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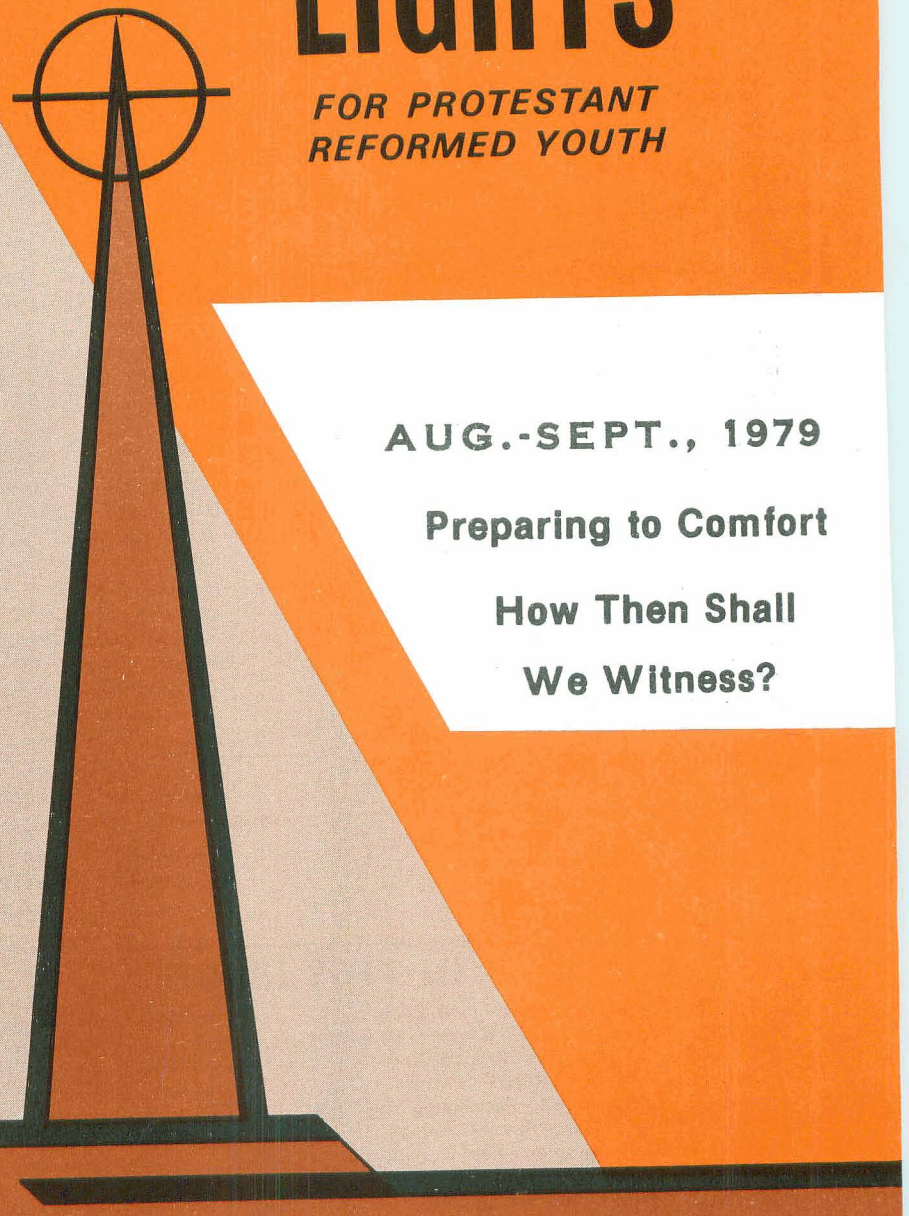

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Preparing to Comfort

How Then Shall We Witness?

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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL - I Am Joe's Heart - J. M. Faber 1
A Voice From Within the G.L.T.S. - Rev. M. Kamps 3
How Then Shall We Witness - Francis Quek 4
THOUGHTS ON OUR WORSHIP - Prayers 9
CONVENTION SPEECHES - Redeeming The Time:
In An Age of Ignorance - Rev. M. Kamps 10
During The Sex Revolution - Rev. D. Kuiper 14
In A Fun-Loving Generation - Rev. R. Miersma 20
Preparing to Comfort - Herman Ophoff 24
Test Your Memory 26

Editorial

I AM JOE'S HEART

by John M. Faber

Lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup.

I am a pump. I am all muscle. I am Joe's heart. I am the center of his whole body; from me are all the issues of life. A pump? Yes, I pump blood (about ten pints) through Joe's body several times a day. I am the size of his fist, located behind his breast bone, protected from injury by it and his ribs. I contain no fat, no bones, just muscle — pure muscle.

I have four chambers which fill and empty rhythmically controlled by valves called mitral, tricuspid and semilunar. The last mentioned is half-moon shaped as you may have guessed. The right-hand side chamber sends blood to the lungs before the left chamber can speed it through the body. In that short interval that blood flows over and among moist air sacs which expand and contract leaving carbon dioxide behind and pick up a fresh supply of oxygen.

This pumping process is accomplished by the contracting and relaxing of my muscles which Joe calls heart beats. When his doctor listens to me with his stethescope he hears, "lubb-dup". The "lubb" sound is that of my tricuspid and mitral vales closing; the higher-pitched and more snappy sound of "dup" is caused by the half-moon valve snapping shut which controls the flow of blood into the aorta. This lubb-dupping business is an automatic process lasting some seventy to ninety years unless it is stopped by accident, heart attack or surgical shock. The rate of this beating is about seventy times a minute in my sixteen year old host; it accelerates in speed when he gets angry, frightened or excited. Under violent exercise I have been known to beat two hundred times a minute! The seventy speed, which is now normal, was a normal ninety when Joe was seven years old, and one hundred twenty when he was little infant.

But Joe doesn't even think about his heart beat for he is a healthy teenager. He might wonder once in a while how come it keeps right on beating, on and on. I am the one muscle in his body that never tires because I have my own supply-line of fresh oxygen. I just keep on a-beating! He has been told that an electrical impulse flows over me

from my tip down over my whole being. Does he wonder how this electricity is generated? Is he concerned how it is regulated to its seventy p.m. speed? Is he worried that I will not speed up when he needs more fuel for his other muscles? Joe doesn't bother his head about such questions.

Do you remember when Joe's foot related how he steered his steps into the pastor's study and that this was a turning point in Joe's life? Now he knows that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made". Joe agrees with the Psalmist that his Creator "saw his substance, yet being unperfect" and in His Book "his members were written which in continuance were formed when as yet there were none of them". So Joe's concern regarding the how and why of the electrically stimulated heart beat is minimal. He is confident that it is an in-created phenominon. That is good enough for my Joe!

Joe had taken his pastor's advice and begun his personal meditations in the study of the first eight chapters of the Bible, with a change-of-pace in reading a chapter of Solomon's Proverbs before retiring for the night. He had learned that his physical heart has a counter-part in his spiritual heart. One hundred twenty years for the flood, God said that all the imagination of the thought of man's heart was evil continually. And the very next verse speaks of God's heart which was grieved by man's wickedness. From the instruction in the catechism class Joe learned that the "heart" so often mentioned in the Bible in connection with good and evil was the spiritual fountain of the issues of man's moral life. Later, in an evening service Joe heard a sermon on Jesus' quote from Isaiah, "This people draweth near to me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me".

Can you imagine Joe's physical heart, so cozily tucked behind his breast, working in opposition to his mouth and lips? No sir! It is impossible that I do anything but send life blood to all parts of Joe's body impartially. But it is easy to believe that a spiritual heart can be so rebellious for it is a sinful heart. Satan tempted Eve, and Adam's subsequent fall caused a hardening process in their spiritual hearts while their physical hearts kept on beating faithfully for another nine hundred thirty years!

In his study of the Book of Proverbs Joe learned that it is possible for his heart to lust after the beauty of an evil woman; that a proud heart can stir up strife. When Joe turned to the Gospels he found Jesus saying that people commit adultery in their hearts; and in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew the summation was given by Jesus, "A good man out of the treasure of his good heart bringeth forth good

things; and an evil man out of the treasure of his evil heart bringeth forth evil things."

Joe's spiritual life is given direction each Sunday morning when, after the reading of the law, the minister calls attention to the Lord's words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind". As Joe and his fellow believers strive to obey the First and Great Commandment they find it easier to obey the Second Commandment to love their neighbor as themselves.

