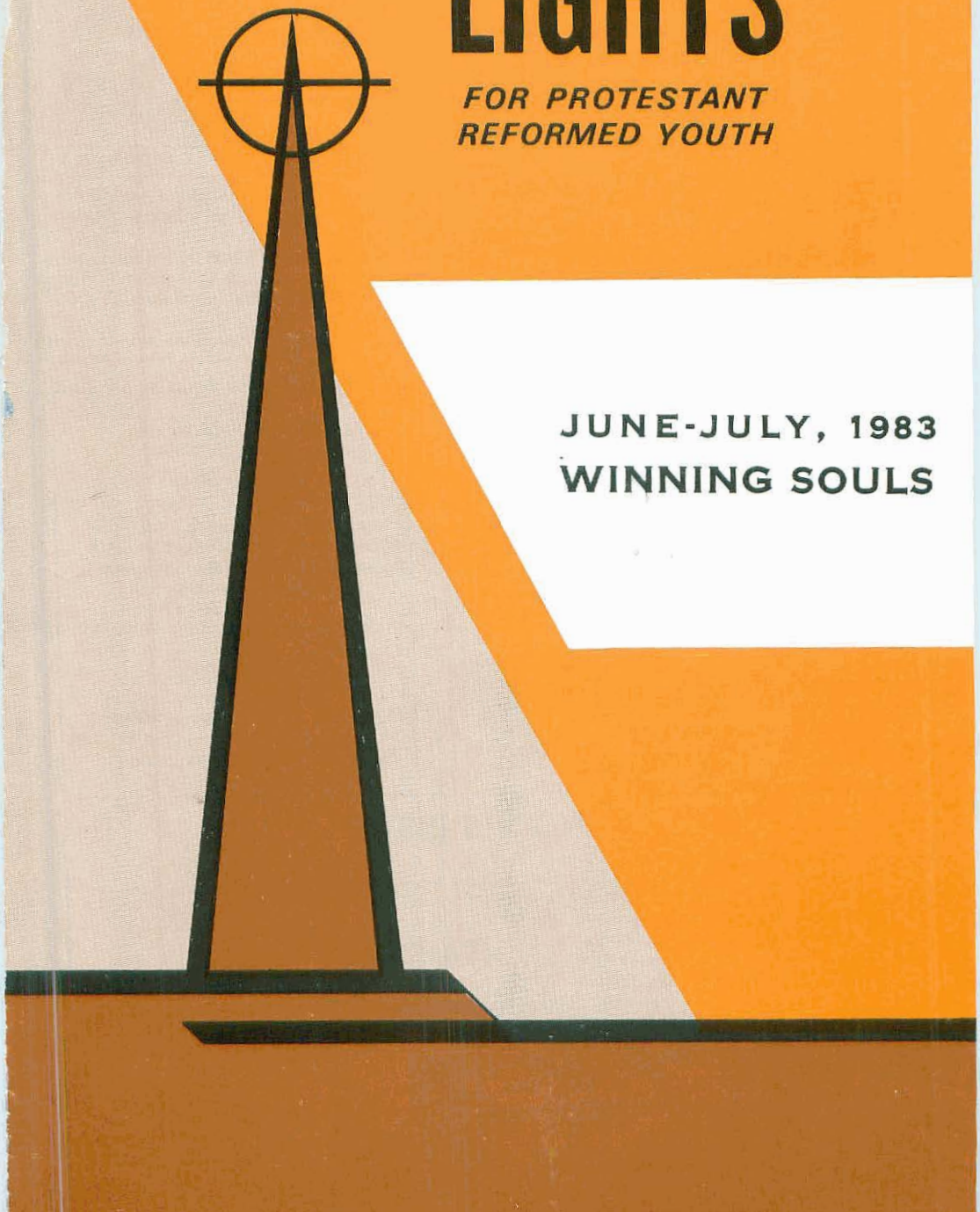
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



JUNE-JULY, 1983

WINNING SOULS

BEACON LIGHTS

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by Dave Moelker

With view to aiding our young people in preparing for society Bible discussion and as a stimulant to that discussion, in this issue of **Beacon Lights** we begin a series of Bible study outlines on I Samuel. They are prepared by Rev. Ronald Hanko of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, Wycoff, New Jersey. Hopefully there will be young people's societies which will use them in their Bible study in the new society season.

* * * * * *

You will also find discussion group outlines for the upcoming convention in Lynden, Washington. Please take note of them and use them to prepare for these groups.

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We welcome Mr. Dean Wassink of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, to the list of contributing editors. He will be sharing the responsibility of the Current Events and Comments department of our magazine.

* * * * * *

Pastor Ron Van Overloop, missionary pastor to Birmingham, Alabama, contributes "Winning Souls" as a feature article in this issue. If you have any questions which are generated from the reading of his article, he would be most happy to correspond with you in attempting to answer them.

The Psalter No. 428 vs. 3, 5

O Lord, how shall a youth preserve his way,
At every turn by vanity surrounded?
In truth, if he Thy statutes will obey,
If on Thy Word his attitudes are founded.
Thou whom I've sought, O let me never stray
From thy commandments, lest I be confounded.

O teach me, Lord, thy way that I should go;
Then shall Thy servant walk therein forever.
Give understanding all Thy paths to know;
Then shall I keep Thy law with zealous fervor.
Instruct me in Thy perfect will and, lo,
I shall observe it with my whole endeavor.

Proverbs for Young Pilgrims

HOPE FOR A FOOL

by Mr. Ed Lotterman

Proverbs 26:12 "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

At first glance, young pilgrim, this Proverb could be somewhat baffling to us. Is not "a man wise in his own conceit" a fool? The fool, as Jesus presents him at the conclusion of the sermon on the mount, is one who, wise in his own conceit, builds his house upon the sand. (cf Matt. 7:26, 27) However, in this Proverb there is a distinction made between one who is "wise in his own conceit," and "a fool." Moreover, the fool has hope. Are you puzzled, young pilgrim?

It is not difficult to identify the conceited one. One who is wise in his own conceit is without God. He is independent of God, or so he claims. A creature, not dependent on the Creator, is his attitude toward life. He is not one to obey the Law of God. His ungodly life is a following of the wisdom of this world. He is given to reason apart from faith; and his wisdom, he claims, is wiser than God.

