Continued from Page 1

All that we have has come to us from God: "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). He apportions and assigns. He is wise, good, and sovereign. And "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (Jas 1:17).

The one who receives change has learned to stop comparing the present with the past, or with the future, and instead to simply receive it. When it comes to that grass on the other side of the fence, it is just green – not more green or less green, just green. It may not be the shade of green we had imagined, but it is the shade of green selected by the master artist himself.

Each day is a fresh experience of the Lord's mercies: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam 3:23). By faith we can receive each day with an open hand, trusting to find the Lord as good to us today as he was yesterday: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:24).

As we string together days like pearls on a chain, they turn into seasons, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecc 3:1). And while each season can have its own ups and downs, here as well we confess the goodness of God: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6). The grass that God has allotted might not be our choice, but it is good nonetheless, for he is good, and he gives good gifts to his children. We have received Christ and all his benefits, and no matter what, we can say with the psalmist: "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance" (Ps 16:6).

What season does the Lord have you in? Is it a bitter season that cannot end soon enough? Or is it a sweet season that you hope will never end? Are you resisting change, or are you requiring it, to be content? Or are you a little bit of both? One final hymn gives words to this tension, and it is a paraphrase of Psalm 34. May these words characterize us as we strive to receive in faith all things from the Lord: "Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy, the praises of my God shall still my heart and tongue employ."

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



Following the theme of change, we turn to the ministry of the word to find several moving parts as we transition series in both the morning and evening services.

This month will conclude our morning series through the book of Romans, which we started back in the fall of 2025. Due to a few breaks along the way, we ended up with fifty-one sermons in the series, stretched over fourteen months. As I have said before, this has been one of those "white whale" books that I have had in my sights for a while, so it feels somewhat monumental to finally bring it to a close.

Looking forward, we will finish out the year with an advent sermons series before turning to a new book for the new year. Starting after Thanksgiving, I have planned a short series in which we will spend a Sunday on each of the four names given for the promised child in Isaiah 9:6: "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Looking ahead, I plan to begin January with a spring sermon series in the Old Testament book of Ezra. With our 2 Kings series ending in exile (see below), it will be fitting to resume the historic narrative with the more hopeful account of the return from exile. Since the narrative of the Israelites returning and rebuilding their home spans Ezra and Nehemiah, I anticipate making time for a sermon series in Nehemiah next year as well.

The evening service will also see us conclude a lengthy series and begin a new one. In October we concluded our sermon series through 2 Kings, which was really an extension of the series that preceded it in 1 Kings, dating back to the beginning of January 2025. And to extend it even further back, our study in 1&2 Kings fell on the heels of series in 1 Samuel (2019) and 2 Samuel (2022). All in all, we have spent over a hundred evenings together studying these historical books! I know the accounts can be long, detailed, and somewhat repetitive, but I never tire of hearing how the kings of old point us to the great King of kings.

This month we will turn to the gospel of Mark for a series that will take us through the end of next year. Mark will be the third gospel we will have studied together, after completing John in the evenings in 2018, and Matthew in the mornings in 2023. (Can you guess where my mind is going for a morning series in the next few years?) Though Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels, it is also the most condensed, so we have been working together as a pastoral staff to map out this meaty book.

Join me in welcoming these new series with hopeful anticipation of what God will do in and through his word.

Preaching Schedule

Date	Morning	Evening
Nov 1	Romans 16:1–24	
Nov 8	Romans 16:17–24	Mark 1:1–8
Nov 15	Romans 16:25–27	Mark 1:9–13
Nov 22	TBD	Mark 1:14–20
Nov 29	Wonderful Counselor	Mark 1:21–34
Dec 6	Mighty God	
Dec 13	Everlasting Father	Mark 1:35–45
Dec 20	Prince of Peace	Mark 2:1–22
Dec 27	TBD	

Youth Ministry Update

By Micaiah Liner

As we have transitioned into the Fall semester and returned to our regular mid-week gatherings, the youth group has been looking at the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification. Each lesson has been simple and focused, briefly covering different parts of these core doctrines. This study has been a great reminder for us that behind the big words we use to describe the realities of the Christian life, are simple, yet glorious truths—Jesus came to save sinners! And Jesus transforms sinners! In the new year, we will begin a series on The Bible. Lessons will explore topics such as: how we got the Bible, why we can trust it, and how to read it.