* * * * *

Did you realize that while you were reading this your own heart beat approximately seven hundred times? Lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup, lubb-dup.

A Voice From Within The G.L.T.S.

by Rev. M. Kamps

The voice that we hear in the material below belongs to Quek Kok How, a member of the Gospel Literature And Tract Society of Singapore. He has taken the Christian name Francis and thus signs his own work. He is twenty one years old, of Chinese descent, and has been a Christian for about eight years. We asked Kok How for permission to publish his paper in the *Beacon Lights* and this was readily granted. It is produced below in full and without any editing.

Our purpose in publishing this material is to let our people hear a representative voice of the G.L.T.S. Especially it is important that we become acquainted with these brethren in Singapore in light of the decision of our Synod of '79 to send a missionary to the G.L.T.S. as they requested. We believe that the work of preaching the gospel in Singapore is your work. For the whole Church through her office bearers preaches the Word. Therefore, that you may gain some insight into this mission field, we ask you to read this young brother's interesting position paper.

In this document Kok How explains the necessity and the possibility of witnessing to the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. This article

was prepared in the spring of 1978, after Rev. Slopsema and Elder D. Engelsma had completed their work of preaching and teaching as our emissaries to Singapore. There was considerable opposition within the G.L.T.S. to the Reformed emphasis and direction which this group of youthful believers had now taken. Some within the G.L.T.S. charged that a commitment to the Reformed faith, especially the Tulip doctrines, made it impossible to witness to others. Kok How felt duty bound to write this position paper in an attempt to strengthen his brothers and sisters of the G.L.T.S. in the Reformed faith.

HOW THEN SHALL WE WITNESS

by Francis Quek

Lately in the G.L.T.D., there has been an awakening in some to the truth expressed in reformed doctrine and for others, there is a period of indecision accompanied with the searching of the scriptures and the conviction of the Holy Ghost if these things are true. Still others are, within their Heart, convinced that such doctrine is not correct especially in the areas of Limited Atonement and Reprobation.

Seeing such disunity in our midst is surely grievious in the sight of one who loves the Lord, the Head of the Church. Did not the Lord in love pray in John 17: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through the Word; **That they all may be one**; as Thou, Father art in Me, and I in Thee, **that they all may be one in Us;** that the world may believe that Thou has sent me, and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given to them, that **they may also be one** even as We are One: I in them and Thou in Me, that they **may be made perfect in one**; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Him and has loved them as Thou has loved Me." Let us therefore desire, pray and work towards her unity. However, at present, it is a fact that there is disunity in beliefs and this fact we must accept for the time being, as the Lord leads us along to the perfection He has so promised. We certainly cannot expect each other to compromise our convictions for the sake of a false untruthful unity.

It is not my desire in this article to try to convince others of my convictions but it is in fact written especially for those who are already inclined to the Reformed doctrine or are unsure and are studying and seeking the truth. I will not deal with the questions whether Christ died for all men and whether God in His good pleasure desires all men, head for head, to be saved, but rather, how we shall present the Gospel after embracing these truths.

Certainly, our witnessing and preaching cannot contradict our convictions. To go to a person and say "Christ died for you and he loves you" is going to incur the opposition of our own conscience if we believe that Christ did not die for all men and that He does not desire the salvation of all men. Even those who are unsure,

when they utter these words, their spirits may prick them, questioning their right to so boldly proclaim in their witnessing of the Truth, something which they consider may be untrue.

The question for us is "How then shall we witness?" We are so orientated to saying "God loves you and wants to save you," "Christ died for you, wouldn't you believe him," in witnessing that to confront a lost soul without these words is unthinkable. If we have no universal atonement to offer for the decision of the sinner to accept or reject at the end of the conversation, it seems impossible for any evangelism — personal or from the pulpit. Yet we cannot just say that we will not witness and avoid the issue....the Lord's command forbids us to partake in such folly.

In this study of how to present the Gospel, we shall analyse the evangelical sermon given by Paul at Mars Hill in Acts 17. This particular sermon is chosen as a guide because it is one of the few complete sermons recorded in the Bible which is primarily to those who are non Jews and do not already know the God of the Old Testament. It is therefore most suitable as an example for an audience who has to receive the Christian message without any prior instruction of the gospel. This article neither seeks to be a "How to do it?" manual nor the stereotype for all our evangelism, for it is foolish to attempt to find a rigid method for such. It seeks however to be a guide in principle to our evangelism and deals more with the contents of the evangelistic message rather than the need for it, attitude towards it or even the preparation in prayer and heart for such endeavours. In short it is on what rather than why, how, when, etc., which if God willing, I may attempt to tackle in future articles.

Please have your Bibles opened to Acts 17:16-34 for reference as you read on. The importance of our gospel contents cannot be over-emphasized.

The setting of this episode in the life of the apostle is the idolatrous city of Athens. Paul as he was there was stirred in his heart seeing the people, creatures of the One Creator, wholly given to idolatry. His prime concern was for them to know their Creator. He was not so much concerned that their sins were causing them misery, broken homes, drunkeness or a host of other social evils nor was he primarily concerned that the Athenians were guilty that they have failed to live up to their own ideal standards or the expectations of their loved ones. For this reason, he did not like in most of our gospel approaches try to stir up a person's emotion to feel sorry for his failures against himself and his loved ones. Conviction of sins is not so much a miserable guilt against ourselves but a knowledge and misery that we have sinned against God. To this end David prayed "Against Thee, Thee only have I done this evil in Thy sight...", and the same tide overwhelmed the prodigal son when he delcared "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Paul was not interested to have a following of Judases who 'repented himself' and finally hanged himself. He knew that conviction of sin has to be Godward. His duty was only to be God's mouthpiece, the ambassador of the only True God! His burden was to declare God to His creatures. This is evident when he said "Him declare I unto you."

Indeed the question "Who God Is?" is sorely missing in evangelism today and I stress that without knowing God there is no salvation for "this is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only True God and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." We have already seen that conviction of sin is Godward and likewise is repentance, faith, yielding and following. The question is what God? Is it just the name Jesus Christ? Not everyone who calls Lord, Lord is saved. If we believe in the Jesus Christ of the rock opera 'Jesus Christ Superstar'

are we then saved? Can one call on the name Jesus having in mind an idol like the many one has at home and expect salvation? Can one add the crucifix to one's trophy case of idols in one's heart and escape damnation? Putting the doctrine of Limited Atonement aside, can we tell a person "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," if the person has not the faintest idea that this is the God that made heaven and earth? Surely an idolator will think of his own idols with eyes, hands, feet, noses which have no living function. An ordinary man-on-the-street may at best have an impression of a benevolent fairy-God-Father who is so perturbed by man's disobedience that he died for him. Dare we as ambassadors risk such a gross misrepresentation of our Sovereign?

Now comes the question of which aspects of God must we present before the sinner we confront. Surely we cannot even in a whole lifetime express to others all the attributes of our unsearchable God even if we knew all of them. Paul in Acts 17 first declares to his hearers the Creator of heaven and earth and all things therein. A God that cannot possibly be contained in a temple made with hands. A God that has no needs and One Who gives life to all living. One Who created man, the creature, and who controls the bounds of the land oceans (or is in control of all nature). vs. 24-26. We need not always follow this set pattern of expressing God's attributes but I believe Paul makes it clear that we must impress upon the sinner the Great and Almighty God. It is pointless to proclaim to the lost that God is Love before first bringing to them the Great and terrible God. If we do, how will we show them that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." Heb. 10:31. How can we impress upon the sinner that the wrath and anger of the God of Righteousness and Judgement is upon him for his sin if he does not repent, if we start off with the God of Love. The truth is that without the wrath fearfulness of the God of Judgement, the grace and Love of God loses their significance and we can scarcely appreciate them. Judgement for sin is that which inflicts the mortal wound while grace is the balm. If we apply the balm, even the death of our Lord for sin, before exposing the wound, the balm loses its value and the receiver may even deem it cheap. If God did not demand that "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4), then why did Christ have to die for sin? Why then do we need grace and mercy, both of which have their source in God Who is Love? Let us come to realization that Christ did not die to save us from the devil, who has no power over our soul, but from the wrath of the Living God, which wrath would consume us if not for Christ our Advocate. There are other attributes which we may stress to our hearers; like the holiness, eternal nature, omnipresence (everywhere presence), omniscience (all knowing), wisdom, etc., of the Living God. The importance is by the working of the Holy Ghost, to bring the sinner to realization that he stands before an Almighty God worthy to be feared; to exalt God so that the hearer may know that he is hearing of One Whom he cannot take lightly; One before Whom he must fall in reverence and awe. We must present to him a God before Whom he must need tremble and quake in fear should this God pronounce Judgement upon him.

In verse 27, Paul presents the Athenians with their obligation as creatures of the Creator to seek Him; to feel after Him. This obligation, continues Paul, is a natural consequence of God's preservation upon them. "For in Him we live and move and have our being." He attested that God is the sustainer of their lives and without whom they would not even 'have their being' or *exist*. He presents what man essentially needed to be, what his purpose was before the fall in Adam.

After establishing the position of man in relation to God, one of Creature to Creator, as one so small before One Whose greatness is infinite, as clay in the hand of the Potter, Paul suddenly pulls the rug from under them. If we are His offsprings (or creation), he declared, "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, silver or stone, graven by art and man's device." Very often we are afraid to point out the sin of idolatry to an unbeliever in fear that he will say we are arrogant and condemning other religions, which in their minds are equal to Christianity. But brethren, have we forgotten that our God is the only true God? The very point we need to bring out is that our religion is not equal to others, our God is above all gods. We must never leave our hearers with the idea that our God is like unto an idol. Evangelism in this present world has deteriorated to the stage that one need not forsake his idols to become a Christian. We hear of Christians speaking of certain 'converts' 'saved' at certain rallies who have not yet been 'convicted' to stop praying to idols. Counsellors need to tell counsellees sometime after their conversion to stop their idol worship. Is our evangelism bringing forth grotesque hybrids holding joss-sticks in one hand and a Bible in the other? Is salvation possible for one who still clings to idols just because he has "accepted Christ"? Nay, it is not ours to accept or reject Christ for what He is but His to accept us inspite and despite of what we are or to reject us because of what we are. Ours is only to **receive** Him just as the clay receives the shape the Potter so desires. Clay has no power to accept nor to reject the Potter's will. We need to come as needy sinners without hope nor power to redeem ourselves and as the Word is declared to receive it with gladness rather than be as one on bargaining ground with God to accept Him should we find Him appealing. This incidently is irresistable grace in operation. It is He Who "worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil 2:13. Brethren, let us remember the Thessalonians who "turned to God from idols to serve the Living God." I Thess. 1:9.

I am not saying here that we must always only point out the sin of idolatry each time we witness. We need to, however, if there is a danger to 'winning idolatrous converts'. The idea is to point out certain sins which are idols to the person we confront. We must never be afraid that our hearer will be offended by the sin we point out. By all means be tactful but never let the fear of man hinder you. For this cause, men of God were stoned, beaten, crucified, imprisoned and hated because they loved their fellowmen enough to condemn their sins. Can we as followers of Christ expect man to love us and hail us as teachers of 'a good religion' (as good as any other) if he hated our Master?

Now comes the command of the Gospel in verse 30. We need not and I believe must not present a Christ Who died for all and offer Him to anyone who wanted salvation. After establishing Christ's pre-eminence and supremacy, we need only to issue His command. We may even echo Jn. 3:16 saying "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." While atonement is limited, the command of the gospel is to "all men everywhere". As Paul puts it, "Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained." It was as if he was echoing John the Baptist who cried "Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matt. 3:2; Jesus in Galilee "I tell you, Nay but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:3; Peter saying "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from

the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19, Peter in Samaria "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Acts 8:22; Jesus in Capernaum: "This is the work of God that ye believe of Him Whom He hath sent." John 6:29; and a host of others.

We need not say that they have to believe that Jesus died for them. We can simply tell our hearers to repent and believe on Jesus, as God; that if we repent and believe on Him, His blood washes us white as snow. This is the balm! Just as Peter declared in Acts 3:19, "Repent... that your sins may be blotted out."

Paul did not have a chance to complete his sermon on Mars Hill. After declaring to them the resurrection of Christ the Judge, they mocked him but we read in verse 34 that certain men clave to him. I believe Paul continued to establish these in the faith.

In conclusion, I wish to add a few words about 'securing decisions of our hearers. In our space age world where everything is judged by speed, let us not get our evangelism drawn into such. We cannot try to drum four to five points into a person and then press him for a decision. If we believe that man can never save himself even by our will, "but as many that believe on His Name, Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God," then we must come to the conclusion that the response of our will is by the grace of God working through the Holy Ghost in our hearts. Can we then press decisions from others? Do not underestimate God and think that unless we secure a decision, that soul would be lost. If our hearer is prepared to receive Christ on the spot, well and good but if not, do not force him. A verbal answer is far from repentance and faith towards God which is the fruit of the workings of God. We need not even ask for a decision. If the person to whom we are witnessing shows interest, invite Him to church or arrange to have bible studies with him. Just as some of the Athenians clave to Paul, the elect will show interest in the things of God. We need not spring a trap on our hearers to get a verbal 'yes' from them and hope this decision will bind them but rather let them say as Peter said "to Whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" Jn. 6:68, as the Spirit of God binds them. Our duty is just as ambassadors of our Sovereign to portray our Sovereign just as He is. Only then will our converts bow to Him as the LORD of their lives. Do not think that witnessing is that activity in which we present the work of the cross to a sinner and end up with asking for a decision. In our everyday lives, we can be witnessing too by sharing to others over God in His Greatness for then we witness and testify to others of our God. For example, we need not press our parents for a decision but we can always tell them of God and let the Holy Spirit work in their hearts. In this way, they may repent and believe. In the same way, we may witness to our friends and colleagues each day instead of once only in a lifetime when we start work and forcing them into a decision.

You may be aware that I did not deal so much with Limited Atonement as with our attitude in witnessing. This is because our emphasis is all wrong and we attempt to make people believe in a Name when they do not know nor believe in the Person Whom the Name ascribes.

Finally, I want to encourage members of G.L.T.D. to read two books on this topic of witnessing, "Today's Gospel" — Walter Chantry and "Evangelism and the Sovereignity of God" — J.I. Packer. This does not mean that I am in full agreement with these books but in general, I find them very edifying.

I have presented in this article an attitude in witnessing which exalts God, starts in God and is a Gospel after God. May we consider in the light of Scriptures

whether these things are so.

Let these words in closing be a warning to us in G.L.T.D. "This is a question which troubles many evangelical Christians today. These are some who have come to believe in the sovereignity of God in the unqualified (infinite, beyond qualification) and uncompromising way in which (as we judge) the Bible presents it. These are now wondering whether there is not some way in which they could and should witness to this faith....Others, who do not contrue the doctrine of divine sovereignity in quite this way nor take it quite so seriously, fear that this new concern to believe it thoroughly will mean the death of evangelism; for they think it is bound to undercut all sense of urgency in evangelistic action. Satan, of course, will do anything to hold up evangelism and divide Christians; so he tempts the first group to become inhibited and cynical, about all current evangelistic endeavours, and the second group to lose its head and become panicky and alarmist, and both grow self-righteous and bitter and conceited as they criticize each other. Both groups, it seems, have urgent need to watch against the wiles of the devil" — J.I. Packer "Evangelism and the Sovereignity of God" — p. 95.

THOUGHTS ON OUR WORSHIP

PRAYERS

The Scriptures are quite definite that prayers belong to the worship service. "My house shall be called a house of prayer."

Whenever Scripture speaks of worship, it speaks of prayer as a part; sometimes it makes prayer synonymous with worship.

We have the practice of prayer before the service, congregational prayer, and prayer at the end of the sermon.

Our prayers must be Scriptural in that they always convey the central theme of Scripture; the glory of God. They must contain petitions which are Scriptural and, as much as possible the usage of Scriptural language.

They must be adapted to their own particular place in the service. The congregational prayers must be for the needs of the congregation and for the needs of the church of Christ universal. They must be for the sick because when one suffers the whole church suffers. They must *not* be vainly repetitious: a 10 minute discourse in theology, or a preview of the sermon. They must contain all the elements of true prayer as set forth in Lord's Day 45. And most surely they must be *to* God, *in* and *through* Christ.

