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Though I can't recommend her book, I love the title of the book by Rebecca Manley Pippert published a few decades ago, *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*. The natural movement of our church (just like every church) is inward, so we all need to be "shaken up" periodically. The mission of *The Saltshaker* then is to produce interesting and persuasive content on the themes that best reflect our values in order to form our collective mind and compel us towards our mission as a church. Pastor Bill Clark and I will each write a column about various themes that pertain to our mission and vision as a church. Central to our vision is understanding ourselves as an "ordinary means of grace" church, which simple means that we are committed to things that God tells us – in his word – to be committed to: preaching, prayer, and the sacraments. As an outflow of this vision, I will also write about the ministry of the preached word in the "Sacred Desk" section: focusing both on what we have recently studied together, as well as what I plan to preach on in the coming months. And finally we will include book reviews as a means of discipleship and an upcoming church schedule to encourage our fellowship together.

You may be wondering why – in a digital world full of screens in every conceivable size and shape – we are spending



## The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann

As I've said a few times already from the pulpit, I primarily wanted to preach through Philippians because it is so full of joy and rejoicing, but little did I know how a series entitled "The Work of God's Grace in Our Hearts" would focus so heavily on suffering! One of the joys of preaching for me is the weekly process of study and learning new things, often unexpected jewels from God's word. The prevailing lesson for me from Paul's letter to the Philippians is that God's grace works in the hearts of his people to turn them to him in times of greatest sorrow, in order that they may discover – again and again – the all-surpassing worth of their Savior. The last sermon really drove this idea home for me: joyful contentment must be learned, and often suffering is our tutor in the school of contentment.

This fall we will embark upon two shorter series during morning worship that will continue the theme of the work of God's grace. In September we will work through the book of Jonah under the title "The Work of God's Grace in the World." Jonah has always fascinated me, and in reading over it this month in preparation for preaching it, I was struck anew by the contrast between God's merciful heart compared with Jonah's hard heart for the nations.

After Jonah we will turn to the book of Revelation under the theme of "The Work of God's Grace in His Church." In the excitement and symbolism of Revelation the opening chapters are often missed, so I want to look at what Jesus says to each church individually as we consider what Jesus might say to our church today.

Our Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that we are to read and hear the Word "with diligence, preparation, and prayer" (Question 90). As you look ahead to the fall and consider these series, let me urge you to prepare to hear God's word and come weekly with an anticipation not for what the preacher will say, but for how the Lord will use his word and Spirit in mighty ways. May the Lord bless the ministry of his "sacred desk" to the convincing and converting of sinners, and to the building up of his church.

time and resources on a print publication, after all isn't the print media dying? In response, I would argue first that simply because technology makes something possible, that doesn't mean that it is always profitable. Call me old fashioned, but I believe there is something unique and memorable in reading off the printed page. Second, if you see an article you like or spot something of interest you think someone else would enjoy, then I hope this is something you can pass on to a friend or neighbor. Think of it as a non-threatening way to start a conversation or even invite an unbeliever to church.

Michael Horton once wrote that the church is a "re-salinization" factory that weekly takes in the weary and burdened salt, and through the worship of the saints and the proclamation of the gospel, restores their saltiness to go back out to a dark and dying world.<sup>2</sup> I truly hope you will benefit from this publication and that the Lord will use it in the coming months and years as we seek to be faithful to the mission he has called us to together.

<sup>1</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*, 56.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples*, 227.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
Sept. 4	Jonah 1	
Sept. 11	Jonah 2	John 1:1-18
Sept. 18	Jonah 3	
Sept. 25	Jonah 4	John 1:19-34
Oct. 2	Rev. 1:1-20	
Oct. 9	Rev. 2:1-7	John 1:29-51
Oct. 16	Rev. 2:8-11	
Oct. 23	Rev. 2:12-17	John 2:1-12
Oct. 30	Rev. 2:18-28	John 2:13-25

## Help from the Past

By Rev. Bill Clark

I have never been a very creative thinker. Writing therefore does not come easily to me. What I have noticed over the years is that I have often been helped by those I call "My Friends", those authors and commentators whom the Lord uses to guide me into his truth. So what follows is a quote from C. H. Spurgeon concerning our solid hope for the success of Christ's church in this world and then, for Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church also. This is from the book, *The Puritan Hope* by Iain Murray.