Looking to the new year, I am happy to share that the youth group will be attending Ridge Haven's Winter Retreat over President's Day weekend (Feb 12-15). The retreat will be for both middle school and high school students, and the weekend will include group devotions and worship, times of personal devotions, and lots of games and activities. We have done a handful of retreats together, but this will be our first time at Ridge Haven as a group, and we are all excited!

This leads me to a word of gratitude. In all the busyness of summer and now into the school year, we have had no shortage of support. Throughout the year I have seen time and again the many ways in which the members of CRPC have loved and helped our youth. And I want to say thank you! We have had parents and members lead youth retreats, open homes for game nights, prepare meals, chaperone events, assist with midweek gatherings, and (of course) faithfully pray for students. As a congregation, you have blessed our youth ministry with the eager and genuine help you have provided. What a witness of Christ-like love this has been!

How You Can Pray

Youth: Pray that our youth would learn to cast ALL of their cares upon the Lord. For many of our students, the pressures of life (and especially school) can bear down on them. Pray that they would bring these weights and worries to God, and that God in his kindness would show himself faithful.

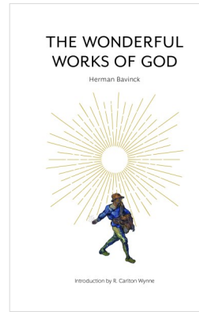
Parents: The work we do in youth ministry is in support of the primary work parents do as the chief disciple-makers of their children. Pray that God would equip parents with wisdom from on high as they lead their children through these pivotal seasons of life.

Ministry: Youth group is a wonderful place for students to build friendships. Pray for a spirit of unity and that God would bless our children with deep, meaningful relationships.

As always, thank you for being the kind of church that loves its children well! It is a blessing to serve our church through youth ministry. I look forward to all that God has in store for the days ahead.

The Wonderful Works of God –Review

By Jim Curtis



Today I want to recommend a somewhat unusual book for the Saltshaker. Usually, we aim for very specific thematic books, or even books on the book table that we have found worthwhile and more introductory in nature to relevant areas of life today. But I want to step outside our norm for two brief reasons: (1) because of our Romans series, and (2) because of the challenge the book represents. So let me cover these reasons by way of recommending to you *The Wonderful Works of God* (*WWG*), by Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck.

First, as we wrap up our Romans series, I hope that most of you have caught the "doctrine bug" from Paul. A professor of mine remarked that "Romans is the most pristine form of Pauline doctrine in the New Testament." I think you will agree with him after Pastor Sean's series! And now that you've done real work in considering those doctrines and their implications for your life, I think *WWG* is a great way to continue to explore the deep doctrines of our faith.

In this volume, you have a layperson's systematic theology—a study of theology which takes what the whole Bible says about a specific doctrine and explains that in a *systematic* way. So systematic theology takes what all the Bible says about sin and explains it as "hamartiology" (*hamartia* is Greek for sin), Christ and explains it as "Christology," and Salvation and explains it as "soteriology" (*soteria* is Greek for salvation). That may appear complicated to you, but *WWG* is written for regular church members. Bavinck saves his work for pastors for the four volumes (!) of *Reformed Dogmatics*! So this volume is accessible for the ordinary Christian who has only heard these doctrines preached.

Second, I want to admit that this book will still be a challenge for all who read it. But this is a reason *to* read it, not to avoid it. Learning new things is difficult but good work—as every parent ever has told their children in school! And learning new things about the topics we are already familiar with can seem even more daunting. Yet, to do so really indicates more than a desire to learn, but a desire *for* the topic itself. Why else do college students pick specific fields to major in, if not an interest in the field itself? These are the reasons why I would recommend you read *WWG*. But let me give you a short overview of what to expect in this volume.

The first thing you will find in *WWG* is a *logical ordering* of topics. Bavinck orders this theological work how all Reformed theologians do. The second thing you will find is a logical *outline* in each chapter. Bavinck writes with precision, so pay attention to his outline! And finally, you will find a devotional tone and spirit to all Bavinck writes. Good theology is not dry, boring, or merely intellectual. Good theology will produce good affections. And in *WWG*, I promise you will find good theology!

