

# The Pastor's Quarry

First Baptist Church of Granite Falls, MN  
March, 2008

## The Pleasure of Their Company

At various times in my life, I have been very fond of several hobbies. First it was ham radio, then flying, then falconry, and then sailing. As a young boy, I was eager to talk about these hobbies with anyone who would listen. I quickly learned, though, that most people did not share my passion for these things. What surprised me most was that even people who shared the same hobby did not usually share my passion for it. Sometimes, this surprise turned into a faint air of sadness.

What a melancholy thing, to stand in a room full of other pilots, only to learn that there was no marvelling at the wonder of flight, or the beauty of clouds, or the splendor of endless fields wheeling beneath your wings! There was no spark in their eyes when I hinted at such things; experienced and proficient, all, but somehow indifferent, aloof to everything but speed, efficiency, and profit. For those things, their enthusiasm knew no bounds, but I shrank away from it, and them.

I finally discovered a kindred spirit when I discovered some of the early writings of Richard Bach. He struggled to put into words the very things I imagined about the mysterious sky, and wind, and propellers, and wings. He lamented with me over the countless pilots who were blind to the wonder of it all. We seemed to share a rare love, he and I, and I eagerly devoured his short stories and books about flying.

But now that all my love for such hobbies has been dwarfed by the love God has given me for himself, I often find myself even harder pressed to find kindred spirits. What a melancholy thing, to meet professing Christians who do not seem to marvel at the wonder of God's majesty, or the beauty of his holiness, or the splendor of his surpassing sweetness! Many are they who have overflowing enthusiasm for this church program and that, endlessly active, yet somehow hollow, inside. I cling to the hope that I misunderstand such people, knowing that only God knows the heart.

Precious indeed are kindred spirits who know trembling joy, reverent fear, and tear-stained, exuberant love of God. I treasure them beyond price, and marvel that God would grant me the pleasure of their company. Names of the dead mingle with names of the living in this dear brotherhood. Wisps of their poems and magnificent music, all but forgotten by most Christians, tower above the wasteland of our age. Those who have an ear to hear still burn with the same zeal, and they recognize the spark in one another's eyes.

Kindred spirits, take heart! Tozer's Fellowship of the Burning Heart lives on. There are still those who dream of our God, who weep penitential tears, who know the ecstasy of Godly fear, and who long for God's glory.

And if there be any who know not of what I speak, do come and join us.

We long for the pleasure of your company.

## March 16 Afternoon Service Moved to First Baptist Church, Marshall, MN

Pastor Greg Linscott, recently relocated from Skowhegan, Maine, to Marshall, MN, has extended the following invitation to our church:

Our church [First Baptist Church, Marshall] requests the presence of your congregation for an Installation Service to formally recognize the beginning of the ministry of their new pastor. The service will be held on Sunday, March 16 at 2:30 PM, with a cake reception to follow. Our speakers for the afternoon will be Pastor Todd Mitchell of First Baptist Church, Granite Falls, and Pastor Chris Humburg of the Altoona Regular Baptist Church in Altoona, Iowa (where I served as a member and an Associate Pastor from 1995-2003). We look forward to your presence with us.

In order to respond to this invitation, our regularly scheduled afternoon service on March 16 is cancelled. We will still have our fellowship meal following the morning service.

First Baptist Church is located at 2219 250th Street, just off of Hwy 23 on the southwest outskirts of Marshall.

## Mark Your Calendars

On Good Friday, March 21, at 8:00 P.M., we will assemble for a time of Scripture reading, song, and prayer as we ponder the passion of our Savior.

On Easter Sunday, March 23, we will plan on breakfast at 9:00 A.M., followed by a short devotional message. Food will be provided, so you need not bring any. Aside from our regularly scheduled morning worship service at 10:30-11:45 A.M., there will be no other meal or worship service.

On Sunday, March 30, at 1:15 P.M., I plan to deliver another "Fifth Sunday Biography" during our regularly scheduled afternoon assembly.

On Saturday, April 19, at 12:30 P.M., come to the Parsonage for our Spring Picnic! Bring something to grill or a covered dish, if you like. Beverages provided.