CONVENTION SPEECHES

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Ephesians 5:16

REDEEMING THE TIME: IN AN AGE OF IGNORANCE

by Rev. Marvin Kamps

The theme of our convention speeches is expressed in the words of the apostle Paul: "Redeeming the time." We should note briefly the use of the concept time in this epistle to the Ephesians by the apostle. In the first chapter of this letter the apostle speaks of eternity in contrast to time. This contrast is foundational and of extreme importance for the understanding of this epistle. Paul speaks of the believer's predestination, of his election, according to God's good pleasure and that this act of God was before the foundation of the world. Before time God predestinated. Secondly, the apostle writes of the realities of the Ephesians' salvation in the sphere of time. From the historic moment when the letter was written, Paul speaks of a past time. The Ephesian Christians had been dead in sins (Eph. 2:1-3), they had been without Christ and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12-13). The present moment for the Ephesian Christians must be viewed in the light of what had been the past time and in the light of the eternity of God. For they are now blessed with all the heavenly blessings (Eph. 1:3-4), they are now the children of God by adoption (Eph. 1:5), they are now God's workmanship in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10), and finally, they are now the temple of God Himself who dwells in them by His Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22).

The Ephesian Christians, therefore, were faced with the responsibility to carefullly examine their walk in order that as God's wise children they would be redeeming the time!

All this has a significance for us. Who are we from an external view point? Obviously, we are a goodly number of the young people of our Protestant Reformed Churches. We have believing parents. We, as do many other young people, have hopes and dreams of possessing powerful cars, of gaining a particular boyfriend or girlfriend, of gaining a specific degree in education, and we hope and dream with respect to many other aspects of the future time. These hopes and dreams are perfectly natural and unavoidable. But who are we from a spiritual viewpoint? We are children of Jehovah God. We are the temple of God. We are the workmanship of God in Christ. We are believers by God's sovereign grace and according to His purpose of election.

Consequently, the host society reminds us of our calling to be walking as wise children of God, who are redeeming

the time. We thank them for this timely reminder.

What is our calling, then, according to the text: "See then, that ye walk circumspectly not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"? We should note that there is only one imperative in our test. The imperative is not to redeem the time. Though in itself this is a permissable idea. But it is not the text. Nor does the text command us to be wise, which is, of course, also a proper admonition; but it is not the text.

The specific command to the believer is expressed in the words of verse fifteen of this chapter, "See then." By this expression the apostle commands us to "look closely", or "examine carefully", **how** we are walking. We are called to a constant spiritual self-examination. How do I walk? Do I walk as the unwise unbeliever or as a wise child of God? The apostle's command that we examine ourselves presupposes that we are spiritually sensitive children before God. For the close scrutiny of our walk stands opposed to all indifference, apathy, and disregard of God and His Word. Our present walk refers to our inward life of heart and mind as well as to our outward conduct. How are we walking? Are we the wise children of God and, therefore, those who are redeeming the time?

Why does the apostle place this demand of self-examination before us? The answer: he would have us as wise children of God redeem the time. It is possible for us to redeem the time and in this way to use it to God's glory and honor. For we are no longer under the domination of the devil, the Prince of the power of the air. We have been enabled to serve our God by virtue of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Since we are children of God it is in our capacity and it is our calling to walk as wise children redeeming the time.

If one is wise he is able to employ the best means to the attainment of his purpose. What is the one great purpose of our lives? It is the glory and honor of our great God and Savior. In wisdom then we must employ the means unto that end. The apostle reminds us that the one all inclusive means that we are to employ unto the attainment of this great purpose is —**time**. We are to redeem the time unto the attainment of the ultimate purpose of our salvation, which is the glory of God's name.

The obvious implication is that our use of time is to be radically different from that of the unbeliever, the unwise. The unbeliever uses time as an unbeliever unto the attainment of his wicked self-seeking purpose. The believer redeems time as a believer and, therefore, not for self but for the glory of Jehovah, his God.

What is then the character of the activity of one who is obedient to this command of the apostle that we carefully examine our daily walk? The character of that activity is that described in our text as "redeeming the time".

What is time? What is this thing we are to redeem? Time is a creature of God; God alone is eternal. God stands above time and is not subject to its power and movement. Time is God's servant. Further, time moves. Time is progress and it never stands still, not even for a moment. Time in its ceaseless march forward cannot be stopped. Time is irrevocable. The opportunities of the past time cannot be called back. What ever was done cannot be undone. Time in a broader sense is the mighty bearer of all the circumstances of our lives. Time brings to us the particular realities of the day or night, of our youth or old age, of sickness or health, of poverty or wealth, of loneliness or fellowship, of sorrow or happiness. Time is the mighty bearer of all things good or bad. Finally, therefore, time is a mighty ruler and law. Time dominates our lives. It pulls us along down through the years and decades of our lives. Time rules. The time

and its circumstances are not our making.

But time can be and must be redeemed by us.

Literally the term redeeming means to purchase, to buy. Through this purchasing of time we make it our own possession. In our text the word time is in the singular. Therefore the moment of the present is to be purchased by us. Every moment of our lives is to be redeemed. We are not to procrastinate and take the attitude that we will purchase some future moment. No, now and each day of our lives we are to be redeeming the time. Every moment of the continuous present is to be purchased.

Time is valuable. This is presupposed. We purchase that which is valuable to us. Time is valuable from the viewpoint, first of all, that it is given to the believer in God's grace as the means to be employed to His glory. Secondly, time is valuable because it is replete with opportunities to serve God as wise children.

If something is purchased we have to pay a price. The price required of us to redeem time is the high price of self-denial. When we put off the old man and put on the new man we are paying the price of redeeming the time. Our reaction by nature to this price is that it is far too high a price to pay. We do not always want to redeem the time. We often would walk as the unwise unbeliever. Therefore, the command of the apostle is that we look carefully to see how we are walking, as the wise or as the unwise.

When are we to be redeeming the time? The host society for this convention reminds us that we are to do that in an age of ignorance. Question. Of what are the people of this modern age ignorant? Is our society ignorant of history in general; in our age is science and its application to our lives without development, is there an ignorance of technology? With respect to what can it be said that we live in an age of ignorance? Do we not live in the age of the explosion of knowledge! The history of mankind and of nations and their development is well known. Modern man is very knowledgeable about the physical wonders of our universe. We live in the age of fantastic discoveries in space exploration, space technology, geology, in the fields of medicine and of industry. Modern man is rapidly discovering and harnessing the powers of the material world to serve himself. From this viewpoint, therefore, we cannot speak of an age of ignorance. No, from this view point it is the age of brilliance and the rapid expansion of knowledge.

However, our age is none the less grossly ignorant of the one important reality of time. In our age men are ignorant of God's Word! The Bible is not known to our society. Even in the church world today many, many church goers do not know the simple facts recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Much less even is the meaning and significance of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus known. People are not familiar with God's Word. Our age is ignorant of that which is above all important.

Even in many conservative churches so-called the people are ignorant of the over all theme of Scripture. This theme is the truth of Christ crucified for the elect people of God, with whom, on the basis of Christ's shed blood, God established the covenant of friendship with His own. Reformed people are ignorant of this central theme of Scripture. To be ignorant of this central theme is no little matter. It ought not to be minimized. Especially is this true with respect to those who call themselves Reformed believers. To be ignorant of this central theme of Scripture is to be ignorant of the heart of the gospel.

Ignorance of the Word of God in our age and in the Church world in general and in the Reformed church world in particular is not merely the fruit of neglect. This ignorance is the fruit of apostasy. Rejection of the truth is the

fountain head of this ignorance. Fathers and mothers have rejected the truth and, consequently, have refused to teach it or have it taught to their children. The fruit of rejection then is what? Whole generations of children and again their children have arisen who are grossly ignorant of the very heart of the gospel. It is the ignorance which is the fruit of a wicked departure. The candlestick of light and truth is being withdrawn from an apostatizing church world. This withdra. ing activity is the work of God in judgment against the apostatizing churches of our land and world. It is an age of evil.

The days are evil! They are days of rejection, apostasy, and thus of ignorance of God's Word.

How about ourselves? Are we ignorant of the Reformed truth? Are we ignorant of the heart of the gospel? Do we know and believe that truth of God that Christ Jesus was crucified for the guilty elect sinner, with whom, on the basis of Christ's shed blood, God has established His covenant of friendship through the way of repentance and faith? Do we know it? I believe that you know this truth. You are not ignorant of it. That you know it is of God's grace and goodness to us in our generations. We may not boast. It is of God we humbly and thankfully acknowledge. Oh, I know that you are not theologians whose minds are filled with proof texts re the articles of faith. But you know the truth for yourself. How can I be so sure that you know God's Word and that you are blessed by the knowledge of it? Because our parents have been redeeming the time. In the church, in the home, and in the school your parents have been using every opportunity to teach you the truth of God's Word. They have used the time of our youth to prepare us to be the church of tomorrow! This was their calling before God. I believe that God has richly blessed that covenantal training in our churches. All thanks and praise to Him alone. Our parents did not cast away the central theme of Scripture, but they pressed it to their and our hearts. They lived out of it and caused us to grow up in the confession of this wonderful truth of God's Word.

Ignorant of God's Word and its central message cannot ever be true of us who are here today. It is possible that some of the youth of our churches in wickedness reject this truth and forsake it. But ignorant of it they can never be. However, our children and their children will be ignorant of it **unless** we do as did our fathers. We too must be redeeming the time in an age of willfull ignorance.

Therefore, we must ever heed the command of the apostle to examine carefully our present walk in order that as wise children we may be daily engaged in the activity of redeeming the time in our age of willful ignorance.

What then specifically must be the content of our activity in redeeming the time? How do we redeem it? Our redeeming the time must take the form of gaining knowledge. Especially is this important in the moment, of the time of our youth. Youth is the time of preparation. The whole of life and its awesome responsibilities lie before you. Prepare! Gain knowledge!

In general we ought to gain a well rounded training in the Christian high school and Christian college. I believe this to be more and more important for our youth. But above all and by all means must we be students of God's Word. We must study the whole of the infallible Bible in the light of Christ crucified for His own. We must then let the light of this glorious gospel cast its illuminating rays upon our path in these days that are evil with the darkness of apostasy.

The benefit will be great for our churches and for others even to distant lands and islands of the sea. We must know the truth of God's Word, defend it, preach it, and live it with all our hearts. We must strive to be fit instruments of

God unto the gathering and preservation of His Church. Gain knowledge! The benefit of a thorough knowledge of God's Word for us individually is that we will develop a firm conviction of the truth and an abiding assurance of God's love and favor upon us in Christ Jesus. We grow in grace through growth in knowledge.

How? How can we redeem the time? How can we gain knowledge in this age of ignorance? Remember, God still favors us with the pure preaching of His Word. Use diligently the means of grace given us by God through the means of the Church. We must be attentive under the preaching of the word of the Cross. We must be faithful in preparation and in participation in our catechism classes. We gain knowledge of God's Word through the efforts of our young people societies. Personal Bible study! Leave your T.V. off and turn off the godless music on the radio. You will not learn God's Word from these sources. We are to redeem the time by contemplating and meditating upon God's Word and Work in Jesus Christ. Doing this we are then walking as wise children of God redeeming the time.

Examine carefully how you are walking.

Thank you!

REDEEMING THE TIME: DURING THE SEX REVOLUTION

by Rev. D. H. Kuiper

I hardly know how to begin tonight. You see, I thought it was necessary and important to say something about a practice that began several years ago at conventions. I was going to make some remarks about clapping at the conclusion of the speeches and point out that the proper reaction on your part, to the exposition and application of the Word of God, was the silence of worship and reverence and awe. Last night your reaction to the first speech was silence, the silence of reverence and meditation, so I am very happy that I do not have to make these remarks at all.

Now to our subject, which is Redeeming the Time During the Sex Revolution. That's a dandy subject to speak on at a convention. Not because it is easy; to speak about sex to an audience composed of young men and young women is not easy. But a wonderful subject, as I see it, for the following reasons: first, you are at an age when sex is not only an interesting area, but a tremendously important one. One you must thoroughly understand. Secondly, the Bible has a lot to say about this aspect of man's life. There is a surprising amount of instruction and information, both negative and positive, in the word of God. And it's all true! And thirdly, the world also has a lot to say about sex, and what the world has to say is uniformly bad. In fact, it is not too much to state that sex is all the world wants to talk about.

As those who are called to be saints, we must follow the Word of God and not the word of man. And we must *follow* the Word of God from our **youth**! We must not fall into sinful practices, attitudes, and speech at this time of our lives, for sinful

practices in the sexual area are the most difficult of all to overcome and forsake, and they often carry with them results that stay with a person a long time, perhaps for the rest of his life. And how sin in this area of life can wound the soul!

The church is in the world, isn't it? And that means that what the world does the church notices not only, but the church is often influenced by it. Let me tell you a short story that comes from a discussion in one of our young people's societies a number of years ago. We were discussing I Peter 3:3-6, where the apostle sets forth the true beauty of women. He tells us that Christian women ought to concern themselves with beauty and adornment. But he warns that this adornment must not be the outward adornment of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel....that really has nothing to do with beauty. But, he says, let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Christian women must concern themselves with the inner life of humility and meekness. Well, we began to talk about fashions. About short skirts and skimpy bathing suits. Things like that. A couple of the girls couldn't go along with what Peter was saying. They claimed that they had to dress like that and paint up abit because other girls did it, and if they didn't do it too, the boys wouldn't ask them out. We'll come back to some of these ideas later, but this example certainly shows that what goes on in this world of sin around us is of considerable influence upon us. And that ought **not to be!**

I. Is there such a thing as a sex revolution? If there is, exactly what do we mean by it? And how does the sex revolution today differ from sexual perversion in the past? We can accept the term "sex revolution" if we understand that what we observe round about us today is not new, and does not stand separate from what has gone on in the past. It is rather the fruit and developement of past evils. Sinful sex is as old as the human race. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, immediately they knew that they were naked and they were ashamed. One implication of that shame is that the sexual aspect of their lives came under the dominion of sin. According to Genesis 6, just before the flood, "the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose." Later, the idolatry of the nations round about Israel, which Israel often copied, involved lewd dancing and sexual sins. At the time of Esther, King Ahaserերus wanted his queen Vashti to dance for all his princes, and when she refused he had a beauty contest to find him another wife. In the New Testament all the epistles to the churches warn against the lust of the flesh. Converts to the faith were, and are, admonished to stop doing those things which belonged to their former conversation and life. The heathen world was simply filled with sexual perversions and excesses. And historians tell us that sex, an emphasis on sex, a misuse of sex, moral decay and rottenness, lead to the downfall of many an empire. Especially was this true of the Roman Empire. No, sexual sins are not new to our times.

What we find today differs nonetheless. What we find today is that the degree of these sins has increased, the openness and lack of restraint has increased, and the condemnation of such sins has all but disappeared. What we mean, then, by sex revolution is the general, wise-spread revolt of attitudes and practices, in the sexual area, against the Word of God! A vomiting forth of filth. A degree of corruption this world has never seen before. And almost a complete lack of restraint and condemnation. Rather, there is the encouraging of sexual perversions and a delighted pre-occupation with it. The sex revolution that we see today is the **fruit** of the past; it has grown **out** of the past. And the reason things have reached the sorry state they have,

the deepest theological reason, is that God has given man over to the corruption he loves. God gives them up to their vile affections. God gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not holy and right. The sex revolution is God's **judgment** upon the world of wicked men. God says in effect, You refuse to honor and serve Me? You refuse to keep my commandments in all your life? I give you over. My judgment upon you is that you **do** all those terrible things you lust after! "And wicked man, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:32)

What are some of the elements or forces that belong to the sex revolution? There is first of all, the new morality or situation ethics. This view of life, which has gained acceptance not only in the world of unbelief but also in a large part of the church, is very attractive to young people. It goes like this. There is no absolute right or absolute wrong. No one can say that this is always right and that is always wrong. It all depends upon the situation or the circumstances. Is premarital sex wrong? Is it wrong to climb into the back seat of the car with your girlfriend and make playgrounds of your bodies? Well, they say, it makes a difference. Do you love her? Do you both agree that you are ready, mature enough? Are you willing to accept the consequences of your actions? If so, it's perfectly alright. If the situation is one way, it's alright to do it. If the situation is another way, it might very well be wrong. That's the new morality. It's the denial of the perfect, everlasting law of God! The new morality is the old immorality.

In close connection with this, we have to recognize that a new permissiveness has grown out of the new morality. What has happened? This. After fifteen or twenty years of situation ethics being taught and preached to people, there is at the present time a whole generation of leaders — teacher, preachers, parents, political figures — who believe this and espouse this. And the result is that an any-thing-goes attitude prevails. Everything is permitted. No one **knows** what true morality is anymore, and no one dares to say, See here, kids, see here, young people, this is right and this is wrong!