"The fullness of Jesus is not changed, then why are our works so feebly done? Pentecost, is that to be a tradition? The reforming days, are these to be memories only? I see no reason why we should not have a greater Pentecost than Peter saw, and a Reformation deeper in its foundations, and truer in its upbuildings than all the reforms which Luther or Calvin achieved. We have the same Christ, remember that. The times are altered, but Jesus is the Eternal, and time touches him not... Our laziness puts off the work of conquest, our self-indulgence procrastinates, our cowardice and want of faith make us dote upon the millennium instead of hearing the Spirit's voice today. Happy days would begin from this hour if the Church would but awake and put on her strength, for in her Lord all fullness dwells.

"Oh! Spirit of God, bring back thy Church to a belief in the gospel! Bring back her ministers to preach it once again with the Holy Ghost, and not striving after wit and learning. Then shall we see thine arm made bare, O God, in the eyes of all the people, and the myriads shall be brought to rally round the throne of God and the Lamb. The Gospel must succeed; it shall succeed; it cannot be prevented from succeeding; a multitude that no man can number must be saved."

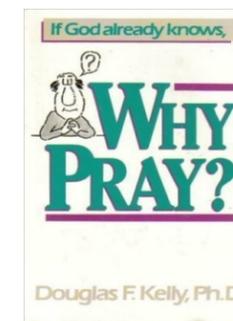


Charles Haddon Spurgeon

## Book Review

by Rev. Sean McCann

"Ask me nicely," her mother repeated, her patience starting to wear thin. "But WHY?!" the frustrated child growled, "you ALREADY know what I WANT!"



Have you seen this play out before? Maybe just a few too many times for some of you! I wonder if we had the ability to pause the scene and X-ray the child's heart what we would find. Besides a racing heart rate, I wonder if we wouldn't find something similar to the difficulty and frustration that many of us often experience in our prayer lives. We've just concluded our evening sermon series through the

Lord's Prayer, and I hope the Lord has and will use it to instill in us a greater mind and heart for prayer. I loved studying the theological truths and missional focus of this prayer, but personally I was left thinking at the end of every sermon: do I pray like this? Am I persistent to make my Savior's priorities in prayer my own priorities? How can I pray more like this?

One prayer resource that I have found most helpful is Dr. Douglas Kelly's book *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* Dr. Kelly is one of the leading theological scholars in the English-speaking world and one of the greatest men of prayer I have ever known. As the reader can immediately tell from the title, Dr. Kelly's manual on prayer will not skirt the significant question facing all readers of the Sermon on the Mount: if my Father already knows what I need, why then do I have to keep asking him for it? In answering this difficult question, Dr. Kelly brings all his scholarly knowledge to bear with such pastoral patience that the rest of us who still do not pray as we wish cannot help but see (and pray) with new eyes. As he summarizes in the introduction and expands through the book: "the seeking of God in prayer releases the blessing of God."

Besides the clear theological explanation of how prayer works, by far my favorite part of the book are the stories that Dr. Kelly tells of answered prayer. From the plantations of eastern North Carolina to the hills of Scotland and back again, Dr. Kelly has always found a home among people who are persistent in prayer. And it is here in these stories of dogged prayer that this book rises to the top. Just the introduction alone will leave you dumbstruck as to the role persistent prayer played in the author's own engagement to his wife. If you need encouragement to persist in your prayer life, then I highly recommend picking up this book and reading the countless stories of saints who remained faithful in prayer. I hope it will inspire and motivate you to return your hand to the plow in the hard yet needed work of faithful intercession.