Not infrequently Scripture presents an exemplification of "a man wise in his own conceit." One clear example is the self-centeredness of Pharoah. Ex. 5:2 "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." Clearly, in his own wisdom, Pharoah would establish his kingdom above the kingdom of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Another unmistakable example given in Scripture is that of the pride of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 4:30 "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the house of my majesty?" Once again it is clear that, in his own conceit, Nebuchadnezzar would exalt his kingdom above the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

Such then, is the one who is "wise in his own conceit." He pays no homage to the Law of God. The commands of our Lord Jesus Christ are below his self esteem. He finds the various exhortations and admonitions of Scripture to be unworthy of his attention. Would we not call him a fool?

However, in this Proverb, young pilgrim, the "fool" is to be distinguished from the one who is "wise in his own conceit." For the fool presented in this Proverb has hope.

Who, then, is this fool?

We receive a glimpse of who this fool is from the prayer of Jesus in Matt. 11:25 and Lk. 10:21. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that hou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The prayer of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew follows his rebuke of Chorazin,

Bethsaida and Capernaum. In Luke, on the other hand, this prayer of Jesus follows the joyful return of the seventy disciples whom the Lord had sent out, two and two, into every city and place. (cf. Lk. 10:1) Included in the commission of the seventy, by Jesus, is the rebuke of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum.

Now, I do not wish to become too involved with these Gospel narratives. However, one thing is important for us to understand. That is the **preaching!** The "woe" which Christ pronounced was His **preaching!** The mission of the seventy was to proclaim the Day of the Lord. Again, **preaching!** And the understanding of this is given by revelation unto the babes. The same revelation comes to us by means of the preaching.

Paul, in I Corinthians 1, connects the preaching with the foolish. Unto the saved, the preaching is the power of God; unto the lost, the preaching is foolishness. (cf. vs. 18) God is pleased to use the foolishness of the preaching. (cf. vs. 21) The preaching of the cross is the wisdom of God (cf. vs. 24) More wise than men is the foolishness of God. (cf. vs. 25) "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." (vs. 27)

Who, then, is this fool?

He is the fool, who claims dependence upon God. He follows not the wisdom of the world, but he follows the foolishness of the preaching. He, who heeds the Law of God, is the fool. The fool is subject to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the fool, who pays close attention to the various exhortations and admonisions of Scripture. Such is the fool presented in this Proverb!

Notice, in this connection, how the "man wise in his own conceit" would distort, displace, and thereby destroy the preaching! Preaching has a smaller and smaller place in worship. Preaching is distorted when false doctrine is presented. Preaching is displaced when many gimmicks are introduced into the worship service leaving scarcely enough time for even a brief exposition of Scripture. In fact, a quick glance at Saturday's paper, which lists all the schedules for various churches, reveals how preaching is being replaced by choir performances and guest speakers and even "Dobson Films."

I am reminded, too, of the elders of Israel coming to Samuel in Ramah, I Sam. 8:4, 5. Israel wanted a king. Why? So they could be like all the other nations. And, I feel, that attitude is all too often among us! "We want a king," chanted Israel. I am afraid to listen, for the distant echo in our church community seems to be "We want a seminar!" or "Give us a lecture with an eye-catching title to be presented by a dynamic speaker!"

I am not saying that seminars are bad. Neither am I saying that lectures are evil. No! But the trend seems to be that these types of things are much more enthusiastically received than the preaching! If so, then the preaching is being displaced. Beware, lest the foolishness of the preaching is destroyed and the "man wise in his own conceit" is allowed to replace it!

The fool has hope. O yes, in each of us there dwells the old man of sin. By nature we all are wise in our own conceits.

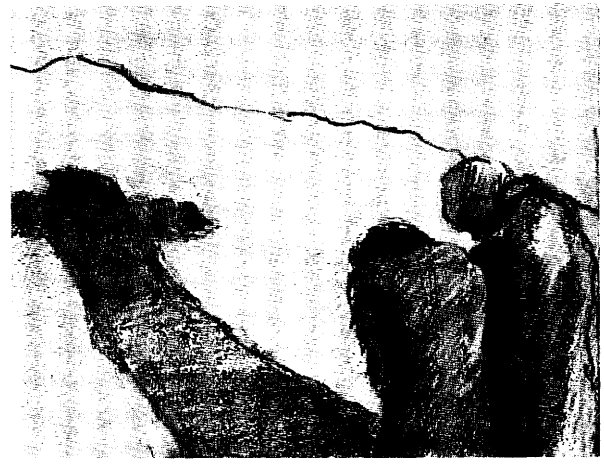
Nevertheless, the fool has hope. I Peter 1:3 teaches ". . .begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection. . ."

Notice here especially two things.

First, that we have a lively hope instilled within us by virtue of the fact that we have been given a new birth. We, who by nature are wise in our own conceits, have hope!

Secondly, that this is possible by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection is the good news of the gospel! No resurrection, no gospel; it is that simple. But this good news of the resurrection is **preached!** I Peter 1 concludes with these significant words: "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

God's Unique Gift To Us:



by Rev. C. Hanko

The confession: I have sinned!
The Acknowledgement: I forgive!

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
Ephesians 4:32

What a blessed privilege to confess sin and to forgive!

The world cannot know this. No man has ever conceived of it. Only the child of God can, by the grace of God, know and experience the blessedness of it.

"I have sinned." These two words are the most difficult to utter. They catch in our throats and refuse to be spoken, even in our prayers. To ease our conscience we lie awake at night thinking of excuses to avoid this horrible admittance. We appeal to circumstances, minimize the wrong as "a slight error", "an accidental slip", a moment of weakness', or "something we simply could not avoid". Readily we blame others for our wrong doing, our parents who are so strict, or our friends who enticed us. We make an appeal to the fact that, after all, we are human, we do need our fun, we cannot dry up, and others are even worse than we. Even though we admit our guilt in prayer, we still often do it very, very half-heartedly.

It has always been thus. When the Tempter came to Eve in paradise, she readily admitted that God had forbidden her and her husband to eat from the one tree, but added, almost defensively of the desire that was creeping up within her,

"we may not even touch it". Can you not hear the echo in our own lives, repeated so often, "We may not do anything"? Immediately after the fall, Adam hides behind the lame excuse, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave to me of the tree, and I did eat." It was as if he were blaming God for giving him the most precious gift of all. But Eve makes out no better. She arises to her own defence, saying, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." It is as if she were saying, "Now don't lay all the blame on me".

