"And Behold there came wise men from the east..."
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“And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him... in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

In a manger: in a lonely stable: somewhere on the outskirts of tiny Bethlehem!

In a manger?! He the Christ of God, the long awaited Deliverer of Israel?! At first impulse we would say: How shameful! How inconsistent with the being and purpose of him who was laid therein! What a reception for that babe of all babes, the living God Himself in the flesh and blood of man!

Mary herself must have thought so. Surely, that manger was one of the things which she kept in her heart until its glorious significance should become plain to her in time to come. That night, however, staring at that lowly manger through the semi-darkness of the dimly-lit stable, she must have thought: Is that the child, that was announced to me by the glorious Gabriel himself? Is that JESUS, concerning whom the angel had said: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:
and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end?” Is that the babe that was conceived by the overshadowing power of the Highest and born without the will of man? In a manger? How strange! If he were the long awaited Messiah, should the Almighty not have prepared for him an other, a better place?

The shepherds, likewise, must have wondered at so lowly a crib. so cold a reception. That babe was indeed the long expected Savior, of that they were certain. Had not an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and had the glory of God Himself not shined round about them? Had that heavenly messenger not brought to them the glad tidings of great joy: “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord?” And had not an innumerable host of angels filled that blessed night with their glad refrain: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men?” Moreover, had they not found all things precisely as the angel had said? Yes, He was certainly the Christ! But, why that manger. Should the Messiah so announced and so glorified, not have been born in better circumstances than these?

Is it not true, then, that every detail connected with the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ was eternally and wisely ordained by God Himself, ordained to signify the person, and place, and task, and excellency of him, who came into the world that night? But is it not strange then, that that sign should be a manger?

Is it not true, that he is the fulfilment of all prophecy? However, looking at that manger we might be inclined to ask: He? Is he the Star that should come out of Jacob and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel? Was it that child of whom the old patriarch spake. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be?” Is he the realization of the beautiful prophecy. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined?” Was it this child that Isaiah had in view when he sang in such unbounded ecstasy. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful. Counsellor. The mighty God. The everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace?”

He is, according to the heavenly
messenger himself, "the Savior, which is Christ the Lord." But always there is that manger. *He,* is he, that Beloved Son, in Whom the Father is well pleased? Is *that* infant the seed of the woman, which was to bruise the head of the serpent and conquer forever all the powers of sin and death and grave and hell? Is *that* he, who must atone for all our sins, blot out all our guilt, fight our battle against all the forces of hell and merit for us eternal life and glory? *Is that* child our highest prophet, who knows the Father as no one else can know Him, a prophet like unto Moses, yet infinitely greater: our only high priest, who would prepare for us the way into the inner sanctuary and concerning whom the Lord of hosts Himself swore with an irrevocable oath. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek?" Is *that* babe our eternal king, to whom all things in heaven and earth and hell should be made subject? *He?* The Judge of all the universe? The fullness of the Godhead? The Firstborn of the dead? The Prince of life? The Lord of glory?

He is, so we believe and confess, the Living God Himself in human flesh and blood. But, there is still that manger. *He,* is he, the eternal God Himself, the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh? Is *that* child Immanuel, God with us, the only-begotten of the Father, God of God? Is *his* name "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?" Is *that* infant, in that manger, the eternal Word, which was with God, which was God, and without which nothing was made that was made? Is he who lies there on that straw the Alpha and Omega, which is and which was and which is to come?

* * * * *

In a manger?

Of course: No place could be more proper. If only we will forsake the viewpoint of the flesh and think of him in his true significance.

That manger is his proper place because God ordained it so. Not man, not mother Mary, but God laid the Christ-child in that lowly manger. True, historically Joseph and Mary had been forced into that stable by circumstances. Bethlehem and its inn were overcrowded that night. The only place left for them was that humble stable. Joseph and Mary simply had no alternative. Even so, also those circumstances were determined by the will and counsel of God. After all, Jesus was not born in a stable and laid in a manger because the town and inn of Bethlehem were full, but the latter was true in order that our Savior might
be born in that stable and laid in that manger.

Wherefore that manger is certainly his place at this time, a most appropriate sign of the person and purpose and task and place of him who was laid therein. That manger will not remain his place. Presently his place will be Nazareth and the humble home of Joseph the carpenter as a brother among the brethren. Still later his proper place is Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. Then, as he continues on his way of suffering and humiliation, we find his place to be Gethsemane, the palace of the high priest, the praetorium, the cross, hell, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Thence his place is heaven, where he is now, seated on the right hand of the Father. At the end of time his place will be the great white throne, whence he will judge the quick and the dead. Eternally his place will be the new heavens and the new earth and the eternal, glorified throne of David. But, now, at this particular time. His place is the manger.

A manger? Of course! That becomes plain the moment we ask: Why? What was the significance of that lowly manger?

The manger spoke of humiliation, and was not the incarnation precisely that for this Son of the eternal God? No, the incarnation merely as such was not a matter of humiliation. Also now the Lord Jesus Christ is man, glorified man. But, the Lord of all came in the form of a servant. The eternal Law-giver Himself placed under the law. The Holy One came in the likeness of sinful flesh. The Son of God Himself came to bear sin and curse, to take upon Himself our griefs, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities.

That manger spoke of abject poverty, and who among all the children of men was poorer than he as far as all earthly things were concerned? He had to be. His glory was not of this earth, but heavenly: was not of man, but of God; was not a natural one, but a spiritual one. His task was not to save from earthly cares and misery and adversity and death, but to redeem from sin and deliver from spiritual diseases and death. Wherefore he needed, not temporal greatness and riches and wisdom, but the Spirit of the Lord and spiritual wisdom and power. How beautifully all this was signified by that manger.

That manger spoke of rejection by man, and who among all that were born of women were so hated and despised and rejected as he? Really, there was no room for him in all the earth. Yet he had to be born. Therefore the stable, and the manger: the very edge of the
earth. Did he not come to testify of the light, to speak of the Father and the Father's kingdom, of righteousness and truth, of God's salvation for God's people in God's way? But the world has no desire for any of these, and they reject him who came to bring them. What did Israel do with him the moment they came to realize who he really was? They took even that manger away from him and changed it into the gory cross. What does the world do with him today? They praise and adore him, you say? Yes, after they have changed him into a Jesus of their own imagination, a symbol of the innate goodness of man, a son of God as we all are sons of God, a good physician, a world reformer. But what of Jesus Christ, our Savior from sin? They hate him. They despise him as a weakling and a fool. They crucify him anew every day. They cast him out, out of their hearts and souls and minds, out of their churches and schools and homes, until no spot is left him in all the earth.