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# THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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## The Re-Salinization Factory

By Rev. Sean McCann

I hate vegetables, I always have. Ever since I was a kid my parents had to coerce me into eating them, and I only did so after putting up quite a fuss. All through high school they never grew on me and I avoided them as much as I could. But then a few years after I left home something changed: I met this cute girl from the deep south and after a few dates she invited me home to Georgia to meet her parents. My first night at the home of my future in-laws they cooked a huge meal and it had the best vegetables I had ever tasted. Squash and green beans and potatoes, I ate it all and went back for more. What was the secret, I wondered; was there something magical about the vegetables in the peach state? Whatever it was, I didn't care I just wanted more. It wasn't until after we were married that my eyes were opened to the secret of southern cooking: salt...and lots of butter...and more salt...and just another dab of butter...and just a bit more salt. Who knew that something so good for you could taste so good if you just add butter and salt!

Jesus used salt as a powerful image in his teaching, though of course he wasn't referring to its use in the southern kitchen. In Luke 14 Jesus concludes his teaching on the cost of discipleship with this challenge: "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away." (34-35) In this analogy the salt represents the disciples, and the way that they maintain their saltiness is to continue to live by kingdom principles and priorities. Chemically speaking, salt can't actually lose its taste; but spiritually speaking a disciple can lose his or her zeal and effectiveness. Similar to salt, another analogy Jesus uses is light, and he reminds his disciples that people don't "light a lamp and put it under a basket." (Mt 5:16) Like salt and light,

God has sent his disciples and his church into the world to proclaim the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to all who believe. Listen to how Sinclair Ferguson summarizes this teaching:

Like salt, Christians may seem small and insignificant, powerless in a power-mad society. Yet they have the ability to influence every segment of it and to permeate the whole. Salt is cheap; its value is minimal. But salt has unusual properties that far exceed its 'value.'<sup>1</sup>

If we sacrifice our saltiness to grow big and gain acceptance in the world, we will become useless; but if we seek after God with all our heart and obey his word, there is no telling how he will use us.

You will notice that we've entitled this new publication *The Saltshaker*, and we've done that for two reasons. The first reason is that a name serves as a continual reminder of who we are, and to use Jesus' analogy, we want to be salt that stays salty. The vision of this newsletter is to *be a tool that grows and galvanizes our members around the vision and values of our church*. The Lord tells us in Proverbs that "where there is no vision, the people perish" (29:18). With this in mind, the main purpose of this publication is to keep our vision and values in front of us in order that we might grow towards them together (or to stick with our analogy, we want to keep the salt salty). You won't find classified ads or many announcements in these pages, but rather we hope to produce thoughtful content intended to grow us together around our vision and challenge us to continually evaluate ourselves in light of our values.

The second reason for the title comes from the purpose of a saltshaker: to shake salt out of itself.

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## Upcoming Events

### September and October

September 11	11:00 am	The Lord's Supper
September 11	6:00 pm	Evening Worship
September 18	1:00 pm	Annual Church Picnic
September 25	11:00 am	The Lord's Supper
September 25	6:00 pm	Evening Worship
October 2	Noon	Elder Groups
October 7-8		Women's Fall Retreat at Ridge Haven
October 9	11:00 am	The Lord's Supper
October 9	6:00 pm	Evening Worship
October 16	Noon	Fellowship Meal
October 23	11:00 am	The Lord's Supper
October 23	6:00 pm	Evening Worship
October 30	5:30 pm	Reformation Day Worship Service

### Weekly Events

<b>Sunday Morning:</b>		
Opening Exercises	9:30 am	
Sunday School	9:45 am	
Morning Worship	11:00 am	
<b>Wednesday Evenings:</b>		
Supper	6:00 pm	
Bible Study/Prayer	6:45 pm	
<b>Bible Study</b>		
<b>For Men:</b>		
Men's Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS (Retired Old Men Eating Out) at J&S Cafeteria, River Ridge	8:00 am	Every Thursday
Norm Bomer's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays
<b>For Women:</b>		
Carol Belz's Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
Fellowship Hall	10:30 am	Every Wednesday
Debbie Cate's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays