

It is the duty of faithful ministers or of the Gospel to consider diligently what failures or temptations their flocks are liable or exposed to, so as to apply suitable means for their preservation – John Owen (1616 - 1683)


MORNING STAR BAPTIST CHURCH

A “CROWN AND JOY” CHURCH IN 2010

A Prayerful & Pastoral Aspiration

*Observations from **Philippians***


MORNING STAR BAPTIST CHURCH

PHILIPPIANS

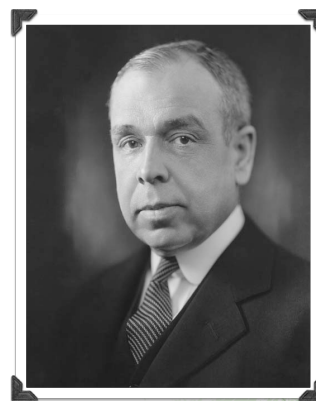
- An informal epistle to a church comprised of dear friends
- 21 paragraphs (ESV)
- Not as systematic as others of Paul's epistles

VARIOUS MEMBERS

- Lydia, the Seller of Purple
- Philippian Jailer and family
- Epaphroditus
- Clement
- Euodia
- Syntyche

They were Paul's
“crown and joy” (Ph. 4:1)!

J. GRESHAM MACHEN



whatever the solution there may be, one thing is clear. There must be somewhere groups of redeemed men and women who can gather together humbly in the name of Christ, to give thanks to Him for his unspeakable gift and to worship the Father through Him. Such groups alone can satisfy the needs of the soul. At the present time, there is one longing of the human heart which is often forgotten — it is the deep, pathetic longing of the Christian for fellowship with his brethren. One hears much, it is true, about Christian union and harmony and co-operation. But the union that is meant is often a union with the world against the Lord, or at best a forced union of machinery and tyrannical committees. How different is the true unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! Sometimes, it is true, the longing for Christian fellowship is satisfied.

There are congregations, even in the present age of conflict, that are really gathered around the table of the crucified Lord; there are pastors that are pastors indeed. But such congregations, in many cities, are difficult to find. Weary with the conflicts of the world, one goes into the Church to seek refreshment for the soul. And what does one find? Alas, too often, one finds only the turmoil of the world. The preacher comes forward, not out of a secret place of meditation and power, not with the authority of God's Word permeating his message, not with human wisdom pushed far into the background by the glory of the Cross, but with human opinions about the social problems of the hour or easy solutions of the vast problem of sin. Such is the sermon.

And then perhaps the service is closed by one of those hymns breathing out the angry passions of 1861, which are to be found in the back part of the hymnals. Thus the warfare of the world has entered even into the house of God. And sad indeed is the heart of the man who has come seeking peace.

Is there no refuge from strife? Is there no place of refreshing where a man can prepare for the battle of life? Is there no place where two or three can gather in Jesus' name, to forget for the moment all those things that divide nation from nation and race from race, to forget human pride, to forget the passions of war, to forget the puzzling problems of industrial strife, and to unite in overflowing gratitude at the foot of the Cross? If there be such a place, then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven. And from under the threshold of that house will go forth a river that will revive the weary world. (Christianity and Liberalism [1923], 180-81)

A "crown and joy" Church is a church that has experienced great grace and is consciously dependent on **more** grace.

paragraphs 1,2, 3, 6, 7,19

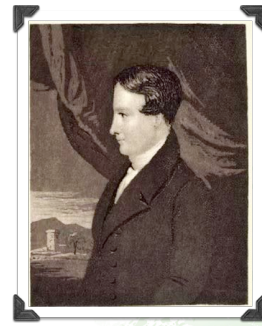
"MORE GRACE"

- Grace comes in quantities. You can get MORE grace.
- "grace be multiplied to you" (2 Pt. 1:2)
- "according to the grace given to us" (Ro. 12:7)
- "but he gives more grace" (Ja. 4:6)

BARNABAS SAW GREAT GRACE IN ANTIOCH

When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose...Acts 11:23

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE



“It is a sure mark of grace to desire more.”

A “crown and joy” Church is a church that has experienced great grace and is consciously dependent on **more** grace.

It is our audacious aspiration and prayer to have great grace poured on us. We desire more.

“mercy drops ‘round us are falling
but for the showers we plead”

Pastoral Prayer from Observation #1: Lord Jesus, lavish on MSBC distinct and completely unmerited favor that startles the self-righteous critics, befuddles the experts, and thrills all those who truly believe the radical nature of gospel grace.

OBSERVATION #2

A “crown and joy” church is a church in which the great majority of its members are active participants in the gospel endeavor.

paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18 19

To some degree we all get credit for being a part of a good church! To what extent are you a leach? To what extent are you a helper (2:3)? To what extent are you positively like Euodia and Syntyche? To what extent are you negatively like Euodia and Syntyche? To what extent are you like Lydia, the Seller of Purple?

Pastoral Prayer from Observation #2: Lord Jesus, stir up the believers in MSBC to serve! Help them to see that they have the high honor of being a Euodia who labors "side by side" with the leaders, a Lydia who provides for the church and its ministry, a Epaphroditus that exports the ministry of the church, and a Timothy that is "genuinely concerned for the welfare" of others.