In a manger? Of course! Where else?

And how beautiful and significant that manger becomes if only we see it with the eyes of a true and living faith. By faith we apprehend that only such a one can be our Savior, which is Christ the Lord. By faith we begin to see how only such a Savior can reveal the fulness of the manifold grace and wisdom of our God. By faith we understand that he is just the kind of a Savior we need and thus prostrating ourselves before that lowly manger we confess:

Not: how strange! How inconsistent!

Nor: how cute! How romantic! How different!

But: my Lord and my God! My Redeemer and my Deliverer! Be merciful to me, a sinner!
Christmas . . 1943
By REV. C. Hanko, Oaklawn, Illinois.

Dear Dad and Mom,

Just a few weeks and we'll be in the midst of the Christmas season again. But Christmas won't be the same as other years, will it? I can just imagine how it will be. You will be sitting there with the picture I sent you on the piano, feeling more lonesome than ever. And I will be thinking of you and of former Christmas days at home, wherever I may happen to be at that time. I don't mean to carp, or anything like that, but it does get a fellow down once in a while.

War, and some more war, is all we see and hear. We hate to talk, hate even to think about it. And then to spend Christmas in our lonely barracks, or maybe in some fox-hole or in action! The fellows used to say that we would be home by Christmas. But that has proved to be just so much more wishful thinking.

Anyway we'll make the best of it. I feel better now that that is off my chest. And I think you will understand.

Your loving son, Bob.

December, 1943.
Somewhere, U.S.A.

Dear Bob,

O yes, you wrote about Christmas, your being way out there and our being lonesome, and so on. Your mother and I understand alright, son. I was going to say, how well we understand.

But that is hardly the point, is it? We don't actually need a home ringing with pleasure and song to keep Christmas. The "peace on earth" of which the angels sang, is just as true today as it ever was.

The world into which our Savior came was no different from the world of today. His "fox-hole" was a cattle stall, and He was even driven from...
there, so that His parents fled with Him into Egypt. The birds of the air had an advantage over Him, for this world did not rest until they had banished Him from their midst and nailed Him to the cross. The heathens raged and people imagined vain things, even as they are doing today.

And yet the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest," for God sent His Son into the world to suffer and to die that we might be saved. He purchased us by His sacrifice on the cross and has delivered us from the bondage of sin and death. Even now while God pours out His judgments upon a world wallowing in iniquity, He is ever busy saving us and leading us through suffering into glory. How strangely marvelous are the ways of God, unfathomed and unknown.

Christmas, the day for commemorating Christ's birth, God's gift unto our salvation, will be Christmas wherever we are.

Yours affectionately, Dad.

Dear Dad and Mom,

Your letter certainly cheered me up. It was like being home again and talking things over, as we used to do.

Those things you wrote about are much more real to me now than they have ever been before. I never realized more fully that my one and only comfort in life and death is, that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. What a peace of heart and mind it gives to know that nothing can befall you or me, or any of us in this vale of tears without the will of our heavenly Father. He uses it all for our eternal good.

That is truly the wonder of all wonders, that God sent His Son into this world of sin to save us. Christmas will mean more to me this year than it ever did before.

Your loving son, Bob.

December, 1943.
Somewhere, U.S.A.

Dear Bob,

I just wanted you to know that we, too, are eagerly looking forward to Christmas day with all that it means to us. As we used to say: A Blessed Christmas, Bob.

With love, Mom.
Remember Thy Creator

Who has not repeatedly read the well-known words of the Preacher, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw high, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them?

But in these times we are inclined to ask, could days ever be more evil than those experienced by our present day youth? Youth is the time for care-free enjoyment of innocent pleasure, for matching strength and skill in games and sports, for dreaming and planning for the future. But youth seems hardly the time for the serious business of warfare, for living in constant dread and fear, breathing the smoke of gun powder, smelling the stench of human blood, manipulating the machinery of destruction and bloodshed; for sitting at home wondering why the letters of their lovers are so long in coming, filled with grave fears about what the future may bring. From the point of view of youthful ideals and joy of living, youth is experiencing evil days. Can days ever be more evil than these?

Yet: Remember now thy Creator. The admonition is as timely now as ever, or, if that were possible, even more so.

Remember thy Creator.

Thy Creator is God, the living God, beside whom there is and can be no other. He is the eternal One, immutable, all-wise, almighty, always and at the same time present everywhere, the Standard of all good and the God of infinite perfections.

In Him we live and move and have our being. For even as He once by the Word of His power called the things that were not as though they were, so He also formed each one of us. He gave us our being, brought us into existence, made us what we are in His own time and according to His eternal purpose. He alone determined the time and place of our birth, our parents, our station in life, and even all that befalls us in each moment of our earthly existence. He does it all in the unfolding of the Counsel of His infinite wisdom.

He created us in His image to be His friend-servants in the midst of the world. How true it is, that by our natural birth we came into this world altogether polluted and corrupt, dead in sin, unfit and unworthy to serve Him. But He has recreated us with the life of regeneration according to the image of Christ Jesus. He has called us
out of darkness unto light, that we may confess His Name and tell His praises as His prophets. may crucify our old sinful nature and devote ourselves to Him in love as His priests, and may fight the battle of faith against sin. assured that the victory is ours, as His kings in this world. Remember Him, thy God, thy Creator.

“For thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob (His chosen), and He that formed thee. O Israel (His people), Fear not! For I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name! Thou art Mine! When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned. neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” (Isaiah 43:1, 2). How could it be otherwise? God prepares the rushing torrents of deep rivers of water and the flaming fires that billow and roar. He leads His people into the angry waves and into the raging flames. Yet they are as safe as Daniel was in the lion’s den. “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness. nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.” For God never forsakes His people. He tries us to purify us as in the refiner’s fire. The Master-builder is shaping us, chip by chip, into stones for His glorious temple. We are being fitted for our place in His Church either here on earth, or finally surely in glory. We may lose a pal, a friend, a lover or husband in the battle-field; we may suffer bodily injury or even lose our lives, but in all these things we are more than conquerors. We finally lose all. . . . our youth, our friends, our dear ones, our own life . . . .to receive all things with Christ in the mansions above.

Remember now.

Which does not mean that we should bring Him into remembrance occasionally as fancy or necessity dictates. God is not a servant, who can be slighted and scorned, yet called in when we are driven to an extremity. To remember Him is to keep Him in continual remembrance every moment of our lives, to have Him always before us in every circumstance that each day may produce, to always be conscious of His sovereign nearness. His guiding providence, His tender care. With the Lord at our right hand, we shall never fear.

