, and reminds me that even "church people" (including me) need a Savior.

*Chip Hammond  
Round Hill, Va.*

## REVIEWS

*Are We Together? A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism*, by **R.C. Sproul**. Published by Reformation Trust Publishing, 2012. Hardback, 143 pages, list price \$17.00. Reviewed by OP pastor **Camden M. Bucy**.

In *Are We Together? A Protestant Ana-*



*lyzes Roman Catholicism*, R.C. Sproul argues that Roman Catholicism remains incompatible with Protestantism. Sproul uses the term *Protestantism* loosely, which can be confusing, especially since mainline Protestants have made strides to reconcile with Roman Catholics through efforts such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together. Nevertheless, Sproul seeks to demonstrate that official Catholic teaching cannot be harmonized with the theology of the Protestant Reformers.

The doctrine of justification continues to be a major incongruity between these two theological traditions. Sproul carefully explains the importance of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and how it is that believers' sins are forgiven. This teaching of justification by grace alone, received by faith alone, was the material cause of the Reformation, and it continues to separate conservative Protestants from Roman Catholicism.

Even so, the authority of Scripture is more basic, since it undergirds this doctrine of justification. Sproul notes that Catholic teaching on Scripture has developed since the Reformation, specifically through the influence of modernism and the theological climate of Vatican II. But these influences have not merely affected Scripture's authority; they reach also to the doctrine of the church. The Catholic Church of the sixteenth century was exclusive, but the contemporary Catholic Church has spread its wings to include people merely possessing an inward desire to please God.

Sproul extends his criticism to other subjects. In his chapter on the sacraments, he focuses on baptism and the Lord's Supper. He also devotes chapters to the Papa-

cy and Mariology. Overall, his theological treatments are insightful and accessible to readers with a modest grasp of Reformed theology. It is apparent that Catholic doctrine has evolved. Still, profound differences persist and remain insurmountable barriers to ecumenical union.

While Sproul's assessment of official Catholic teaching is accurate as far as it goes, it does not penetrate to the underlying issue, when considered in light of post-Vatican II theology. Through a use of transcendental philosophy and a modified doctrine of revelation, many recent Catholic theologians affirm the magisterium's official teaching even as they make room for contemporary formulations. Sproul touches upon Vatican II, but does not identify this particularly pernicious feature. Modern Roman Catholicism is often a both-and proposition, in which apparently conflicting theologies can coexist. But this provides all the more reason why Sproul's fundamental concern is legitimate. We should not seek to reconcile with Rome. Indeed, for this very reason, the truths of the Reformation are perhaps more significant today than they were in the sixteenth century.

Sproul concludes that "we have no common cause in the gospel" (p. 121). He suggests that, as individuals, Protestants should reach out to their Roman Catholic neighbors, and pastors should preach the gospel, even demonstrating the theological errors of Catholicism when necessary. The Reformation is not over, and the "cause of *sola Scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus*, and *solus Deo Gloria* remains the cause of and for biblical truth" (p. 122).

\* \* \*

## Why Should God Answer Our Prayers?

Read "Prayer for Jesus' Sake" on the OPC website  
[opc.org/qa.html?question\\_id=205](http://opc.org/qa.html?question_id=205)

***Our Southern Zion: Old Columbia Seminary (1828–1927)*, by David B. Calhoun. Published by Banner of Truth, 2012. Hardback, 380 pages, list price \$27.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Arthur J. Fox.**

With this book, David Calhoun follows his two-volume history of Princeton Seminary by writing a shorter history of Columbia Theological Seminary, which was located in Columbia, South Carolina, from 1828 to 1923, and then in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1923 to 1927, when it closed. The title “Our Southern Zion” was given to the city of Columbia, where the seminary and First Presbyterian Church joined forces to educate men for the ministry and reach the world with the gospel. The seminary served the PCUSA until the War Between the States, and then became the theological institution for the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS).