We are reminded of king Ahab, who had brought God's wrath and judgment upon Israel by his idol worship. When Elijah comes to him, after the three years of drought and famine, he greets the prophet with the accusation, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" The prophet had prayed for this drought in his zeal for his God and to bring Israel on their knees, recognizing that Jehovah alone is God. Yet the wicked king, rather than repent from his sin, blames the prophet for that which he brought on himself. It sounds familiar, does it not, blaming someone else for the bitter consequences of our own sins?

Pilate is another example of self-justification. When the rulers of the Jews brought Jesus before him, it did not take him long to realize that they had no real charges against Jesus. The more he saw and spoke with Jesus the more he realized that here was a case of perfect innocence. There was absolutely no reason whatever to condemn this Man as a criminal, to be punished with crucifixion. Yet there was pressure from the rulers and from the people. His throne began to feel a bit unstable under him. His wife aggravated the situation by warning him not to have anything to do with this just man. Pilate knew that justice demanded that he declare this Man innocent, drive away His accusers, and take Him under his protection. But. . .for selfish, carnal reasons he delivered Jesus over into the hands of His enemies, condemned Him to death, and then tried to soothe his conscience and escape his guilt by washing his hands before the mob. Let these Jews carry the blame. Today in hell he still realizes that he did not get away with it.

The Book of Proverbs speaks of the adulterous woman who, "eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness". Proverbs 30:20. How true of us, sinners! How difficult it is to admit and confess our sins.

There are two more words, which are equally hard to say, namely, "I forgive". When pushed into a corner we may say so. We may even say this with tongue in cheek. Secretly we tell ourselves, "I forgive, this time, but don't let him try it again." Or, "I forgive, but I can never forget."

People can be so cruel. It is so much easier, so much more pleasant to gossip about the evil-doer than to confront him with his sin, to admonish him, to save him, and to get the sin out of the way. When an evil is discovered telephone bells ring, people confide in their friends, "Have you heard? Isn't it terrible?" "How can anyone do something like that?" The impression is readily left, that the gossiper considers himself (herself) beyond such a wicked deed. Like Peter, who in bold confidence assures the Lord, "Though they all should forsake thee, I will never forsake thee."

But, we ask, can we forgive a person who has done wrong, if that person will not admit any guilt? It is true, that it is impossible to tell someone that you forgive him, if he knows of no guilt, or if he refuses to confess it. Yet that does not mean that we can carry resentment and bitterness in our hearts against him. The willingness, even the desire to forgive must be foremost in our hearts, so that we can freely pray for the transgressor. The barrier must be removed that stands

between us and him.

We do well at this point to read the parable of the unmerciful servant, that is recorded for us in Matthew 18:23-35. This servant owed his master ten thousand talents, an impossible sum, which he could never pay. The master forgave him, cancelled the debt. But this servant, in turn, went and searched out his fellow servant, who owed him the paltry sum of a hundred pence. Especially in comparison with the debt from which he had been relieved, this amounted to less than nothing. Yet this unmerciful servant takes his fellow servant by the throat and demands payment. In fact, he throws him in prison, demanding cruel punishment for his offence.

Why? Why is it so difficult for us to confess our wrong and to forgive others? The answer is, **pride**. Sinful pride enters into the picture. Although we might never admit it, the thought is there, if only all people were like me, what a wonderful world this would be, or we convince ourselves, that when we commit an act of sin it is not so serious, but if someone else commits the same act, well, that is a different matter. From this sinful pride arises bitterness, anger, wrath. Actually we are harming ourselves more than anyone else. We build up resentments which keep on growing. Our prayers are hindered. How can we pray the fifth petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors", when we feel no forgiveness in our hearts? Our spiritual life suffers. Resentment grows into hatred. The communion of saints is disrupted. The preaching on Sunday and the celebration of the sacraments do not merely run off us like water from a duck's back, but we are offended by them. The joy and hope of salvation fade. The words of Jesus become a reality in our lives, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Where lies the solution? We should take ourselves in hand and take a good look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word. We soon must recognize how ugly we are; our ugly pride, our wretched self-righteousness. How often I resemble the other brother and his attitude toward the prodigal son, who wasted father's goods. Actually I at times feel inclined to justify him. . .and myself. Yet a bit of introspect condemns me as the chief of sinners. How ugly, how despicable I must be in the sight of the holy God! What if God did not forgive **me** every moment of the day, seventy times seven, casting my sins into a sea of eternal forgetfulness", never to remember them or lay them to my charge again? God must regard me in Christ. He must see Christ in me, and must deal with me in Christ, as if I never had had any sin, even as if I in my own body had atoned for every sin I ever commit, and have merited the right to everlasting life and blessedness.

What a wonderful gift! What a privilege it is to be able to confess our sins and to forgive one another! The world cannot possibly know what that means. Therefore their problems are never solved, their hearts are never one. Although by nature we find it impossible to humble ourselves before each other, we can, by the grace of God, stand together at the foot of the cross, confessing our sins, experiencing mercy and bestowing mercy. There husband and wife, parents and children, members of the same church can experience the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, the one strong bond that unites us in the Lord.

Strange as it may seem, confession of sin and forgiving one another enriches our lives, our communion with God in prayer, and our fellowship in the Lord! How wonderful to embrace a fellow forgiven sinner!

What a glorious privilege that is, that we may forgive one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us!

Are You Listening?

by Ben Wigger

Webster's dictionary defines communication as a giving or an exchanging of information, messages, etc. . . . Now all of us, be he young or old, parent or teenager, student or teacher, have a communication problem. There is not one of us who can escape completely times when there is a failure to communicate in our own lives.

For myself this problem became a very real reality recently. Since things have slowed down at work, I have been getting home an hour earlier than in the past. Now when I walk in the door there are times when our sons are watching their favorite cartoon program, and it isn't at all uncommon that they will not hear me or anything that is said by either myself or my wife for the length of that program. Even though they are only four years old there are times when they just choose not to hear what you are saying.

This is only one example of a situation that will repeat itself hundreds of times over the years. There seems to be a battle of wills between parents and their children. This problem, although always there, seems to become most noticeable during the teen years. And it is that problem that I would like to look at with you, but please bear in mind that this whole area of communication could be called a two-way street. What is said about the parent's responsibility is on the other hand just as true for the teenager. Communication between parent and teenager is a joint responsibility.