Looking at it from that aspect, the present days of youth are not so evil after all. In fact, they are not evil at all, for if God be for
us, nothing can be against us. No anxious care, no bursting shell, no hissing bullet, no earthly loss, no. not even death itself can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

But evil days are those days when we shall say that we have no pleasure in those things. When we have reached the end of the road and we sit down by the smoldering embers of a wasted life, worn and broken, our dreams blasted, our vain hopes shattered. We had tried to drink to the full the intoxicating pleasures of the flesh, had striven to gain this world, only to lose everything. Like a dog we ran the treadmill, and gained nothing. We are forced to admit, vanity of vanities, all in this life, apart from God, is vanity.

When our life is wasted and spent it will prove impossible, actually too late to remember the Creator.

Remember Him now, young man! Young woman! And the evil days will never come, nor will the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in Him. "The righteous shall flourish as the palm tree, they shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." Our Creator is forming us into a building for eternity.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

To that Christian Youth answers: By Thy grace we will! C. H.

The Beacon Lights Staff extends to all
The Season's Greetings
The events of the past month have again revealed the insincerity of our Administration at Washington in respect to its promises of freedom from fear and want. Many a home in our country wanted coal for heating purposes. Many others lived in fear of being forced to face freezing weather without any coal wherewith to heat their homes. Many a home lived in fear of what John L. Lewis might do next in the line of calling a strike.

It was not due to a coal shortage. There is plenty of coal in this country, and there is also on the books anti-strike legislation which makes striking during the war punishable by imprisonment and fine. Yet our Administration does nothing about it until forced to do so at the last moment. Democracy is lauded to the sky today. But of what use and avail it is when justice is not meted out for fear of losing votes at the next election?

Unless the bungling bureaucracy of today comes to an end our whole Nation will live in fear of its own Government. How ironical that the very same Government that promises us freedom from fear fills us with fear by its very behaviour.

The greatest event of recent days, no doubt, is the conference held in Moscow with its decisions. It appears on the surface as though America, Great Britain and Russia have come to a common agreement. For the present at least the decisions taken are a great diplomatic victory. It shattered all the hopes of the Germans that a rift was developing between the United Nations. It likewise gave both Germany and the Allied Nations to believe that a separate peace between Germany and either Russia or America and Great Britain was not to be expected. Yet we ought to bear in mind that of late treaty breaking has become rather fashionable, and that it is very easy to make an agreement especially when there is an advantage to be gained by doing so. Could it be, perhaps, that Cordell Hull and Anthony Eden persuaded Stalin to agree to their proposals
and to cease urging a second front for the psychological effect this would have upon the enemy? To hear that all three nations were united in purpose and intent certainly would help to make Germany uneasy and might shorten the war by cracking the morale at home. It certainly pleased Germany to hear Stalin constantly underestimating our war effort and demanding that we get busy and open a second front. This gave them much room for propaganda. Would you not then expect such diplomats as Hull and Eden to point out to Stalin the effect of a declaration of solidarity and unity of purpose? Hitler used the close union and unity of purpose of the Axis time and again to frighten the other nations. Each mentioning of the fact caused the hearts of the oppressed to sink deeper and deeper into despair. Are we now borrowing his tatics to practice them upon his people? Personally this sudden agreement upon all major points is too sudden for the undersigned to accept. It may be well for us to remember, too, that these same Axis nations who boasted so of their unity of purpose are now divided. Italy surrenders. Japan openly confesses that Germany cannot win the war in Europe. Will the apparent seeing eye-to-eye of the United Nations collapse also when peace is achieved?

One thing we may surely consider and that is that all these things are bringing us closer to the days of the Antichrist. Let us not deceive ourselves or let ourselves be deceived by others. Let us not expect a wonderful world after our boys come home. Jesus describes the day in which we live in Matthew 24 with the words: "Nation shall rise up against nation, Kingdom against kingdom." And then He adds, "These are the beginnings of sorrows." Let us look into the future with hope because we look for the eternal kingdom of Christ. But let us also live in the consciousness that the Antichrist comes as God declares, "Watch and pray." "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:13.

"...and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." —Matthew 2:9, 10.
Admonition: A Discarded Practice.

There was a time when christians could admonish one another in the spirit of true love. But it seems as though that isn't possible anymore in the day and age in which we live. And that is not due so much to the fact that the christian isn't able or willing to admonish the other in the spirit of love but rather to the fact that most of us refuse to receive such admonition in the spirit in which it is given. Now, I admit that it is not always easy to give admonition in that spirit and that there is always a great danger of allowing some personal element to enter in so that our admonition loses its true character and becomes little more than a show of personal grievance because of hurt pride. There is also the danger of climbing upon the pedestal of our own lofty opinion of ourselves and assuming the "holier than thou" attitude, to then look down disdainfully upon him who is, according to our idea, of lesser virtue than ourselves. Such an attitude makes admonition practically impossible and certainly prevents the proper reception of it. Still we do not believe that that is the real reason for the abolition of this practice. I refuse to believe that the christian is always prompted by some ulterior motive as that which we have just mentioned. There are no doubt many times when he truly purposes only the correction and well being of the one who is at fault. If love means anything at all, it certainly desires and seeks the welfare of its object. How extremely disappointing it is then to find that a well meant admonition is not received. We are convinced that it is here that the source of all the trouble lies. As christians we seem to find it extremely difficult to receive even the most well meant admonition. What is the usual result? This, that the person who is admonished becomes angry and, to use a common expression, "flies off the handle" or "blows up"; he accuses you of "picking on him" or "sticking your nose in his business" and, in a desire for revenge and an attempt to heal his wounded pride and soothe his searing
conscience, he retaliates by calling your attention to some abnormality, either actual or invented by him, which he magnifies as a terrible evil in your own life. And so he politely, or impolitely, tells you to "mind your own business" and leave him alone. And the result is that the "I'm just as good as you are" attitude has spoiled the sweet admonition of love. You meant it well, yes, but he couldn't receive it and you go home with the well founded feeling that you have lost a friend.

What a pity!

What a shame on us as christians!