In the third place, there is the whole area of entertainment. Another speaker will lead you through that problem, but I must show that entertainment is governed by the godess of sex. Music, dancing, movies, television, even advertising, are all given to the proposition that sex is **fun**, sex is for all, there are no barriers and restraints. I was going to quote some words from a few current songs at this point, but I've decided I better not, and I'm sure you prefer that I don't as well. When I was a young man there was a song played on the radio two or three times every hour that went something like this: "Standing on the corner, watching all the girls go by. You can't go to jail for what you're thinking...." I guess that's true, but the Bible teaches that a person can go to **hell** for what he's thinking. Then there's nudity, the sexual act on the stage, magazines in the super-markets, pornography. Did you ever watch Charlie's Angels on Television? How many watch this program? (Almost every one in the audience raised his hand.) I don't have television, but **Time** magazine calls that television program soft-core pornography. It is designed to show-off the female body and to make people lust after it. And if you watch Charlie's Angels, that's why you watch it, too!

Fourthly, there is the women's liberation movement. What concerns us here, regarding women's lib, is their purpose to have complete equality with men so that they can free their bodies for whatever purpose they wish to use it. The result is that more and more women

refuse to marry; that's a drag for them. They want a career. And as for sex, well, there are ways of taking care of that. Further, there are contraceptives: the pill and other devices that are not only available to young people, but are pushed on them by physicians and educators! The thinking is, You won't get caught, not if you're careful. You don't have to worry about pregnancy. So that, practically, that serious consideration and restraint is removed. And finally, belonging to the sex revolution is the world's low view of marriage and the resulting ease of divorce. Marriages are entered into on the basis of sex appeal, and when the sex appeal wears off, husbands and wives dump each other and find some one else. So there is widespread, sinful divorce, and wide-spread, sinful remarriage. And when this is observed by young people as painful or distasteful, they determine to have trial marriages to see how things will work out, or they decide to live together with no strings whatsoever attached. Can anyone deny there is a sex revolution? Can anyone deny that these things have some affect on our thinking and on our lives? Can anyone deny that many of the things I have mentioned are also practiced by some of our own young people? No one can...no one can deny it!

II. What we have to do is hear the Word of God concerning sex. What **is** sex according to Scripture? First of all, sex is a good creature of God. God created sex. Sex did not come into the world **after** the fall, as something dirty and sinful. No, it belonged to the beauty and perfection of the original creation. Before the fall, God created them male and female, and said unto them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth...." Before the fall, God instituted marriage with the result "that a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Then we read. "And Adam and Eve were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." They were not ashamed because there was nothing to be ashamed about! The human body was beautiful, and the use for which the human body was created was likewise beautiful. Sex belonged to the sinless state.

Well, the fall came and the sexual aspect of the human nature came under the dominion of sin, as did the powers of man. So that man became a fornicator, an adulterer, filled with sexual lust and evil desires. When Christ died on the cross, beloved young people, He redeemed that creature we call sex. He redeemed His people not only, but He also redeemed all of creation...every creature God had made. He redeemed time too. That's why we are called to redeem the time. And belonging to our redeeming the time is redeeming sex in our personal lives. Because of the death of Christ, therefore, sex for the Christian is once more a good and a beautiful thing. Sex, according to the Word of God, is **love**. Sex is an act of love! I want you to see that, and appreciate that, and never forget that. Love is giving. "For God so loved the world that He **gave** His only begotten Son." When you love a person, you give to that person. If parents love their children they give them time, they give them instruction, they give unselfishly of all that they have. And if you love the poor, you give to the poor. The activity of love is always to give. Love shows itself in giving. Sex is love because when a man and a women engage in this act they give themselves to each other. That's what the act of love is! It is the complete giving of one to the other, the giving of one's body and strength to the other, because one loves the other, because he wants that person to have joy and satisfaction. The act of love is a **love-debt** that a husband and wife have toward each other. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 7 that the wife's body doesn't belong to her, but to her husband. And the husband has not power over his own body, but the wife. It belongs

to being one flesh that a person's body becomes the right and possession of his mate! That's why Paul states further. Don't defraud or cheat each other. Don't hold back from giving yourself to your mate. You may not do that, and if you should nevertheless try that, Satan is going to tempt you. So in the first place, the Bible makes clear that sex is an act of love in that it is the complete giving of one's self to the other, to the mate.

Secondly, sex is for the married only! How the Bible impresses that upon us! Outside of marriage sex is not good and beautiful, but outside of marriage sex is ugly and sinful. God did not create sex for single people. The seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Thou shalt not engage in sex when you are single, and thou shalt not engage in sex with anyone but your mate when you are married. So serious a sin is adultery that God warns us again and again that adulterers and whore-mongers cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. And if young people nevertheless do these things, and it becomes known by the church (as for example when a girl becomes with child) then the church labors with the boy and the girl to bring them to confession of their sin. Since it has become known publicly that this has happened, the sin must be confessed publicly as well so that the entire congregation may rejoice in the fact of this confession, and may also know that the sin of adultery is not allowed in the church of Jesus Christ. Sex outside of marriage is not love. It is not an act of love and unselfish giving. It is hatred for the other person, and it is selfish **taking** for one's own pleasure. How can it be love when it involves you and your friend in the wrath of God? Don't be deceived by that slippery lie, If you love me, prove it. Prove it to me by going all the way. That is nothing but an expression of hatred. And you do well to have nothing to do with such a person until he or she shows real change in his life.

Thirdly, it belongs to the Scriptural doctrine of sex that this wonderful activity is used by God to bring forth, in the church, the children of His covenant. Sex is a good and honorable aspect of marriage by itself. Having children is not the only reason for sex. But God has joined together this act of love with child-bearing. So there are two purposes which God has in mind with sexual life: the one is that it be an expression of the joyful intimacy of marriage, and the other is that of begetting children. Rev. Engelsma in his book **Marriage** writes, "The two purposes of God with regard to sex in marriage have been joined together very closely. In the practice of birth control, man separates, or tries to separate, what God has joined together. Man tries to retain the expression and enjoyment of the intimacy of marriage, while excluding the bringing forth of children." He asks the question, "Does man have a right to do this?" And his answer is **no**. And my answer is no. And that is your answer, too, is it not? As husband and wife love each other, and show their love for each other, they submit themselves to God's will completely as to children, the number of children, and the timing of children. They gladly receive all the children God gives them and they view those children as most precious gifts from God!

III. Let me end by holding before you your calling in regard to sex. How can young people today redeem the time during the sex revolution? How can we spend our days in a way that is pleasing to God and that will surely bring His blessing upon us? First, it is our calling to confess the Word of God to us on these matters; to give our personal assent to His Word. When we read our Bibles, when we hear sermons preached on this topic, when we have a speech such as tonight, then we must say to our souls, That's right and true...I must hear and do that. The

Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that the Seventh Commandment means "That all uncleaness is cursed of God: and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life." Hearing that, the child of God does not say, Well, maybe. We'll see how it goes. But he says, **Yea, Lord. Amen!!**

Secondly, we must understand that our bodies and our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit. We walk about day after day and night after night carrying within us the Holy Spirit. And as temples of God, we must preserve our bodies and souls holy and pure. Otherwise we grieve the Holy Spirit of God that is in us. And what grieves the Holy Spirit is not only gross sins such as adultery, but also unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.

Thirdly, help one another to be pure, and don't tempt each other. There is a lot of sexual temptation in this world as we have seen earlier. What I'm saying now is this: don't add to the problem by tempting each other as well. Skimpy bathing suits entice men to impure thoughts. Peek-a-boo fashions tempt other to look and to have sinful desires. There is no place for that worldliness in the church and there is no place for that at our conventions. And I say it's got to stop! And I say that because God's Word says that. If there are those at our conventions or at our churches back home who are loose and wild in this whole area of sex, let's witness against their evil and do everything we can to show them the beauty of purity and holiness. And if we can't change them let's be sure that they are in a very small minority, and as a tiny minority that they feel out of place and wished they were home. Boys, don't tempt your girls to go further and further each date. Girls, don't try to turn your boyfriends on by acting or looking sexy. Help each other be pure and faithful. That belongs to loving your neighbor. And if you're in the car, and the kisses are getting longer and longer, and the temperature is rising, STOP! Put your hands back where they belong, apologize to each other, and go home!