COVENANT
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
281 EDGEWOOD RD. ASHEVILLE, NC 28804

November — December

Upcoming Events

For additional information about any of these events, please refer to our website (covenantreformed.net), or contact the church office at 828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net.

The Lord's Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

Morning Worship:
November 1, 15, December 6, 20
Evening Worship:
November 29

Youth Events

November 20, Movie/Game Night
December 18, Christmas Party

Fellowship Meal

November 1

Men's Second Breakfast

November 14, December 12

Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 5:00 pm

Weekly Events

Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except on 1st Sunday
Wednesday Nights (Concludes November 18)	6:00 pm	

Bible Study

For Men:

ROMEOS (Retired Old Men Eating Out) at Cornerstone Restaurant	7:30 am	Every Thursday
Norm Bomer's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:

Carol Esther Belz's Home	9:30 am	2nd and 4th Tuesdays
Gospel of Mark Study (Concludes November 10)	10:00 am	Every Tuesday

Watering Seeds Podcast

Be sure to check out our church's weekly podcast, *Watering Seeds*. Each week our pastors review, discuss, and apply the previous Sunday's sermon. You can find the podcast on any major podcast platform, such as Anchor, Spotify, or Apple Podcast, by searching for our church name or the title, "Watering Seeds," or by scanning the following QR code:

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The Goodness of God in Every Season of Life

By Rev. Sean McCann

The only constant in life is change. We live in a world that is always changing and never the same. In the words of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "you cannot step into the same river twice." The hymn-writers throughout history concurred, comparing the changes of life and the passing of time to the physical decay we see in the natural world around us ("change and decay in all around I see"), to grains of sand sinking beneath our feet ("the sands of time are sinking"), and to a river always running away before us ("time, like an ever-rolling stream"). That final line comes from *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, which is based on Psalm 90, where we find these verses: "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. You sweep them away as with a flood, they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning." (Ps 90:4-5)

Indeed, change is inevitable, but our response to change is not. What emotions do those hymn lines evoke? Longing and sorrow? Nostalgia and sentimentality? Hope and anticipation? Despair at the pointless inevitability of it all? We live in a world of change, but our faith calls us to respond to change by trusting in the one who never changes. I want to consider two ways we wrongly respond to change, and then advocate for a better way.

Resisting Change

For many of us, change is a bad thing, and we resist it with every fiber of our being. You may have a natural aversion to change, or maybe the Lord has you in an especially sweet season of life, and any change must inevitably be a change for the worse. When it comes to the proverb about greener grass on the other side of the fence, you are convinced that the grass is never greener! You dread that coming change; you even brace for it, knowing that on the other side lies nothing but tears and sorrow. You would never admit it, but in your heart of hearts you believe the lie that though God has been good to you in the past, he will not be good (or at least he will not be as good) to you in the future.

Christians with this proclivity must work to put to death the sins of fear and doubt. We must sing from the heart of how "the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head." We must believe the promise: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overcome you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (Is 43:1-2). We must trust that though seasons change, the goodness of God never does.

Requiring Change

On the other extreme are those among us who not only welcome change but live for it. It may be situational, as in wanting to move on from a hard season, but often it is a general disposition of discontentment. For you, the grass on the other side of the fence really is always greener. You have what the hymnist calls "the restless will that hurries to and fro, seeking for some great thing to do or secret thing to know." You resonate with the fictional president on *The West Wing*, Jeb Bartlett, when he continually asks his staff, "What's next?" And in your heart of hearts, you believe the lie that God has not been good to you in the past (or as good) as he will be to you in the future.

Christians with this proclivity must work to put to death the sins of restlessness and discontentment. We must echo the psalmist, "But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother" (Ps 131:2). We must learn with Paul the secret of contentment, "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need' (Phil 4:12). We must trust that though seasons change, the goodness of God never does.

Receiving Change

It is one thing to stop resisting and requiring change; it is quite another thing to replace those tendencies with something better: receiving change. To receive change is to recognize that the seasons of life are not random or inevitable; rather, they are apportioned out by God.

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