Is it any wonder that this sound practice of admonishing one another, to which Scripture exhorts us as children of God, is fast disappearing and even now is virtually extinct? Who wants to lose his friends? And so, instead of doing our christian duty, we just keep still, even though we know that it isn't right. And that is not good; not good for us as individuals, not good for the Church of Jesus Christ. The question arises whether we are justified in refraining from performing our duty in this respect just because of the unpleasant result it may have. The answer is self-evident. It is our christian duty which we must exercise toward one another and we need not fear the result. The individual, who becomes your enemy because you have told him the truth for his own good, is perhaps unworthy of your friendship and certainly proves that to be a fact if he does not change his attitude. And if your admonition was given in love, even though it may for a moment arouse the other's ire, it will have its effect if he is truly a christian and you will in the long run have praise from him. But is it not true that the one who admonishes often has some fault himself for which he should be admonished? Indeed it is. And when we admonish we should be the first to acknowledge that. We must be ready not only to admonish but also to be admonished in return. That is for our good. And that is why the abolition of this practice is such a sad thing. For if we no more admonish the other for his welfare, we will no more be admonished for our welfare. Let us therefore, as christians, revive this lost practice and let us begin now while we are young. Let us be ready not only to admonish but also willing to receive admonition in the spirit of love. It will bear positive fruit!
Dear Fellows:

The other day I heard some speaker over the radio say that even though we could not get turkey for our thanksgiving dinner, but perhaps had to eat chicken instead, we could still be thankful and celebrate the day! The statement evidently proceeded from the supposition that with some, at least, the difference between thanksgiving and grumbling is really the difference between turkey and chicken!

Silly, don’t you think?

I wonder whether there really are such people as this radio speaker was addressing, people who probably imagine that they are sacrificing a good deal, and are doing their part in the war effort, when they must substitute chicken for turkey; and who like silly children are moaning and in need of a word of comfort and encouragement because they have to eat one delicacy instead of another!

I was thinking of the boys that have been called from home, in the camps, overseas, on the battlefield, on the high seas, in the air. If here at home there are people that are dissatisfied, and cannot give thanks because they must feast on chicken instead of turkey, how impossible it must be to give thanks when one must spend the day in the jungles of New Guinea, or by making a bombing trip in a Flying Fortress! And how about the thousands that are starving in the occupied countries of Europe, or that are sighing and pining away in prisons or concentration camps?

The principal error of such a statement as I referred to is, of course, that the abundance of material goods and worldly prosperity and enjoyment is the measure and ground of thanksgiving. Those who think so will never give thanks, even when “their eyes stand out with fatness.” for the simple reason that their joy is in the things of the world, not in God. On the other hand, if our joy is in the Lord, we can always give thanks. For then we are assured that He is the God of salvation Who loves us with an eternal and immutable love, Who revealed His great love to us in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and Who will surely give unto us all good things with Him. Then turkey or chicken, or even turkey or a dry crust of bread cannot possibly have any influence upon our thanksgiving, for we know that whether the one or the other, our God gives it to us in His eternal love. Then the way may not be pleasant to the flesh, in fact, it may be a way of sorrow and suffering, but even that way is directed by His almighty hand, and we may be confident that in that way He leads us to eternal glory. And then the loving-kindness of our God is more to us than life. And we give thanks, rejoicing in the God of our salvation.

We pray that you may find it so, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but every day.

As ever your friend,

Rev. H. Hoeksema.
Oct. 31, 1913

Dear Friends:

Another Sunday is nearly by. It is a day when one thinks of home, friends, and his own church. I didn't have a chance to go to church today, because of being on barracks guard. However, I received my copy of the Beacon Lights, Standard Bearer, and Sovereign Grace Hour yesterday. Therefore, I had plenty with which to enjoy myself.

The church papers help one to come in much closer communion to God than do the sermons in the chapel. These sermons all have a good thought in them; but every one seems to end up with that well meant offer of salvation: namely the invitation. We believe that the Lord is almighty and nothing can upset His eternal counsel. We are elect from before the foundation of the earth; therefore, it is a calling rather than an invitation.

We have very little time to ourselves here during the week. Being under classmen, we surely are kept busy from reveille till taps. Everyone looks forward to the time when he can return the compliments to some other under classman.

The Beacon Lights are surely a comfort for both my friends and I. Please continue to send them.

Yours sincerely,
a/c Dick Dykstra,
Ellington Field, Texas.

October 16, 1943.

Dear Friends:

I received my first Beacon Lights yesterday of this season and I was surely glad to get it again.

I thought today would be a good chance to do my duty, and what has been in my mind ever since I left home and our church last December. I have been in the army a little over ten months, and as yet I am still in Louisiana.

Well, I have been getting all our church papers, and O, how much these church papers mean to me nowadays. Because good Christian reading material is very hard to get. I enjoy the articles in Beacon Lights and the Standard Bearer and Our Church News, and what a blessed comfort that our covenant God has given us our church papers.

When I was in camp I was able to attend some sort of chapel service every Sunday, but as you may know that it was not Prot. Reformed at all. We sure miss the services of our own church.

But we are indeed grateful to our covenant God for all these things, and how thankful I must be to our Lord that I am still in the States.

Well, keep up the good work of Beacon Lights, and may God bless and keep you all.

I remain, your brother in Christ,
Pvt. Ben Weessier,
Shreveport, La.
September 30, 1943.

Dear Editor:

It has been some time ago since I promised to do justice in some degree to the Beacon Lights by writing more often. Since I am about to move again I had better write as I may not have the occasion to write later. We never know what comes up next so there is no time to put off 'till the to-morrow. I have been in New York the past summer and had the privilege of going to church every week, and have the same over here in Flint, Mich. where I am now. I will be leaving Flint again on the 9th of Oct., when I have to report to my district office for further instructions. I am in the best of health and wish the same to everyone.

Lately I received a booklet "Meditations" put out by Classis East of our churches and I wish to thank all those who contributed to this cause. I certainly appreciate mine. I don't think there is any need of saying anything about life in the service, that is an established fact. Till we meet again, for as God's children we shall certainly meet again, if not here then in the hereafter.

Your friend in Christ,

Conrad Portenga.

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Sept. 25, 1943.

Dear friends:

Having been persuaded by the last issue of Beacon Lights to write once again, I am doing so now. Thanks to all responsible for the summer issues as they are enjoyed immensely. I am feeling fine although received slight injury this morning, but also giving me time to write this letter. The weather during the day is very hot, but evenings are cool. We work six hours per day and have two shifts. I received a raise in rating last week, to electrician's mate 2nd class, (staff sergeant in army), and am in charge of a 20 man detail. We are not near actually fighting, but do feel the sting of war from overhead, and even that is well under control. We have meetings every evening in charge of an Orthodox Presbyterian chaplain, so we do not lack spiritual food and teachings very much. This surely is a good sign of God's mighty Word being out here in heathen places. He surely cares for all our needs everywhere. Thanks to Him alone for all things. In His name and love, a brother always.

