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## The Work Before Us – Psalm 90:16-17

**Introduction** – Considered rightly, time is a blessed gift. Try to imagine what existence would be like for finite creatures like us without time. I cannot. Time properly received by faith grants us order, a start and a finish, the ability to plan and implement. Time grants us the ability to measure, evaluate, judge, and change as well. A New Year, another measure of time, is upon us.

**God's Work, Glory, and Beauty** (Psalm 90:16-17) – This Psalm speaks of God's eternal significance and our futility apart from His eternal significance. It warns us to fall upon His mercy, to number our days, and to make sense of life by making Yahweh the center of everything. Moses ends his prayer petitioning God for His work, His glory, and His beauty to be manifest upon us and everything we do. These are always good words for meditation, especially at times like New Years. It is also within this context that we consider where this particular local church is, what our vision is for the year and years to come, and why we are who we are. Of course, such future-mapping requires us to remember the humility of James who admonishes us to always add, "*if the Lord wills*" (James 4:13-15).

**Let Your Work Appear** – One important lesson comes to Moses after forty years of wandering in the wilderness: getting on with the work of ministry begins with walking in the work prepared for us (Eph 2:10). The center of covenant-keeping is promise-believing, not doing. The focus of a grace-saturated people is grace and not merit. The good works that flow from such people is rooted in anticipation of blessing while stayed with patient trust in God's exhaustive sovereignty and perfect timing. He is never late, never early, never affected by time the way we are. His work "*appears*" and when it does His children see His "*glory*" and "*beauty*."

**We are Here** – As we move into 2007, we are a teen-age church growing and being sanctified by a Father who loves, nourishes, and disciplines us perfectly. We describe ourselves as *evangelical* and *reformed* (as does our confederation).

By *evangelical*, we mean (as the term meant historically) that we believe the Evangel, the Good News, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He came to earth to pay for the sins of His people, and that faith in Him is essential for a new life and for life eternal. We are evangelistic as well, believing that God has called us to declare this Evangel to the dark world around us. We are to do so not only in obedience but because God has promised that His Evangel will effectively reach the ends of the earth. We believe that the world will be saved.

By *reformed*, we mean that we believe in the Doctrines of Grace (also called the Five Points of Calvinism), and that grace is central to the gospel. We believe that God has predestined absolutely everything that comes to pass, that Christ's death on the cross effectively atoned for the sins of His people, and that the Spirit of God, blowing wherever it wishes, accomplishes irresistibly whatever God has decreed in the hearts of men. In other words, we believe God is in control of everything, past, present and future. And we believe this is a good, a very good, thing (Rom 8:28).

As we mature, we are aware that our doctrinal and constitutional commitments need to mature (our declaration of a baptismal cooperation agreement was a great gift to many here). We long to tie ourselves more directly to the historic evangelical and reformed church. How we constitute members, how we declare our beliefs, and even the name of our church (*Fellowship?*) are in need of reconsideration.

These doctrinal commitments not only reflect what we believe, but how we are to live....

**The Centrality of Worship** – We are committed to the Lord's Day service as central to every other aspect of our lives individually and corporately in the body of Christ. We believe that we are caught up covenantally into the heavenlies as we come before the Lord at His summons to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We are committed to the covenant renewal model of worship as the structural backbone of our liturgy. You see this in the steps of the Call, Confession, Consecration, Communion, and Commissioning set out in the order of service and reflects the order used by God's people before and after the First Advent of Christ. This service means that we will come before the Lord to be transformed by the renewing of our minds as our Great Physician examines and ministers to us, and as our Advocate who has run the race well trains us to complete that which is before us in this life. We will continue to grow, hopefully in our understanding and implementation of how we worship in the years ahead, but this will remain the general structure of what we believe is our highest privilege, our greatest duty and our deepest joy. It is from "here" that everything else happens "out there."

**The Glory and Beauty of Music** – Great music grabs you in the soul in ways other gifts the Lord has given us cannot. We are instructed to sing the psalms in such a way that the Spirit takes the Word and causes it to make its home in our hearts. We are commanded to sing skillfully, to be a people who play skillfully, and to sing and shout our praise in the holy of holies as well as while doing the laundry or sitting in traffic. What a blessing we have witnessed in the beginnings of a recovery in this for the saints. But it truly is just a beginning. God has given us the opportunity to learn how to sing, how to read music, how to use instrumentation gloriously, and how to search the scriptures for biblical standards in aesthetics and beauty. We may even be in a position to serve other churches hungry for the things we have been given.

**The Work of Equipping the Saints** – Flowing out of our worship and the preaching of the Word, the elders are committed to the work given them of equipping the saints for the work of ministry. Strong, biblical families are primary in this, for whatever we have, if we do not faithfully pass it on to future generations, will be lost in less than a generation. Therefore, we continue to emphasize teaching on the headship of husbands and fathers in the home, a thoroughly Christian education, and faithful childrearing, as essential to our preaching and teaching. In addition, being reformed means that we must equip the saints with a practical outworking of the sovereignty of God in every realm of life and thought.

**A Church Culture** – The new commandment that Jesus gave us is this: love one another. Our church has been known for its hospitality and meeting physical needs for one another in the name of Jesus. As Paul said somewhere, “*do so more and more.*” Hospitality must flow from a culture of celebration and care, and a ministry of mercy must flow from hearts overflowing with thankfulness for grace that is ours.

**Looking Beyond Ourselves** – The elders are grateful for those stories of those who reach out to unbelievers in our neighborhoods in informal ways and for those who pray and support missionaries around the world. It is also time for us as a church to formally work locally (i.e. Food Banks, pregnancy/adoption ministries, ESL, college outreach...) and support worldwide missions work (through CREC connections and other like-minded church ministries). We would like to see a growing percentage of our tithe going to such work.

**Financing the Kingdom** – Missions, education, music ministry, and the work of the church all cost money. It has been said, however, that faithful tithing would more than cover all such needs. That kind of obedient giving comes when we understand that all that we are and have is a gift from God and that His church is His central means of bringing blessing to the world.

*Moses' prayer is our prayer as well – that God would manifest His work, His glory, and His beauty to us and to our children for the sake of His Son, Jesus. There was a time of wandering and waiting, and then the children of Israel were brought into the land. We, as well, have a great work before us – and it is all based on the promises of God for His church. It is all done in the context of our love for Jesus Christ.*

Dave Hatcher – December 31, 2006