As unappealing as this whole area of communication between parent and teens is, the problem is a normal one, a typical family situation even for a Christian home. Looking back to my own teen years, it seems to me that this problem is really not so much rebellion on the teen's part when he ignores his or her parents, as it is a desire to decide for himself how he will use his own time. When a teen was younger, he more or less went with what his parents asked him to do. But now he is beginning to test whether he really exists as a person or if he is just an extension of his parents.

Each family has to decide how to handle each of the issues that confront the teenager and his parent almost continually. From what I have been able to find on this subject it seems that most of these issues can be placed into very concrete

categories. These issues could be grouped into these area: getting home at a certain time, cleaning one's room, watching television, listening to music (type and volume), using the telephone, one's grades, using the car, caring for one's clothes, choosing one's friends, and spending money.

Remember that your parents are trying to communicate a set of values and priorities to you, which are based on their own perspectives and experiences.

Communication in the home depends on the respect of each family member for the others in the family. You have to respect the differences that are there and the seriousness of each one's particular problems. As a father I have to realize that the problems my four year old sons have are as great and serious to them as the problems I face each day. This applies to the teen and his parents as well. One problem isn't big and the other small, all problems are very important. Each person in the family has to try and get inside or empathize with the other. When a young person is treated in a way that belittles his or her problem, the teenager senses this. And you know from your own experience that if you feel that someone doesn't take you seriously, you tend to clam up. Parents can not expect their children to talk about their joys and pains unless they know that they will be taken seriously and that someone is sincerely interested.

One word by an adult that may be just on the edge of disapproval could very possibly damage a young person's fragile self-esteem. Parents have to take teens seriously and really value what they say.

One of the best times to listen to each other comes when you sit down together for a meal. I know that this can be a difficult thing to do, especially with the hectic life style we all seem to lead, but a meal together is still worth the effort. Everyone feels things and has opinions and knows what his or her classmates feel. Expressing one's feelings can be the starting point for beginning family discussions. But remember, when a young person is asked for his opinion he has to have the confidence that he can answer and not be put down. Even if there is disagreement, after all a young person can be just as wrong as anyone, credit should be given for the teen's thoughts. But the parent also has a God-given responsibility to see that the children he has been given receive the very best answers. A parent must base all of his views and thoughts after all on the Word of God. And where his teens differ from God's Word it is his covenant duty to show this to them.

Parents may find, however, that they have done a lot of needless worrying if they ask questions like: "What kind of person do you want to be?" or "What kind of friends do you want?"

As teenagers share their goals and ideas we can get a glimpse of their value structure and reasoning process. As I read recently, "If we understand the compass that guides them, we are more confident when they are out in the deep forest of modern life". More often than not we will find that their guiding compass is a mini-version of our own.

Communication is not just words, it is more; it is understanding and trust. It is not getting the other person to do what we want; it is valuing each other. Communication is not domination, it is rather a giving of ourselves so others can grow and develop their own values and in turn share them with us.

So many things in our lives depend heavily on our ability to communicate. God in His wisdom has seen fit to put each one of us in our own unique situations. We can be thankful for that. On the other hand, it places an awful responsibility on each of us. God's Law demands that we honor our father and mother. Never lose that one thought, and communication will be greatly improved. For despite our own sinful shortcomings, God will provide for each according to his or her need.

BIBLE STUDY

by Deane Wassink

"Oh, no! Its time to leave for society and I didn't get but a couple of minutes to look at the text. Well, at least we read it at the table." Sound familiar? I am sure that I am not the only person who has said something like that when it was time for society. I have chosen to write about the subject of Bible study because it is a current and also constant problem in the church. I intend to address some of the problems, suggest solutions, explain the principles, and discuss helping tools in connection with Bible study. The last subject, tools, is particularly interesting in light of some aids that have recently become available.

I would like to begin with this question, Can we interpret the Scriptures ourselves? Can each of us understand the Scriptures without any outside help, without even our minister? Even to ask the question makes us somewhat uneasy. Why is that? The reason is that we are dealing with an aspect of our Christian life that is absolutely fundamental. We are dealing with the fact that we are Spirit filled children of God. We answer then "Indeed we can!" We can and must interpret the Bible ourselves.

Our ability to understand the Scriptures does not arise out of ourselves but belongs to Christ's work in us by His Spirit. By nature we are blind to spiritual things and unable to understand the Word. It is true, of course, that the ungodly can study Scripture and come to a certain knowledge of it. But, he cannot come to true spiritual knowledge because his ears are deaf and his eyes blind to spiritual truth. If Christ has worked in us by His Spirit, we are given understanding. We are given eyes to see and ears to hear the things of the kingdom of God. For us the Word of God becomes a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. This ability to interpret the Scriptures ourselves belongs to us in our office of all believers.

Rome tried to deny the ability to interpret the Scriptures to the laity. A man needed a priest to interpret the Scripture for him. The Scriptures were not written in the common language, the vernacular, but in Latin. The result was that the common people were Scripturally ignorant and illiterate. It is against this lie of Rome that Luther and the other Reformers fought with all their might. They emphasized the office of all believers. They translated the Scriptures into the everyday language of the people so that all the saints, providing they could read, had the Scripture to read and study for themselves.

We must not fool ourselves into thinking that the error of Rome is in the dusty past and has been left there. Even

today we face that destructive error. The office of all believers is denied everytime the clergy or a official church body makes a decision and the common people do not quesiton or examine that decision in the light of Scripture. The office of all believers is denied everytime a church supports a decision or stand it has taken with terms too ambiguous and argument too detailed for any but the most learned to understand. The office of all believers is denied everytime, in society, a proficient leader claims deeper understanding(as of Greek or Hebrew), without explaining it in layman's terms, to support his particular interpretation of a text. It makes no difference if he is right or wrong. You say these do not sound like the errors of Rome? Look again! Rome said the layman could not and may not interpret the Scriptures at all. All of the examples given have the same basic problem. In all three the problem is not that it is said the layman cannot understand the Scriptures at all. But, in each the underlying notion is that the layman cannot **really** understand the Scriptures, that the layman is not in a place to question those who **really** understand what the Bible says. It seems to me that the interpretation of the scriptures is hardly nearer to the layman's grasp than it was in the error of Rome. The reason is that in both cases the Scriptures are taken out of the hands of those who have not been trained and who do not posses the office of minister. It really makes no difference if the fault belongs to those who claim to have the deeper understanding or those who believe it is not their place to question those who have been trained. It makes no difference because in either case the office of all believers is denied.