Fourthly, your calling as Christian young people is to marry! The Bible says marry. That's God's answer to a perfectly proper sexual desire. If a person cannot contain himself, if he notices that he has these desires, that's no shame; that's normal and healthy. And you will discover someday that it's wonderful besides. But Paul says, "Marry." Don't burn with lust. Don't sin in your heart and mind. Marry. But marry in the Lord, marry a fellow-believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And finally, because not one of us can do any of these things of ourselves, your calling is to pray! Pray for the Holy Spirit that He may guide you in your life of dating and courting. Pray that He may strengthen you in the midst of powerful temptations and hold you faithful. And that He may lead you in finding a proper mate for the rest of you life. In the power of the Spirit you can redeem the time, and through the power of prayer you can live chastely, whether in single life or in holy wedlock.

Thank you.

"Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not...."

Proverbs 23:22, 23

REDEEMING THE TIME: IN A FUN-LOVING GENERATION

by Rev. R. Miersma

Redeeming the time in a fun-loving generation! That in a way is a strange statement with a hidden message. We all like to have fun, a good time. What is wrong with having a little fun in our life? Yet, this is a strange statement because it implies that something is wrong. The Young People's Society here at Redlands must have sensed that as well. Otherwise the subject would never have been brought up for discussion. Yes, indeed, we need guidance also with respect to our fun.

Fun! Fun-loving! What does that mean? A look into the Holy Scriptures will tell you that there is no such word in the Bible. Webster defines fun as "sport or merriment, a lack of serious purpose." The idea of merriment implies the concept of pleasure, that which is pleasing to us, that which affords us "a good time."

The Word of God does speak concerning pleasure, both in the good sense and in the bad sense. The Scriptures speak of God's good pleasure. When Christ was baptized a voice from heaven said "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased," (Luke 3:22). The apostle Paul writes this concerning God's children, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jsus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," (Eph. 1:5). God is rejoicing in that which is in harmony with His will.

When God speaks of pleasure in His Word according to the bad sense He refers to worldly pleasures or lusts of the flesh. This is not in harmony with God's will but rather is in harmony with the fleshly desires of man. For example, in the parable of the four kinds of soil as recorded in Luke 8:14 we read, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Elsewhere, Paul says to Timothy, "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," (I Tim. 5:6). And Paul in describing the perilous times of the last days characterizes men as "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," (II Tim. 3:4).

This kind of pleasure often goes by another name, hedonism. This word is derived from the Greek word meaning pleasure which is usually used in the evil sense of lustful pleasure. This is the philosophy in which the ultimate criterion for conduct is pleasure. Wm. S. Banlwsky in his book **It's A Playboy World** writes with respect to hedonism, "It is a formidable moral philosophy, and its perennial plausibility is forged from the irresistible fact that **pleasure is good**; so good that all normal people instinctively and universally desire it." In other words, everybody ought to do his own thing for what is pleasurable is good.

It is in this latter sense that I understand what is meant by a fun-loving generation. There is in this day an insatiable desire to seek worldly pleasure. This is accomplished in two ways, both of

which are evil. The first way is the greater and greater desire to do that which in itself is wicked, contrary to the will and good pleasure of God. I have in mind such things as the pleasure sought in adultery, fornication, movie attendance, dancing, gambling, Sunday sports, and the like. These acts one readily recognizes to be sin whether we have pleasure in them or not. From such sins and from them that commit thses sins we must stay away.

The question is, does this characterize the present generation. The answer is an emphatic "yes," otherwise we would not be discussing this now. Many today are seeking their fun and pleasure through the use of drugs and alcohol. So many are turning to this mind-corrupting and mind-destroying means of pleasure that it has reached epidemic proportions. Movie attendance and dancing are an accepted norm in life. If you do not participate you are considered square and narrow-minded, and the object of ridicule. In addition, hardly a Sunday goes by, if any at all, that is not desecrated by millions by attending sports events on the Sabbath day. After all, this is the day when one can have the biggest crowds. Another open violation of God's commandments is the seeking of self-gratification by satisfying one's sexual appetite whether that be pre-marital or extra-marital. In fact, this particular violation is openly advocated even by so-called church people. This is all possible and right in their eyes because God's Word is no longer the standard for life, but one's own pleasure. Again, if it is pleasurable, it is good. We can expect to see more and more of this because the days are evil. As the cup of iniquity gets fuller and as the end of time draws nearer we will continue to observe an increase in this lawlessness in which each one does that which is right in his own eyes.

In addition to sinning by seeking pleasure in that which is evil one can also sin by seeking that which in itself is not evil. Let me explain. That which we do may in itself not be bad or evil, but the evil resides in our becoming so preoccupied in the pursuit of pleasure that it crowds out and chokes the good in our life. Again the question must be asked, "Is this true of our generation?" To ask the question is to answer it. A look about us will quickly convince us of the truth that this does characterize our day. Those of you who work at a particular job certainly notice the fact that employees have one thing in mind-the end of the day so that they can rush off to play ball, golf, tennis or go water skiing, riding snowmobile, riding motorcycle, or hiking, swimming, and a host of other activities. The work itself and all other things are second. the work is only a means to an end, that end being pleasure. Campgrounds are full, vacation resorts continually put out the "No Vacancy" sign, major league sports are constantly expanding to satisfy the demand of the public, and the fast-food industry is one of the fastest growing industries on the market. Simply everything that has to do with recreation is booming. Ten years ago 40 billion dollars a year was spent on the pursuit of pleasure. An amount that is greater that what was spent on education and religion combined. That was ten years ago. Imagine how high that figure is today and how out of proportion it is with respect to church and school.

This preoccupation with pleasure, sad to say, is also found in our homes. Let us be honest with ourselves. During the school year the family is very seldom at home together, even to the point where not even one meal can be eaten together as a family. The reason is not because of catechism and society. No, it is because we have this or that game practice, game, or some other sports activity. Even our Sunday afternoons are filled with activities that are not conducive to our having a foretaste of heavenly glory and rest. Rather many sit glued to the television

watching basketball, football, or what have you. It is basically no different in the summer. Everybody is going in every other direction at once. As a family we have to have what the neighbors have-a boat, a bigger boat, or a RV of some kind. A clamor is raised for a shorter work day, or daylight savings time, or three-day week-end. All in the service of our new god, pleasure.

What happens when we prostrate ourselves before this god? We find that we do not have time for God's kingdom in whatever way that is manifested. Catechumens either do not know their lesson or they are absent because of some outside activity which is supposedly more important. Societies which are formed for the study of God's Word are poorly attended because we are too busy. Societies can not even meet in the summer because nobody can or wants to come. We use the excuse that we have to have some free time.

Why is this? One reason is the prosperity of the times. In this time of affluence many have the opportunity to seek pleasures they otherwise could not afford. What used to be available only to the very rich is now affordable to millions. Thus, the pleasure cult is inherently materialistic. The making of money and the seeking of pleasure go hand in hand. One's chief desire is to make more so that he can have more fun.

The second reason why we are so pleasure-crazy is because we are bombarded day in and day out with this hedonistic philosophy through the means of the television. An alarming statistic was given to us by Rev. Slopsema in the **Standard Bearer** article entitled "A House Divided." It read "A new member of today's generation can expect to spend nearly 10 years in front of the television screen during his life-span." He has viewed twenty-two thousand hours of television by the time he has graduated from high school! Hour after hour and day after day the television convinces us that we need all that we desire. No longer are they luxuries, but we simply can not get along without them. If we do not have what the rest of the people have, then we are not with it, but we are backward, relics of an age gone by. To make matters worse, the television sweetens its commercials and sells us its products by appealing to the lusts of our flesh, namely sex. If we can be excited sexually then the product is as good as sold.

The third reason why this generation is so pleasure-minded is because man is trying to fill a spiritual vacuum. Within one's soul there is a certain emptiness. The simple pursuit of pleasure is the anesthetic that is used to deaden the constant ache of emptiness. The irony of it all is that the more he obtains to fill this vacuum the greater the vacuum becomes. When one seemingly has reached his goal it no longer satisfies, but something bigger and better must now replace it to keep him stimulated. That reminds us of the Rich Fool of Luke 12 who tried to satisfy his soul with corn—tried to satisfy a spiritual need with material goods. A fool, the Lord calls him, for he does not reckon with reality. This is the blindness of man by nature; spiritually he is empty, but he will not and cannot seek the spiritual food to fill his empty soul. Since material goods are not the proper food he continues to strive to fill the void but never is satisfied.