OBSERVATION #3

A "crown and joy" church is a church in which the great majority of its members have the maturity to **think** like sprinters and **cooperate** like helpers.

paragraphs 14, 15, 16, 10, 11, 7, 2, 6, 19

---from my journal in 2002 --

I want to be a city of refuge church. Here the person who has really blown it can find what a person needs most in a time of misrepresentation, failure, and overwhelming grief: security, a second-chance, and justice. The city of refuge church displays the loving-kindness of God to men and women as they really are, and opens its doors wide to the person who has been assailed by the hasty judgment of the majority.

The City of Refuge was God's idea. He knows that men don't ever get the whole picture. He knows that men are very likely to make cutting judgments based upon one limited dimension of a multi-dimensional scenario. He knows that men love themselves more than they love others. He knows that men cannot empathize. He knows that men are easily biased in favor of their own agenda, people, culture, and tastes.

He knows that sometimes what all men may call a murder is really an accident. He knows that often when all men cry, "guilty!" there is really innocence. He knows that a person judged by humans needs a place to flee. (Journal 2002)

--- journal 2010 ---

I feel like I'm the Derek Redmond of ministry. I'm in the race. Sort of. In the race, but not with those who run like the wind. All aspirations of being in the pack or ahead of the pack are lost. Finding out that I don't have what it takes to run with the winners has collapsed me. All I'm trying to do is muster the will to finish. One inglorious step after another, praying for the finish line. To die is gain. But to live must be -- *it has to be, please!* -- fruitful labor necessary on the account of the Church even if it is only to show that hobbling too is a trophy of grace.

What we need -- what I need -- is a church like Derek Redmond's father who from the distance sees the faltering runner, his blood brother, and starts pushing and shoving through the fracas of mundanity to get to the elbow of the stumbling saint. Somebody has to break out of the crowds of spectators who are too dull to know the real spirit of the race, defy professional protocol, wave off the guardians of conventional wisdom, stiff-arm the lifeless moralists, get on the track and help their brother cross the line.

I want to be a church like Redmond's father that shoos off conventionalism and makes a practice of hooking up with the faltering, crossing the line arm in arm if necessary. I want to be a church like the assistants of the blind marching band in this year's Rose Bowl Parade who quietly walked alongside their needy musician satisfied to be only a steadying, comforting, and guiding hand while the one who conventional wisdom had declared unable to ever make music in a marching band marches and makes music.

Pastoral Prayer from Observation #3: Lord Jesus, help us to want to finish. Help us to defy the smug assurance of the winners in a dog-eat-dog world and become straining, stretching, heart-throbbing helpers of anyone who is in the race just to finish. Especially, makes us Aaron and Hur who lift up the hands of your servants who have the taunts of Tobias and Sanballet ringing in their ears

OBSERVATION #4

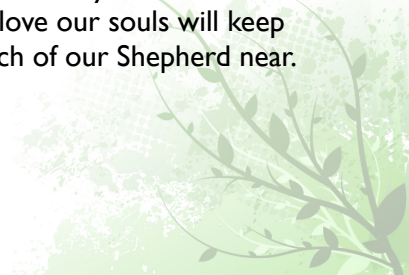
A "crown and joy" church is a church in which the great majority of its members see themselves as saints in process and therefore have the audacity to believe that a good start in grace secures the hope of a stellar completion.

paragraphs 2, 13, 14, 15

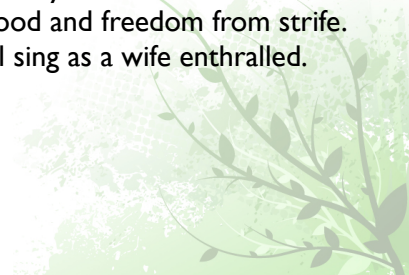
Pastoral Prayer from Observation #4: Lord Jesus, help the believers at MSBC to glory in their grace start and have deep within their beings the thrill of victory -- the joy! -- of knowing that 2010 can be a year of growth, greater exploits for God, and renewed vigor. Help us to know that completion -- glorious completion! -- is guaranteed for all those of us who are partakers of grace.

"Thank You, God, for Your Holy Church"
R.P. Bixby, 2009

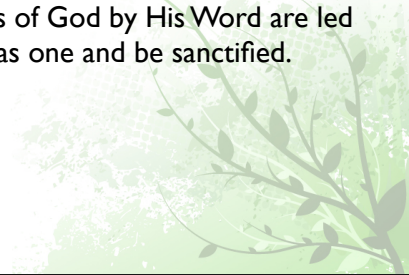
Your Church is the flock; You shelter Your sheep.
Through the Door we are led by the Voice true and clear.
In a refuge of love our souls will keep
Under the watch of our Shepherd near.



Your Church is the bride; You gave her Your life.
'Neath a banner of love by the Groom we are called
To a cov'nant of blood and freedom from strife.
One day we will sing as a wife enthralled.



Your Church is the body; You are the Head.
By Spirit we are joined; with Him baptized!
The redeemed ones of God by His Word are led
To serve Him as one and be sanctified.



O, thank you, God, for Your Holy Church,
For the glories that wait in our final place.
Help us serve You here, give us strength to search
Communion with Yours in Your house of grace.