To be continued.

DESPERATELY POOR YET EXTREMELY RICH

by Rev. John A. Heys

What a beautiful way to begin a sermon!

But at the same time, what a way, what a powerful way to cut down the conceited and proud Pharisees, and to encourage the despised, scorned and humble children of God! What a way to mow down the self-righteous Pharisees who stand so tall in their own eyes and considered those who followed Jesus to be the scum of the earth!

To what do I refer? To the first Beatitude with which Jesus began His sermon on the kingdom, or if you will, His Sermon on the Mount. His opening words were, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

We do, however, face the question, "What does it mean to be poor in spirit?" Well, let me tell you at once that it does not mean to be spiritually poor, to be poor in spiritual matters, to lack spiritual strength and spiritual gifts and virtues. That could never be the case. And your parents and church leaders pray that you may be rich in these things. They fear sometimes because Satan's temptations are so clever, so enticing and powerful. And they desire so intensely to have you rich in spiritual gifts and life. Would, we may also ask, Paul tell us in I Corinthians 12:31 to covet the best gifts? And surely he is thinking of spiritual gifts when he writes these lines. For he goes on to write a whole chapter about that gift that is greater than faith and hope,

namely love to God and the brethren. Would Paul tell us to covet what would clearly indicate that we are not citizens in God's kingdom?

And look at the Beatitudes. They all speak of spiritual riches. Surely to be pure in heart is a spiritual gift. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, to mourn over sin, to be meek and merciful, to be a peacemaker, and to be persecuted for righteousness' sake all reveals one to be spiritually rich, to have much of the grace of God and of a truly spiritual life. No, a thousand times, NO! It is not blessed to be poor in spiritual graces and virtues, to be poor in spiritual knowledge and courage.

At the same time Jesus does not mean either that you young people must deny and despise the natural gifts which God has given you. He does use the word spirit here in the sense of disposition of mind; and thus the poor in spirit are those who do not think much of themselves, in fact that think nothing of self. But that does not mean that you must lie and deny that God has given you natural gifts and abilities when He has bestowed them upon you. All falsifying is sin; and it is not blessed to sin. You must not be proud if God gives you a beautiful singing voice and the ability to use it; musical ability; a good memory; teaching ability; or gifts of oratory; writing of poetry; drawing and painting; or sculpture work. All these you may and must develop in order to serve God more fully with them.

But to be poor in spirit means that in the depth of your soul you are convinced that you have no right to be in God's kingdom and have no right to the smallest part of any of its blessings. Get that, young people! A characteristic of a true citizen in God's kingdom is that he knows that in himself he deserves the curse, with all its woes, and that in no way, and to no degree, does he have any right to heaven's joys because of what he is in himself, or because of anything he has ever done. The poor in spirit sing from the bottom of their hearts the versification of Psalm 139 which we find in Psalter number 383, "All that I am I owe to Thee, Thy wisdom Lord has fashioned me; I give my Maker thankful praise, Whose wondrous works my soul amaze." The poor in spirit have a very low opinion of their own worth before God. They are those that say with Paul that we are saved by grace and not by works. They know that they are desperately poor as for as works which please God are concerned, yea that they are poverty stricken, completely destitute, and are absolutely unable to produce one work in their own strength, and have never performed one deed of themselves, that God could receive as a reason for bringing us into His kingdom.

You want an example of such poverty of spirit? That publican in Jesus' parable who smote his breast and (in the Greek) cried out, "God be merciful to me the sinner." He did not see himself as merely a sinner but as **the** biggest sinner he knew. There may be and were bigger sinners. But because he knew his own heart—and no one else's—and saw his own sins, he found nothing worthy of God's favour and pleaded for mercy. The Pharisee had a proud spirit, and instead of thanking God—which his mouth but not his heart expressed—he actually, as far as the meaning of his words is concerned, told God how thankful He ought to be to have such nice people on this earth and as citizens in His kingdom.

The question you young people should ask yourselves is whether you believe yourselves to be as worthless of receiving the blessings of God's kingdom as that publican, who hung his head in shame and smote upon his breast in grief and agony. The question is whether you are convinced in the depth of your souls that the **only** reason you can be and are citizens in the kingdom wherein all revolves around and centers in God and His glory, and wherein all willingly and

consciously live only for His glory, is what work Christ accomplished for you on His cross and in His perfect obedience in our place as our Head.

The poor in spirit see the richness of the cross. They see how needful it was, because of their own mountain of sin, and because of a life-long rebellion against God. For you can see the richness of the cross only as you see the poverty of your own works as far as their spiritual, ethical value before God is concerned. You cannot appreciate what Christ has done until you see what you have done as rebels, enemies of God, lovers of all that is evil.

O, yes, I know. Your parents, the officebearers in your church (and by all means include me) have committed thousands more sins than you have yet. There are thousands more reasons why they do not deserve to be in the kingdom of heaven with its blessings. But I want to impress upon your minds the fact that only one sin, committed in a fraction of a minute, makes you wholly unworthy of being in the kingdom of heaven and calls for everlasting punishment upon you. Let me remind you that Adam and Eve committed just one sin that took very little time to be executed. Yet because of it God drove them out of the garden. Because of that one sin all the curse in the world came as its punishment. Because of that one sin God created a lake of fire with everlasting torment. One sin makes you poverty stricken as far as worthiness to enter God's kingdom is concerned. It makes you penniless, destitute!

Yes, you are baptized, and even some of you are confessing, members of the Church of Christ. You belong to Christian homes. But do you see that even one good work, which by God's grace you perform, such as prayer, faithfully going to God's house on the Sabbath to worship Him, Scripture study, financially supporting the church and the truth, witnessing, confessing Christ before men, are, as the Heidelberg Catechism correctly points out in Lord's Day XXIV, "in this life all imperfect and defiled with sin"? And do you not realize that one good work—even if we could perform it without the blessing of grace that comes out of that kingdom—could never remove the guilt of one sin performed in the past? One sin calls for everlasting punishment, and a good work performed in time cannot take away the guilt that must go on everlastingly.