This is an honest book. The author begins by informing the reader that “the ‘Old Columbians’ purposed to honor Christ in their teaching and living,” but that “the Southern theologians’ reading of Scripture ‘was hampered and twisted by the degree of fallenness which remained in their culture’” (p. xvii, quoting Douglas Kelly). He is referring to the maintenance of slavery before the Civil War and of segregation afterward.

But it is also a careful book. It informs us that many of the men of the Southern Church, both seminary professors and pastors of First Presbyterian Church and other churches, did all they could for the slaves before the War and after their emancipation—building churches for them to worship in, preaching in and pastoring all-black congregations, and training them for the ministry.

Calhoun tells the whole story of the seminary and the way it supplied the Presbyterian Churches in both the North and the South with ministers. Here we read of John Lafayette Girardeau (considered by many to be, as a preacher, the equal of his contemporary, Charles Spurgeon), James Henley Thornwell, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Robert Lewis Dabney, and others whom Christ used to

build his church for nearly a century.

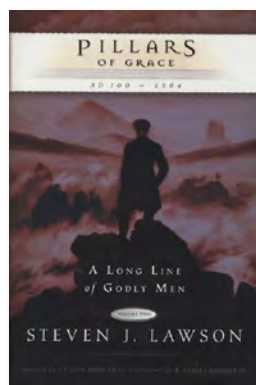
He also tells us how the Southern Church was divided for close to a decade over the teaching of evolution by James Woodrow. We also learn that President Woodrow Wilson, son of James Ruggles Wilson, who taught at the seminary, and nephew of James Woodrow, made a public profession of faith at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia.

There are also sad tales of theological decline in the Presbyterian and other churches in the United States and how Columbia, along with Princeton, tried to stem the tide, but in the end failed to do so.

*Our Southern Zion* is not as full a book as the author’s history of Princeton Seminary, and I felt it rushed through the story a bit too much. Still, it is a delightful and important book. We who focus so much on Princeton and Westminster Seminary in the North do not do justice to the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, North and South, if we neglect the history provided by this book.

\* \* \*

***Pillars of Grace*, by Steven J. Lawson. Published by Reformation Trust Publishing, 2011. Hardback, 562 pages, list price \$28.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Mark J. Larson.**



the truth that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy (Rom. 9:15). In *Foundations of Grace*, Lawson expounds this message as it appears in the Bible. In *Pillars of Grace*, he demonstrates that the Lord maintained this biblical testimony in the succeeding centuries of church history, even in the darkest days.

*Pillars of Grace* is the sequel to Lawson’s first volume, *Foundations of Grace*. Each volume underscores the sovereign grace of God in salvation,

Lawson shows that the teaching that God chose a people before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him (Eph. 1:6) is found in the church fathers, the medieval doctors, and the Protestant Reformers.

The first half of the volume covers the patristic era. The second half is evenly divided between the medieval period and the Reformation. This forcefully conveys the fact that the doctrines of grace did not originate in the sixteenth century. The doctrine of sovereign grace was expounded by the church fathers, and it was not entirely forgotten in the Middle Ages. Lawson reminds us that the Holy Spirit has raised up powerful witnesses to the truth of election unto salvation.

Lawson provides portraits of twenty-three theologians of grace. He includes men whom one would expect to find: Augustine, Bradwardine, Luther, and Calvin. There are also chapters on figures who are less well known within the Reformed community: Isidore of Seville, Gottschalk of Orbais, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The material on Bernard helps one to appreciate why Calvin quoted from him so frequently in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

The chapters on Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory Nazianzus are valuable. We tend to think of the fourth-century fathers exclusively in terms of their Christological and Trinitarian contributions. Lawson shows how they bore witness to the doctrines of grace as well.

Lawson’s style is engaging. He builds each chapter on the primary sources—documenting his presentation with endnotes, so that the reader can do further study in the sermons, treatises, books, and letters of the theologians themselves. He concludes each chapter with a pastoral word of exhortation and counsel.

This book would make a nice study for an adult Sunday school class. It would also be a good textbook for an introductory college class in church history. It is not overly technical, and its presentation of great men who lived in different times over the course of fifteen hundred years is interesting, informative, and uplifting.



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