On Sunday, April 20, at 1:15 P.M., we plan to conduct our first quarter business meeting during our regularly scheduled afternoon assembly.

## Pastor's Schedule

Underlined dates are times when I will be in town without my "better half."

In Granite Mar. 1-2  
In Granite Mar. 15-16  
In Granite Mar. 21-23  
In Granite Mar. 29-30  
In Granite Apr. 3-8 \*  
In Granite Apr. 10-13 \*  
In Granite Apr. 18-20  
In Granite Apr. 25-27

\* Monica in England.

## Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth, peace to men of good will.

We praise you.

We bless you.

We adore you.

We glorify you.

We give thanks to you for your great glory.

Lord God, Heavenly King,

God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son,

Jesus Christ the highest.

Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

You who takes away the sins of the world,

have mercy upon us.

You who takes away the sins of the world,

hear our prayer.

You who sits at the Father's right hand,

have mercy upon us.

For you alone are holy,

You alone are the Lord.

You alone the most high Jesus Christ.

With the Holy Spirit

in the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

## A Bit of History

Was Johann Sebastian Bach a believer? Surely if he believed all the words he set to music, he must have been. But for years some scholars dismissed this, arguing that he was only doing his job. After all, he was employed to write music for the church. What else would he write? How can we know for sure that he really took seriously the biblical message of his church music?

But then Bach's study Bible, filled with hundreds of his own notes in the margins, was discovered in June, 1934. A Lutheran pastor from Detroit, attending a church convention in Frankenmuth, Michigan, was staying at his cousin's farmhouse when his cousin showed him a nice old book that his father had purchased in Philadelphia many years before. This pastor was astonished to see "J.S. Bach, 1733" on the title page. Soon they confirmed that this was indeed the third volume of Bach's three-volume study Bible – and the other two volumes were in the attic!

Scholars in Germany begged for the owners of Bach's Bible to donate it to them, but the owners were disturbed by the recent rise of Nazism in Germany. So instead of sending it to Germany, they donated the three-volume Bible to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

And there the Bible sat for decades! Not until 1992 was a thorough and accurate study made of the notes Bach wrote in the margins of his Bible. At that time, a doctoral student from the University of Minnesota, Thomas Donald Rossin, went to St. Louis and pored over each page, painstakingly cataloguing, translating, and analyzing the 390 markings he found in the margins.

What Dr. Rossin discovered was that Bach not only took the Bible seriously, he was a serious student of doctrine! In 83 places Bach corrected errors in the text of the commentary as well as in the Biblical text. Elsewhere he methodically noted what the Bible said about various topics, including authority, government, personal life and morality, relationships (vocational as well as personal), sin and its consequences, music, death, eschatology, justice, and ceremonial customs.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, Bach underlined a portion of the commentary on Romans 1:17, and put quotes around it to highlight it. The text he underlined is a clear presentation of the gospel message, and it explains how justification can only be grasped by faith in Christ, whose righteousness alone can justify sinful man. That this mattered so much to Bach, in his personal Bible study, is evidence that his music was sincere; he truly was a man of God.

Recently I had the privilege of perusing one of the volumes of Bach's Bible with Dr. Rossin, and I was riveted by one note that we saw in the margin of Haggai 1:1. To my astonishment, Bach had underlined and put in quotes this portion of the commentary: "Chekaniah begat Shealtiel."

Why does it matter that Chekaniah begat Shealtiel? This matters because it proves Joseph could not have been the biological father of Jesus. Mat 1:12 shows that Joseph was a descendant of Chekaniah (or "Jechoniah"), who was cursed in Jer 22:30, when God said, "none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling." This is an important part of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth that few Christians know today – but Bach knew it!

By all appearances, Bach was a believer and a diligent student of the Bible. And he took his doctrine very, very seriously.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Donald Rossin, "The Calov Bible of Johann Sebastian Bach: An Analysis of the Composer's Markings" (Ph.D. diss., University of MN, 1992), 56.

### My Contact Information

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### "Walk-in" office hours

10:00-12:00 A.M. Sat. in the church study,  
schedule permitting.