Now, do you believe that you have NOTHING in yourself that makes you worthy of having a place in God's heavenly kingdom? Is that the testimony of your spirit as well as of your lips? Is that your honest opinion of yourself, and sincere evaluation of your works? Then you have God-given riches and a rich sign from Him that Christ did earn a place for you. Then the kingdom of heaven is yours. And surely it is a blessing to be a citizen in that kingdom. Then you have riches that moth and rust cannot corrupt; and thieves cannot break in to steal any of it from you. Then you have Christ and all the riches of God's covenant that are in Him.

Why does Jesus mention this earmark of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven first? Because we get into that kingdom by grace and not by works. When we will be with body and soul in that kingdom, when it is fully come, there will be absolutely no boasting of what we did. There will be no smallest notion that we deserve the least part of its blessings or place in it. As its citizens we will ascribe all praise to God and His Christ. We will confess that in every sense it is the kingdom realized by heaven's work, and that no work done by mere man on this earth goes into it or deserves a place in it. We will, to paraphrase Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8, 9, say, "By grace am I here in the kingdom of heaven through faith; and that not of myself: my citizenship and that faith are the gift of God: I do not boast of my works, but of the cross of Christ and the grace of God."

WINNING SOULS

by Pastor Ron Van Overloop

The term "soul-winning" is immediately acquainted with the unbiblical practice of one human using a variety of methods to save the soul of another from hell and for Jesus. Such a practice, howbeit very popular, in unbiblical and a thing which is very grievious in God's sight. As described above it is to be most severely condemned.

"Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), not of or by man. Salvation is by grace, not of works (Ephesians 2:8, 9). God has saved us "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Timothy 1:9).

So, of "soul-winning" as it is commonly spoken of today the true believer is to have no part.

Then we read Proverbs 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." What does this mean? How is it that the saint wins souls? We find the answers to these questions from the first part of the text.

What does a tree do? It does several things for humans. It provides cooling and refreshing shade from the hot sun. It puts oxygen into our air to help us in our breathing. If it is a fruit tree, it gives us food to eat. In general, a tree does many good things for us.

What about the Tree of Life? The Bible speaks of a tree of life being in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) and of one in heaven (Revelation 2:7; 22:2). The tree of life in the Garden of Eden had a powerful fruit which maintained the earthly existence of Adam and Eve. A similar power is ascribed to the tree of life which is a part of heavenly glory. It provides food and medicine to the glorified saints that they may enjoy the highest possible activity and blessedness of union with Christ. It is the true enjoyment of heavenly glory.

Trees help us to live. And the trees of life certainly helped our first parents to live and will help all saints in heaven. They refresh, quicken and exert a happy influence.

So is the righteous! His fruit is a tree of life!

* * * * * *

What is right? To be right is to be correct or not wrong. It is to meet the requirement set out.

One who is righteous is right and not wrong. He is right and not wrong according to God Who sets the standard. In fact, God Himself, in His own Being and Person, is the standard of what is right and what is wrong.

A human becomes righteous before God when God Himself gives to him or her this great blessing. God makes His people to meet His own perfect standard of being right. He makes them to be like Himself. He gives this blessing for Jesus' sake. Jesus earned for His people these blessings. Thus one becomes righteous.

There is more, for the human whom God makes to be righteous shows it in his life. His walk is also righteous. His words and deeds meet God's standard of right and wrong. These good works not only flow from the righteousness which God gave, but also they are themselves gifts from God. The righteous man delights to do good works as a way of thanking God for making him righteous. His life and walk are called "righteous".

* * * * * *

The life of a righteous man or woman is as a light set on a hill (Matthew 5:14-16). As the child of God lives his righteous life, he shines as an example. His life is like the picture in a newspaper: it illustrates what the print says and it attracts attention.

This righteous life of the righteous man is his FRUIT. His God-given righteousness produces the fruit of righteous actions.

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." The words and actions of the righteous persons exert an influence on others. This influence, like that of the tree of life, is a happy influence, refreshing and quickening. His external influence, prayers, instruction, and example is a tree of life to those about him. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life" (Proverbs 15:4). Wisdom "is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (Proverbs 3:18). "The mouth of the righteous man is a well of life" (Proverbs 10:11).

The fruit of the righteous IS a tree of life. Not, it might be, but it IS.

Thus the righteous life of a righteous man exerts a powerful influence upon his fellow-saints who are elected and called of God. As a fisher of men (Matthew 4:19) the righteous man gains the souls of the elect, not for or to himself, nor for Christ, but TO Jesus Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, q. & a. 86).

The righteous wife wins her husband by the wisdom of meekness and sobriety (I Peter 3:1, 2).

The righteous man converted the sinner from the error of his way, thus saving a soul from death and hides a multitude of sins (James 5:19, 20).

When the righteous man experiences the tremendous blessedness of forgiveness, he tells transgressors of God's ways. The fruit of God's blessing upon that speech is that sinners shall be converted to God (Psalm 51:13).

Winning souls is the blessing of the Lord upon the righteous life of the man God has made righteous in Christ. 1. Objective righteousness in Christ manifests itself in the righteous life of holiness. 2. This life of holiness is not any special witnessing, but the godly piety which touches every aspect of the life of the man God has given the gift of Christ's righteousness. 3. God uses this godly life to be an influence upon others. This influence is like that of the tree of life.

Oh, how important is the conduct of the professing righteous one! It is the outgrowth of the preaching of the gospel. It is the preaching in action.

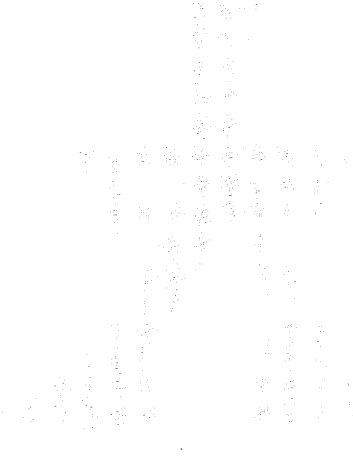
This action makes the elected sinner ask for a reason of that kind of righteous life. The elect sinner wonders about the glorious subjection of a godly wife. The elect sinner is led to marvel at the glory of a God who evokes such reverence in those who believe in Him. The elect sinner is touched by the story of great sin and of even greater forgiveness which the righteous man is telling.