George Lanting.

Oct. 31, 1943.

Dear Friends:

I am taking this opportunity to thank you for sending me "The Beacon Lights."

Altho' I don't find very much time to concentrate on all the articles, I do read them and on the "gloomy" days they help a fellow out.

Also, please note that my address is,
Pvt. A. D. Swieter 36407218
Co. M. 271st. Inf. A.P.O. 417
Camp Shelby, Miss.
In the spring of 1937, one of the brethren from Edgerton, Minnesota gave a talk to a League of Christian School Societies in Hull, Iowa. While talking with some of the people gathered there, he met Rev. L. Vermeer and after a talk with him about Church and School matters, he invited Rev. Vermeer to come over and give a speech in Edgerton.

Time went on and before we knew it, it was fall and a busy time for farmers. One day in September, Rev. B. Kok came over to Edgerton and settled down with his auto trailer in one of the side streets of Edgerton. Being a stranger in a strange land he had to make some point of contact which is hard to do if you don't know anybody. But it did not take him long to find the man he was looking for — somebody who was well acquainted with the Christian Reformed congregation. So after a visit at the home of this "someone" Rev. Kok found a big field to work in but very little knowledge. He also found some people who were very much dissatisfied with the preaching of the common grace theory. These people had the same experience as children in a merry-go-round, the sermons took them around and around but did not bring them anywhere. It took a little time for Rev. Kok to get his work lined up so he could contact the people. Of course there was no church for rent but there happened to be a Memorial Hall in Edgerton which could be rented reasonably. After some advertising, Rev. Kok gave his first sermon!

The first few Sunday evenings the hall was packed. Then the warning went forth to stay away from Rev. Kok's meetings. But a number of people found it to be a living Testimony of the Truth. Most of the older people who attended these meetings were born in the Netherlands, and so Rev. Kok gave all his first sermons in the Holland Language. After much hard but fruitful labor by the missionary, we decided to organize. Rev. Kok asked the Mission Committee to come over and organize and install office bearers in the new congregation. In April, 1938, 17 families came together to be organized and to elect 2 elders and 2 deacons to lead and govern the congregation.

A minister was promptly called,
but the call was declined. Once! Twice! The third time the congregation was gladdened with the answer: I will come over and help you!

We had Rev. Kok in our midst till July, 1938, when he had to go to Manhattan to labor there. We were all sorry to see him go with his family, but we did not sit down in sackcloth and ashes. With faith in God and in His promises we went forward and labored for the wellbeing of the congregation. In the fall of that same year, we bought two lots so that we could build a parsonage and church as soon as possible.

When Rev. Verhil, our first pastor came over, we had a house rented and ready for him but it was not at all modern: a pump by the house, no running water, and no bathroom — Minnesota farm style! Rev. and Mrs. Verhil seemed to fit right in our young congregation. They labored hard in our midst and were very much appreciated. We decided to build a parsonage first: and to do most of the labor ourselves to save money. It was not long before Rev. and Mrs. Verhil moved into the new parsonage. To make you understand how it was possible for a small and young congregation to do so much, we can't explain it in any other way than that: the Spirit of the Lord made the people willing and it was a pleasure for the minister and the consistory to lead the congregation in the way they should go. When we look back on those three years that we were busy with the building of the parsonage and church, we must admit they were the best years of our lives. The building committee as a rule found our people always willing to do their duty. Our people did not like the idea of being in debt so they all dug deep in their pockets to pay as much as possible. Some people ask us, "How did you people do it?" And the only answer we can give is that as minister and consistory and congregation, we worked and prayed and paid! And you know, when everybody is busy and working hard there is very little time and cause for friction. You must not think that everything Edgerton accomplished in so short a time was easy. It was a steady grind but nobody can ever do anything worth while if he doesn't take his coat off and get to work. That is so in material as well as spiritual labor.

Our congregation is now five and a half years old. That is six months older than some people said we would ever get. They said, "Inside of five years they will be back." At present we have at least 30 families, a Men's Society, a Holland Ladies' Aid, an English
Ladies’ Aid, and a Young People’s Society which are all well attended.

If any of our Protestant Reformed People came to Edgerton, be sure to step in and visit a while, so you can see what great things the Lord has done there. We even have some ground bought to build our own Christian School as soon as we can get material with which to build. Since I have been away from Edgerton for some time now, on account of health, I did not mention much of last year’s history. It was very hard on the congregation that the Lord took away by death our first minister, Rev. Verhil. He and his family were very much loved and appreciated and they have done very much for Edgerton. But the congregation is happy that they now have another minister, Rev. G. Vos, who we hope will labor in Edgerton for years, and will be a blessing to the Church to the Glory of our God.

Editor’s Desk

“Christian Living” — a page of practical thoughts, is contributed each month by the Rev. H. De Wolf. We are sure that you will find these “thoughts” but helpful and comforting in your daily Christian life.

We have heard many favorable remarks made in regard to our November issue and we would like to pass these comments on to our friends in California who worked toward realizing our All-California issue. Someone suggested that we make it “a yearly affair.” Perhaps, a good suggestion!

The cover on this months issue was made possible through the kindness of the Chr. Ref. Publishing House.

Recent donations have been received from the following:

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True Discipleship

By MISS BESS DE VRIES — Redlands, California

And He said to them all. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. —Luke 9:23.

In the context we read of the multitudes that followed Christ. And after the feeding of the five thousand Jesus and His disciples were alone. Jesus prays after which He asks them whom the people say He is? He then asks them whom say ye that I am? Peter answers saying, “the Christ of God.” He then tells them of His great suffering, and that all should reject Him.

Right after this Christ gives the text which I shall write on.

In it we read: Three requirements of true discipleship.

1. Self denial.
2. Cross bearing.
3. Following of Jesus.

First then self denial. What is self denial for Christ’s sake? Oh there is so much in life that we must be denied. Because of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we know God, and His blessed will. Often our hearts desire is denied us. Did not Christ leave His heavenly home, deny the blessed covenant life with His Father in heaven? He was cast farther and farther from Father’s love which He desired above all. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh that He might atone for the sin of His beloved people. He was the perfect One. If we would be His disciple we too must deny ourselves. Yes, it is oh so hard, for there is much that is of sin in us, and we often reply against God. Why must it be so? The answer is for Thy sake are we killed all the day long. We love God above all, and all things that are against Him we hate. Our life is not our own. We belong to Him who has died that we might live. If He has died for us, we in our life show that we do belong to Him and we shall follow in His footsteps.

Secondly: Cross bearing.

Every Christian, every true disciple has his or her cross. Jesus says, “must daily take up our cross.” Every day we have a cross. Some have a greater cross to bear than others. Many times we wonder if we can bear the cross that is placed upon us, it is so heavy, the cares, the worries of this life. God giveth sufficient grace for us to bear the cross. There is never a cross that is too heavy. Often we are given a cross to bear to
be drawn closer to the side of Christ. When we have many burdens and heartaches we look unto Him and cast ourselves upon Him. If we had no cross we would soon forget Him who is the giver of all. Daily we must go to Him with all our trials and heartache. He alone can help us bear the burden. Because of sin we have our Gethsemane. Christ in Gethsemane received no reply from the Father. But thanks be to His Name we are given an answer. We are comforted. Because Jesus received no reply and went into the eternal depths of hell, we receive a reply. The sweet words of Jesus, "thy sins are forgiven thee." He gives us strength to bear the burden. And there shall come a day when our cross shall be taken from us, when we no longer shall be denied anything.

This leads me to my last point:

Following Jesus:

In this life we follow wherever He leads. It may be through great strife, or great joy, but follow we will. Where He leads me I will follow. He leads and we walk beside Him. We must do what He wishes us to do, and what He will not have us do we must not do. Yea we must follow Him through the Valley of the shadow of death, but we do not fear. Even through death we follow, for He has opened the grave and we follow Him to heaven. Every day is a step nearer home. Christ has arisen and has ascended unto His Father and we must follow Him. Jesus has prepared a place for us. What a blessed thought here on earth where all is sin and evil. So many heartaches. There is an end to all our denial of self and cross bearing. For we follow Jesus to our home above, where we shall sin no more. We shall have a crown instead of a cross. Where all things shall be given unto us, we shall be denied nothing, for we shall see the light of our life, which is His glorious face. All longings and desires will be filled. Where want shall be no more. Where we shall praise His name for ever and ever.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
And the government shall be upon his shoulde:
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God,
The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6
Bible Study
By REV. G. LUBBERS
Pella, Iowa.

Introductory remarks:
A word about the relationship of Chapters 3 and 4 of Acts may be first of all in place. To see the beauty of the Word of God in these chapters and the marvel of His doings it is necessary to read and reread these two chapters as belonging together. They are most closely interwoven.

Because of the truth of the former paragraph, we found it no easy task to outline it. An attempt has been made in these outlines to meet two requirements. The first one to divide it into such sections as were suggested by the text itself. The second requirement that we kept in mind was to have sufficient material for study and discussion in each outline for one meeting. In how far we have succeeded will depend to a great extent on the method of study and discussion employed in the society meeting.

* * * * *

Outline IX
The Healing Of The Lame Beggar
Acts 3: 1-10

Occasion Vs. 1.
1. It was the ninth hour Jewish time, or around three o’clock in the afternoon. The time of the evening sacrifice was at hand. Just what day of the week it was, or how long a time had elapsed since the day of Pentecost we are not told. According to the Mosaic-ordinance Peter and John go to the temple to pray.

2. While they approach the temple a man about forty years old is being carried to the temple gate. At this gate he is accustomed to sit begging. He has been lame from the day of his birth. He is well-known for he is a man in middle life thus having contact with the experiences of young and old. Acts 4:22. There is something ironical about this man’s form of obtaining a livelihood, when compared with the state of affairs in the church as pictured to us in the preceding chapter. There all the “needs” were abundantly supplied. But that was in the temple of God, the habitation of God in the Spirit. But in this temple where the priests of mercy (?) had never learned what it means “I will have mercy and not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6; Matt. 12:7) the children of Abraham must
follow the ignoble course of begging! Forsyth the Aaron's priesthood has perfected nothing. Here is still much of the work of Him who dwelleth in the burning bush to be accomplished. But God has heard the cry of His people in the city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. Gen. 3:7; Rev. 11:10, 11. The Healing Proper. Vss. 3-8.

1. The beggar expects something also from Peter and John as they approach. He expects silver or gold. Little does he realize that the ground upon which he stands is far too holy for such trivial gift in this hour. He is not meeting men from the rank and file in Israel and Jerusalem, but the eye-witnesses of the glory on the Mount (Luke 9:28; II Pet. 1:17) and of the many infallible proofs of the resurrection; who are therefore witnesses of the Word of Life!

2. Their entire treasure is in the Name of Jesus, in the name of Him "who was to come." He caused the blind to see, the lepers to be cleansed, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk and preached the gospel of glad-tidings to the poor. Matt. 11:4-6; Isa. 35:5. 6; 61:1.

3. And in the name of Him who has the power to lay down and take up His life again. Peter commands the lame man to rise and to walk. And forthwith the man walks! His ankle-bones become strong. The great mercy of God in its efficacious power is visibly manifested. O. wondrous power Divine! Blessed are those who are not offended!

The Purpose Of This Miracle Vss. 9-11.

1. The immediate purpose was to attract the attention of the common people. This appears from the following considerations:

a) That this particular man was chosen for this purpose. He was well-known. Every one knew that he indeed was lame. There could not be the shadow of doubt in the minds of the people as to his identity. Even the arrogant leaders "cannot deny it" (4:16).

b) That it is explicity brought out in 4:22 that this man was well-known to the "people" because the man was more than forty years old.

c) God who hath put the times and the seasons in His own power (1:16) prepared this man evidently for this very purpose. It was that God might be greatly glorified in His redeeming power that this man was born lame. even as this was the case with the men born blind spoken of in John 9:1-4. The night had evidently not yet come when the work of God no longer became manifested in the blind and lame.

d) And certainly from this viewpoint the result among the amazed and wondering people answered perfectly to the divine "time and season."

2. And this became the "proof-material" that God still dwells in the "burning bush," and that His arm is not shortened so that it cannot save. We spoke (see above) of God's "times and seasons" for the manifestation of His faithfulness. And in this we may not only see God's love, but also His wisdom. Evidently Jesus being the Holy Servant of God. and being perfectly obedient to
the Divine Wisdom controlling the times and seasons, purposely left this man in his lame condition when He saw him at the gate. Does Jesus not speak to His disciples of the "greater works than these" that they shall perform in His Name? John 14:12.

Questions: Did you study the various passages referred to in this outline, and did you carefully read these two chapters of Acts? Can you see the divine wisdom of God in allowing the temple to remain standing for some time? Did this healed beggar evidently understand the means of his restoration better than the populace? Vss. 6, 8. Is the general reaction of those healed that they remain close to their benefactors? How about the man in John 5:1-16?

* * * * *

Outline X

Acts 4:12-26

The Sign Of Healing Interpreted
Its Power Vss. 12, 16.

1. There was an interpretation of this miracle on the part of the people which must definitely be contradicted. The amazed people all flocked around the apostles on Solomon's porch. That indeed a notable miracle had been wrought all were fully convinced of. They beheld it with their eyes. But they do not comprehend what they see. It is imperative that they do, and that for the following reasons:

a) It lies in the nature and intent of God's wonders and praises and virtues as revealed in His miracles and signs that He alone receive honor and glory. He is God. This is corroborated by the 1st Commandment of the Decalogue as well as by what John is told by a fellow-servant as recorded in Rev. 19:10. Not to see this principle is the sin of all idolatry, which changes the "glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man..." Rom. 1:18-24. And to do this would surely bring down the holy wrath of God from heaven. for He is very jealous of His honor.

b) Therefore that the people may not view this sign in the light of unbelieving superstition and sorcery, as did also Paul's audience in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) Peter denies two elements: 1) That it was by their own inherent power. It was most emphatically not a human, dependent creaturely power that had healed this man. 2) Neither does it have its origin in the godliness of the apostles. Their piety never is the fountain of healing. This latter also must be definitely understood. Especially by Israelitish men who possess the oracles of God!

2. Positively it is stated whence this great power is. Vs. 16. We call attention to the following elements in the text.

a) That it was the NAME of Jesus which healed this man. The NAME of Jesus is more than a mere sound. It is more than a honorary title. It is the Self-Revelation of God in His saving power, grace, mercy, by which He brings His
own out of the deepest woe of the bond-
age of sin to the freedom of sons in
the heavenly Canaan. It is God raising
up the tabernacle of David. It is the
entire truth of God’s redemptive work
focused on the one central truth that
SALVATION IS OF THE LORD! It is
Saving Power of God Almighty!

b) Only on the basis of implicit faith
in this Name was this man healed.
Apart from the question whether every
man was healed physically also had
saving faith, or whether this particular
man had faith, we can state the follow-
ing as to the relationship of faith and
the Name of Jesus. Peter is not intro-
ducing a new principle here unheard
of before. It is the fundamental axiom
for every child of Abraham who is the
father of believers. That believers are
God’s children and enter into the sav-
ing work of God is evident in every
step of the wa;:. In the killing of the
Lamb and the blood on the door posts
in Egypt, their crossing of the Red Sea,
in the event of the water flowing from
the Rock, Crossing of the Jordan, tak-
ing of the city of Jericho—faith is the
only way of entering into the work of
God. And faith in the Name of Jesus
is here the same as the faith whereby
Moses crossed the Red Sea. In this
faith the world is conquered and God’s
sure mercies are experienced in their
efficacious effectiveness. James and Jam-
bres, sorcerers before Pharaoh cannot
stand before it. Peter will not allow
Israel therefore to divorce this saving,
healing power from the Name of Jesus.
the Author of Life!

1. That the above interpretation is
correct and that this miracle is meant
to be placed among all the exhibitions
of God’s saving power as recorded in
the O. T. Scriptures is evident further
from the perspective of Vs. 13. It is
“the God of Abraham and Isaac and
Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glori-
ﬁed His Servant Jesus!” We have here
the following:

a) This is the form of address, the
exact words are which God spoke to
Moses at the burning bush at the foot
of the Mount of God. As “God-Almighty”
He had made Himself known to Abra-
ham, but now they would experience this
“almight” in the form of Salvation! Jes-
us, that is, Jehovah Saves. He would
ever be the faithful one to His promisal
mercies.

b) The content of this saving power
is again and again repeated in the proph-
hecy of Isaiah which speaks of the
great Servant of the LORD! The par-
ticular passages are Isa. 42:1, 19; 49:3.
5-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11. In all the
passages in the book of Acts the King
James version reads: “Child Jesus” we
must read, “Servant Jesus.”

c) For salvation is of the Lord by
His servant, the suffering of the Christ,
as spoken of and foretold through the
mouth of all the prophets. Vs. 18. Com-
The glorification of the Servant spells
salvation for the Israel of God.
2. This was done though the evil deed of men, yet serving the divine decree.
   b) Yet that it was the God-ordained way of fulfilling the Promises foretold by the Prophets.
   c) And that they (the people) and their leaders had done it according to Ignorance. Ignorance of what? 1 Cor. 2:6-9 says: The Divine wisdom of the Cross! Had they known it they would not have crucified the LORD OF GLORY! Of the depths of riches, wisdom and knowledge of God—that are past finding out, Paul also speaks when he treats this very question of Israel's being "Hated for the Gospel's Sake Rom. 11:28-36. Possibly the prayer of Jesus at the cross refers to this ignorance when Jesus prays: Father forgive them (permit them to proceed, K. Schilder) for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34. What depths of divine glories are signified in the healing of this lame beggar! But, O, my God, that is as it should be! For the very opposite of this ignorance see Heb. 10:28-30.

Purpose Vss. 19-26.

1. The blessing of Abraham must come to Israel: must be their portion as a conscious possession.
   a) Ultimately in the new heavens and new earth. the better fatherland sought by the Patriarchs. Hence the "times of refreshments" designate the future hope where there shall be no night and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. Not therefore in the Premillennial sense, neither Postmillennialistically, but A-Millennialistically!
   b) The "restitution of all things." For the Scriptural teaching of this we refer you to Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:16-20.

2. In the way of Repentance.
   a. This is the way preached by John the Baptist, who is Elias who shall come and restore all things. Matt. 17:11. He would restore the hearts of the children to the beaten paths of the fathers. Mal. 4:6; Luke 1:17. John's preaching was building on the foundation and along the architectural lines of righteousness. That was the principle of the restitution of all things. God's work of the restitution begins in the heart of the elect sinner!
   b. For consider the following:
      1) The falling away of all things by one man (Rom. 5:12 ff.) was by the act of disobedience. All things were dislodged fundamentally in their relationship to God.
      2) Grace now does two things: In the first place it restores to righteousness and again sets the law of God in honor among men. Secondly, it so restores all things that they will never fall away again. Man must in the way of repentance be brought into the work of Jehovah saves which also is an unrepentant work!

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Outline XI

Peter And John Before The Sanhedrin Occasion Vss. 1-4.

1. The Priests, Temple-Guard and the Sadducees also take notice of these apostles speaking to the people here in the temple-porch. They are “all worked up” on two points we are told:

a) That they taught the people. This they must have felt was intruding on their field of labor.

b) That they preached Jesus the resurrection from the dead. This as we will see was the real grievance.