This depravity and spiritual vacuum which is the basic cause for one's pleasure-seeking is closely related to what Rev. Kamps discussed with you earlier. Spiritual ignorance is this vacuum. When we do not have the knowledge of God we seek worldly things to fill its place. The relationship is reciprocal. When we seek worldly pleasures then we seek less and less the Word of God, thus becoming more and more ignorant. Apply this principle to your own lives and see whether or not you see danger signs. We

are not immune to the influence of affluence. Our parents and grandparents had to struggle through hard years, especially during the time of the depression and the World Wars. They were poor. Day by day they lived as if they were fed directly from the hand of God. They were consciously dependent upon His care. They stayed home with their Bibles and their families because there was neither time nor the money to indulge in all kinds of pleasures. But they were strong spiritually.

Today our affluence takes us more and more away from our time with the Scriptures. You see the results—broken homes, divorces, disrespect for authority. Very plainly an ignorance of the Scriptures. And all of this is a result of our not having our hearts in the right place. We are self-pleasers rather than God-pleasers. What we have really done is to destroy the antithesis. The antithesis means that there is an absolute standard by which we judge our actions, thoughts, word, and deeds. If they are in harmony then they are right; but if they conflict, then they are wrong. The standard or criterion is the Word of God. When our life is in harmony with God's Word then we are pleasing in His sight. But if we follow the philosophy of the fun-loving generation and let pleasure itself be the standard, then we have thrown out the Almighty God and have set up our own god called man. When man does this he no longer cares for God's Word, no longer studies it; he is ignorant. He has become a slave to that which he thought was his freedom. By seeking happiness as an end in itself, he loses it.

Young people, your calling in this situation is to redeem the time. Time is a creature that has been created by God. Time is filled with words which serve the purpose of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven. When that goal has been reached there will no longer be any need for time. This time was redeemed because it had fallen under the curse because of man's sin. Under the curse all the labors of man are in vain, time remorselessly dragging him to the grave. However, Christ redeemed time so that it would serve the purpose of God, the gathering of the elect and the return of Christ in glory, might, and honor, thus ultimately serving God's glory.

As children of God in Christ who are yet here upon the earth we have the distinct calling to have the mind of Christ in us, that as redeemed sinners we redeem time to the glory of God. Man by nature seeks the things of time alone and as ends in themselves. But man by grace looks beyond the things of time and uses time to set his eyes on Christ, and on God's church, God's cause, that God may be glorified in all. Everything that we do must find its motive in our love for God which He has given unto us through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The question in your mind at this point may very likely be, "What may we or may we not do? What pleasure may I seek? What kind of fun may I have?" In keeping with our liberty in Christ wherewith he hath made us free I am not going to lay down some rules as to what you may do or for how long you may do it. You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. That is right; you have knowledge, true, spiritual knowledge. Where did you get it? Certainly it did not fall from the sky. Nor did you purchase it at the store. No, God gave you that knowledge through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He gave you a knowledge which has as its contents all that God has revealed unto His children in the infallibly inspired Scriptures. However, the knowledge of the Scriptures you will not know if you do not study those Scriptures. And you will not study those Scriptures if you waste your time vainly pursuing the pleasures of the world. Think of that the next time you want to do this or that or go here or there, or when you are asked to contribute of your time or money to the

cause of the church. Try the spirits to see whether they are of God. Remember, the more you seek pleasure the less you will know God. This is true simply because pleasure is not and end in itself.

What is our pleasure? To love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then we know that we are a sweet-smelling savor unto God. That gives us peace in our hearts, comfort for our souls. That, young people, is true spiritual pleasure—to seek God and His glory, knowing that in this way we experience and receive the blessed benefits of the cross of Jesus Christ. Then we are filled with righteousness; no spiritual vacuum is present so that we crave for worldly things. No, we are content, happy, and at peace with our God. No greater joy can be found this side of the grave. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is," (Eph. 5:15-17). This will of the Lord is "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," (Matt. 6:33). This is the life of obedience which looks for the return of Jesus Christ who promises us, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. 22:12).

PREPARING TO COMFORT

by Herman Ophoff

I believe an area in our lives that we think and talk about least is this whole matter of visiting our loved ones, our brothers and sisters in the Lord, who have been cast into bereavement. Particularly when they are mourning the passing of a loved one and we must visit them at the funeral home. This is a time for most of us that we find ourselves nervous and become shrouded with the feeling of inadequacy. We even tend to justify the whole matter by simply sending a "sympathy" card in order to avoid facing the issue. I'm sure we all experience this, laymen and clergy alike.

Now, the question is this. Why is this the case? Why do we feel so totally inadequate during this moment? Why is it that we breath a sigh of relief when we find our way out as we hurriedly attest to our visit by signing our name to the registry on that shaky little stand with that dim little light? Why is it that we feel a sense of emptiness and helplessness after we performed what we thought to be our duty?

I believe the answer lies in the fact that we have not properly prepared ourselves spiritually for this moment. We have not spent a

moment in prayer or have read an appropriate portion of scripture prior to leaving for the funeral home.

We have not prepared ourselves to offer a word of comfort because we first haven't approached the source of all comfort, namely the word of God. This is proven often when we schedule our visit while the least amount of people would be there. Conversly, the Christian above all people should seize this as an opportunity in such a way that we are to be a blessing to one another not only, but it should also prove to be a blessing to ourselves. We above all people should not find ourselves tongue-tied when we are called upon to speak of our only comfort in living and in dying that we indeed belong both body and soul to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. What an opportunity to speak of the comfort with the words of the apostle, "For me to die is gain - for to live is Christ."

If we are really sensitive to this truth we should not find ourselves in difficulty but eager to speak of the hope that is within us. What an opportunity to speak of the resurrection when we profess to possess the resurrected life of Christ already in this life.

If we truly prepare for this moment of visitation, we will not only speak a word of comfort to the bereaved, but also we ourselves will receive a blessing because we have come with the word of God. We will then not only be reminded of the brevity of life and its seriousness but also have a firmer grasp of the truth concerning the return of our Lord. Then we shall all be raised incorruptible. We shall see Jesus with new heavenly eyes as He really is in His resurrected body. Then we shall be like Him. The fact is that if we are to be a comfort to one another, we must first be able to testify to possessing that same comfort.

Ask yourself — Do I really know that comfort? Do I really possess the resurrected life of Christ even now in principle? Do I really in principle look forward to Christ's return when all things will be made new? There is more, of course, but that is the essence of the matter.

When we are able by God's grace to answer these questions affirmatively, then we will find ourselves eager to comfort one another in our sorrow. Then we will hear the bereaved speak of that same comfort and the hope that is within *them*. It is only then that we realize more deeply that all things work together for our good, our only good, for us who love God because we are hidden in Christ.

So then, when we are confronted with this opportunity, we will find it is not only necessary but a tremendous calling to comfort one another as the Lord has comforted us. Prepare yourselves as only the child of God can as the fruit of His grace.

This is a serious matter but it should also be a matter of inner joy knowing that those we bring to the grave shall be raised again into newness of life in Christ unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What a beautiful prospect for the child of God and only for the child of God.

*During the interim of penning and publishing this article, Rev. M. Schipper preached a sermon further developing this thought from Psalm 116:15 — "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". Anyone desiring a tape of this comforting sermon may contact the Tape Ministry Committee of Southeast Church.

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. Who was the father of Joshua? Joshua 1:1
2. Where did Joshua send two spies? Joshua 2:1
3. Who protected the spies Joshua sent to Jericho? Joshua 2:1-4
4. What kind of clothes did the people of Gibeon wear when coming to Joshua? Joshua 9:3-6
5. Where did the children of Israel suffer defeat after entering Canaan? Joshua 7:2-6
6. What was set up at Shiloh after Israel conquered Canaan? Joshua 18:1
7. Why did God permit the children of Israel to be sold into the hands of their enemies? Judges 2:12-14
8. Name a woman judge. Judges 4:4
9. Who was Israel's enemy at the time of Gideon? Judges 6:11
10. What object was used when Gideon asked evidence that God would use him to save Israel? Judges 6:36-37