The elect sinner is influence to go to the source of this righteousness in action: the preaching of the gospel. In response to the question of the elect sinner the righteous man always speaks of the constant source of the power of his righteous walk: the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then it is to that preaching to which the elect sinner turns. There the power of God and the wisdom of God operates upon

his heart and life just as it has been constantly doing to the righteous man and woman.

The righteous soul winner is wise. It is the wisdom of God. It is God's wisdom that He is pleased to use the means of the righteous life of the man He has made righteous to attract or influence others whom He has eternally elected. God Himself does not win souls without wisdom, for the eternal plan of salvation exhibits infinite wisdom. In fact, Jesus Christ is "the wisdom of God." In the saved sinner there is as much of God's wisdom to behold as in the wisdom which made the universe to rise out of nothing.



Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

IV. Earnestly Contend For The Faith
Some Primary Principles

In the previous article we were really showing from scripture that the Word of God, scripture itself, is self-sufficient, self-authenticating and self-attesting. This is where we began because a defense of the Christian faith can be accomplished only with, out of and on the basis of the scriptures and in connection with incessant study of the Bible. So where we began was perfectly proper because our present series is in the interest of faithfully defending the faith and to attack all heresies and errors that militate against the Reformed doctrine. But this is not where the Bible itself begins. Scripture does not begin with itself; it begins with God. "In the beginning God. . ." (Gn. 1:1). This is also where our Reformed Confession begins. Its introduction, in Articles I and II, introduces to us the being and essential attributes of God, and then how God is revealed (as, namely, in the book of nature and in the book of scripture. See Ps. 19). Because we are dealing with Christianity, it might be assumed that the most fundamental question is, Why did Christ come into the world? The answer, of course, would be, "to save sinners." But that leads us to ask, What is sin? The answer could hardly be better put than in the words of the Westminster catechism, Sin is "any lack of conformity to or transgression of the Law of God." This prompts us to the most fundamental question, What is God? "God is Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." To

this language of the Westminster catechism our Belgic Confession agrees. (Note: It is more fundamental to ask, **What** is God? than to ask, **Who** is God? **Who** draws forth assertions without necessarily penetrating to nature or essence. **What** gets at nature, essence, meaning.)

We have already seen how all thought and action must be founded on the rock of truth (scripture) or it will all soon enough be blown away. All our feelings, too, must be disciplined to stand on that rock and submit to the obedience of Christ. (They are not good, moral feelings which are not bound in obedience to Christ.) But now we must see, relative to the foundation of scripture, where it has its starting point, namely, in the doctrine of God and in the doctrine of creation. It is very important for us, if we are to be faithful, fearless witnesses to the gospel of Christ and competent defenders of the faith, that we understand this, that we realize that this position must undergird our consciousness. This is important for two reasons: first, because we must always begin with God, not man or man's judgment; second, then see the whole universe as God's creation, for all of reality is founded on that basis. Then without the doctrine of God and the doctrine of creation as our foundation there could be no thinking or acting in harmony with reality. So this point of beginning is to us axiomatic and previous to any of our thought-structure and scaffolding for action out from the foundation. We would have no good news story to tell and no Christian or Reformed position to discuss in reasoning with men if there never had been any creation by God. Without this foundational starting-point we could never argue a God in heaven, a real, historical garden of Eden, an original human pair, a literal and natural serpent, a real woody plant known as the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Nor would we be able to discuss the realities of sin, the curse, the universal flood and the resurrection of the Son of God. (Note: We are very much aware in our day of the fact that apostate man and the apostate church have abandoned this starting-point. The result is rationalism and humanism.)

So then, not only the scriptures and confessions are, but our thinking must be based on the idea of the Creator-creature relationship. For that is where all realistic thought and work have their roots. The Bible distinguishes the God who created **and** all things created by Him (Jn. 1:3). The creator-creature distinction (also abandoned by apostate thought) will keep us on the track of (facing) reality. Without it we simply derail and go reeling out into "the wild blue yonder." This indispensable distinction implies God's attribute of absolute independence. Dr. H. Bavinck tells us that this is the first thing scripture teaches us concerning God, that "He has a distinct (separate) being, a distinct 'nature, substance, essence,' not apart from His virtues, but revealed in all His virtues and perfections. He has proper names which do not pertain to any creature. Among all these names the name **Jehovah** stands out pre-eminently . . ." This name designates Him "as the One who **is** and **will be** what He **was** (bold, RCH), that is, who remains eternally the same in relation to His people. He has the ground of His existence in himself. He existed before all things, and all things exist through Him. Ps. 90:2; I Cor. 8:6; Rev. 4:11." (The Doctrine of God, 142). God's independence "is that virtue. . . according to which He is of and in and through himself, has the eternal ground and fountain of His being within himself, is not caused by or dependent on any being outside of himself, and is, therefore, the absolute, pure being who is perfectly self-sufficient, and has no need of any being outside of himself. In this virtue He is wholly different from the creature." (H. Hoeksema, **Reformed Dogmatics**, 69). God is Maker of heaven and earth. Then heaven and earth are the things made.

The universe is not the Creator but the creation. The universe is not self-generating but dependent on the upholding power of its Maker.

The whole creation is dependent upon the purpose, appointment and rule of God. He has not given up His creation to accident or chance (Epicureanism). He has not left the creation to fly in its orbit on automatic pilot. Deism and Darwin). The world, including man, his will and reason, were created dependent upon God, His providence and sovereign foreordination, according to which He plans and directs whatsoever comes to pass. The denial of this results in Pelagianism, the humanistic philosophy that man by his own inherent powers can save himself. "The word **providence** means that God supplies the world with what it needs." (Bavinck). This means that the world is continually dependent on God for the constant supply of its needs. From moment to moment the creation is dependent on God's omnipotent, omnipresent power to keep it in existence. So as scripture does, we distinguish the Creator from the creature; the two are not to be confused or indentified. (Pantheism). This independent Creator, dependent creation distinction is integral with the Christian position. Those not holding the Christian position, do not maintain this distinction, but deny it one way or another, as above. If God and the creation were conceived as mutually dependent, this would imply the creation as having some independence. (Dualism). So we must avoid, (1) the error which views the universe as a bouncing ball on the spinning roulette wheel of Fate (Islamism), also (2) that view in which the Creator is thought of as a man who invented a watch, wound it up, put it under his pillow, slept and forgot all about it (Deism); or (3) the view that the world is like a fast revolving flying saucer capable of elevating itself and shooting off to heaven by its own internal energy system (Pelagianism); and (4) a sort of mish-mash blender view in which the Inventor becomes dependent upon his own robot which in turn must depend always on the Inventor. (Dualism). We must be aware of these non-Christian positions in order to stand firmly on the rock of the Christian position and from which impregnable fortification we may, and must, call on men to stand with Christ and us.