2. But since it was already eventide, Peter and John are placed in custody for the night to stand trial the next day. And behold Matt. 10:17 is fulfilled, as Jesus had predicted. They can be of good cheer. even though all the dignitaries will be present at the meeting. What an august meeting! The elders, the scribes, the whole house and kindred of the high-priests are present. Certainly the matter at hand is deemed very weighty and important. If this meeting were held today it would have made front-page news and pictures in a metropolitan “daily!”

But what a glorious position for Peter. On the very spot where once his Lord stood when he denied Him thrice, he now may confess His Name before men. Tradition has it that Peter would not be crucified right side up because Christ was crucified, but here Peter may stand where His Lord stood and made the good confession before Pilate. I Tim. 6.

The Issue Vss. 7-22.

1. As intended by the “leaders.”

a. Ostensibly they are not aware of the power by which the lame beggar had been healed. At least they ask the apostle as to the real nature of the power. The real nature of the power we have attempted to explain in the former outline.

b. But the real purpose of this meeting was to maintain the status quo of the official books in regard to Jesus. This is corroborated by the following:

1) By what we read of the attitude of these “leaders” toward Jesus in His relationship to the people and the temple during His entire ministry on earth—yea from the days of His being baptized by John. See John 11:45 ff: 12:19 and other passages.

2) The fact that they had attempted to disseminate the lie among the “people” that Jesus had not risen from the dead, but that the disciples had snatched the body of Jesus from under the nose of sleeping guards. Matt. 28:11-15. And this burning issue was the one called forth by Jesus in the temple as recorded in John 2:13-22 and remembered at the trial in Caiaphas’ judgment hall. All that had happened at the cross, the darkness, the rending of the veil, the report of the “watch” was something not easy to forget, and could not be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulder!

3) But these children of hell who know not of repentance will to maintain themselves, and their sinful deeds over-
against all that God has wrought. They are comparable to Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses before Pharaoh. A like lot of hardening has befallen them. They tenaciously oppose the work of God. They stumble at the Corner-Stone as the builders! Matt. 21:42; Ps. 118:22.

2. As Intended by God:
   a. Manifestation of the greatness of His power before the vessels of wrath. To laugh at them and to have them in derision. Ps. 2.
   b. There is not a word of solace here for these men! These are the men upon whom Jesus had pronounced the eight-fold woe! Matt. 23.

The Outcome Vss. 13-22.

1. The leaders find that they have not legal ground on which to condemn them. The logical thing for them to have done, as well as the just course, would have been to set them at liberty. But they had no cause to start with, and know that they are defeated on the side of righteousness. For we notice the following particulars:
   a. They acknowledge the fact that a notable sign has been done. They have the wit in fact to perceive that this healing was a sign. It had an import, a message to convey!
   b. But in spite of this they will not heed. And they do not depart from the course of Matt. 28:11-15.

2. They do what Satan always does. They begin to persecute the Saints!
   a. The apostles are threatened not to speak in the Name of Jesus to any man. They must discontinue to do what Jesus commanded them to persevere in. They persecute the woman. Rev. 12:13ff.
   b. And here the apostles are a sweet-savor of Christ—a savor of death unto death! The leaders have said A and must now follow because of their unrepentance the way of consistency of sin to the end!

Outline XII

The Prayer Of The Apostles
Acts 4:23-31

Occasion And Content Vss. 23, 29, 30.

1. Peter and John return to their own company, to the circle of the apostles. No doubt with heavy and burdened hearts. They have much to tell, and they tell all—all that the Jewish Council had threatened! They are fully aware of the diabolic nature and of the “method of Satan’s madness” behind it all. The issue was: Speak and be faithful to God, or be silent and disobedient men! And the latter they could never be in this case! Indeed it was an hour in which they must possess their souls in patience.

   b. But the occasion is still of greater magnitude. The battle also here is not merely against flesh and blood. Eph. 6:12. We here have a particular case of the gigantic struggle of the ages of the “Seed of the Woman” struggling with the “seed of the Serpent, the Old Dragon.” It is the hour in which the Nations gather together against the Lord.
and against His Anointed Servant. Ps. 2:1. 2. Indeed there are no 185,000 Assyrians encamped against Jerusalem, but the issue is essentially the same, and the strategy is far more vicious in nature. For—Satan hath "a short time and hath great wrath" Rev. 12:12. Well are the disciples aware of this: they have measured the strength of the enemy!

2. Content of their prayers:

a. They pray against the enemy. They present the facts of the case before the face of the Lord, as did Hezekiah in his day when he championed the cause of the Lord in Jerusalem’s time of need. Isa. 37:16. And ask the Lord to look upon the threatening of the enemy, This can only mean: defeat their purpose O. Lord!

b. And that their work which is God’s work may continue with power. Consequently they pray: 1) For the gift of Spiritual boldness and courage to fearlessly speak the Word. 2) And that signs and wonders may continue to break the way for the gospel triumph! What a noble and God-purposing prayer! Compare its spirit of piety with that of Hezekiah’s prayer. If they must die, that does not matter! Then they will continue to pray the prayer of the “souls under the altar.” Rev. 6:9-11.

Ground Vss. 24-27.

1. They appealed first of all to God’s absolute and unrestricted power in relation to heaven and earth, and all things that it contains. God rules over all things, over the very devils and the hosts of hell. He sitteth in the heavens upon His throne. This is acknowledged not merely as a formal address, but it is in keeping with the apostles consciousness of the greatness and relentlessness of the foe. For had not his foe:

   a. In nearly the very persons who now threaten gathered together against the holy Servant Jesus! Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the people had they not done all what God’s hand had determined they should do!
   
   b. But they had done no more either. God had determined their measure!

2. They appeal to God’s word what He would do when the nations would gather against His servant. As the Lord God who ruleth by His decree He can discomfit the enemy by giving them boldness. What serene confidence in the praying hearts of these saints! Yet what anxious hearts! Jacob here wrestles in prayer with God for Israel, and will not let God go lest He bless him!

Answer Vss. 31.

1. There is a visible manifestation of God coming to hear their prayer. God comes and shakes the place where they were met. The power that conquered over the foe at Easter morning will now continue to conquer. The Lord will rise to the battle and put all His foes to flight. Ps. 68:1.

2. Yea the apostles receive boldness to continue to testify of the Word of God. And when they speak, let the nations rage and imagine vain things. God will laugh at them. Thus it ever was and shall be till the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Rev. 11:7ff.