In the dependent creation the independent Creator has set the stage for making himself known to man. As mentioned, He did this in the book of creation and in the Book of His holy divine Word. It would be better, instead of distinguishing between a general revelation in nature and a special revelation in the inspired scripture, to say that there is a **manifestation** of God in nature, but that the **revelation** of God is in scripture. The one is intra-cosmic and natural; the other, extra-cosmic and super-natural. the Two are inseparable. They are related as facts and interpretation of facts. The former without the latter would have no meaning. God is the Creator of the facts and the Interpreter of His own facts. God's interpretation only has absolutely unique originality. For man to have the truth, his interpretation must so conform to God's interpretation as to bear the stamp of and show the pattern of the original.

Apostate man came to believe the devil's lie and ever since denied his creaturehood (Gn. 3:5). Ever since, he has claimed normalcy for everything about himself. (Prov. 30:12; Rev. 3:17). Therefore he assumes that he is perfectly capable of interpreting the world and all things satisfactorily on his own and entirely without God. Unregenerate man gropes in mental futility, being darkened in his understanding. alienated from the life of God bacause of the ignorance that is in him, because of the hardness of his heart. (Eph. 4:17-18). Hence his interpretation of things is in many ways faulty, certainly sinful, and for this he is responsible. Only the regenerated man,

thinking in terms of God's scripture revelation, may be assured of having true knowledge. (I Cor. 2:9-16).

God is sovereign and independent (Isa. 40). Man is subservient and dependent. (Ps. 104:27-30). God's law is a declaration of His own sovereignty and man's moral subjection to Him and dependence on Him" (S. Charnock's **Attributes**, II, 387). Man's existence depends on God's (Ac. 17:28); man's knowledge is that between the authority and the obligated. The one is original (Rom 11:33-36), the other derived (Ps. 94:10; Prov. 16:1); the one is absolute comprehension of knowledge (I Jn. 3:20), the other, of necessity, is partial (I Cor. 13:9, 22).

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Suggestions for Futher Study

1. To get an idea how that without the revelation of God in the Bible no one knows what "virtue" is, read the first 40 pp. of Plato's **The Republic**. For the exact antithesis of this read Charnock's **The Attributes**, II, xii, on the Goodness of God!
2. Read chap. two in Warfield's "The Plan of Salvation", on Autosoterism. (Bunyan would personalize this term, Mr. Self-save.)

Study Outlines on I Samuel

by Rev. R. Hanko

Chapter 1:1 - 2:11

A. The background of the book of I Samuel.
   1. The book (read an introduction to the book; sometimes there is one in your Bible):
      a. What period of Israel's history does the book cover?
      b. What are the characteristics of this period, both from an historical and a spiritual point of view?
      c. Are there any indications in the first chapters of Israel's spiritual condition at this time?
   2. The man Samuel:
      a. Who was Samuel's father and what tribe was he from? I Chron. 6:22-28.

b. Does Samuel's background have any significance with respect to his unique place in Israel's history? Ps. 99:6, Jer. 15:1.

B. Hannah and Peninnah.
   1. Elkanah's polygamy:
      a. Why do you think Elkanah had two wives?
      b. Why was not polygamy punished in the O.T.? Was the law of God different in those days? Luke 12:48, Matt. 19:7-9.
      c. Did Elkanah have the peace of God in his home while he lived in this sin?
   2. The relationship between Hannah and Peninnah:
      a. What was the cause of Hannah's grief?
      b. How did her relationship to Peninnah add to her grief?
      c. Is there any indication in this passage of the spiritual character of these two wives of Elkanah?
      d. Why did Peninnah persecute Hannah?
      e. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between God's people and the wicked? Matt. 5:10, 11, John 15:18-21, I Peter 2:21-23.

C. Hannah's desire for a son.
   1. Her barrenness:
      a. Was barrenness a sign of God's displeasure? Gen. 30:1, 2, II Sam. 6:16-23.
      b. Did Hannah's barrenness have anything to do with the spiritual condition of Israel? Duet. 28:4, 11, 18, Ps. 127:3.
      c. Is barrenness still a sign of God's displeasure?
   2. Hannah's prayer in the tabernacle:
      a. How did Hannah deal with her grief? What can we learn from this? Ps. 37:5, I Peter 2:21-23 & 5:6, 7.
      b. What did Hannah promise if the Lord would give her a son? Judges 13:5, 7, Luke 1:15.
      c. Why did Hannah want a son so badly? Is. 9:6, Luke 1:31. Can we desire children for the same reason?
      d. Why did Eli think she was drunken? What does this say about the spiritual condition of Israel?
      e. Why did Hannah go away from the tabernacle rejoicing?

D. Hannah's prayer answered.
   1. The birth of Samuel:
      a. How long after did the Lord give her a son?
      b. What is the meaning and significance of Samuel's name?
      c. How and when did Hannah fulfil her vow to the Lord?
   2. Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving:
      a. What is the theme of Hannah's prayer?
      b. Why does she speak of enemies and adversaries?
      c. Compare her prayer with Luke 1:46-55. Is there more than an accidental similarity between these prayers? Explain.

OUTLINES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

Stewardship

Introductory Principles

A. All of the world is the Lord's.
   1. What is the Lord's according to Exodus 19:15 and Psalm 24:1?
   2. What do the following verses add to the above: Psalm 50:10; Haggai 2:8; I Chronicles 29:14?

B. Besides creation God also has the possession of man and his life. cf. Ezekiel 18:4. The reason is found in Deuteronomy 32:6.

C. The result is two-fold:
   1. Every man is under God and is responsible to Him. Romans 14:12.
   2. Every man must use God's good gifts to praise Him. I Peter 4:10.

I. Matthew 25:30, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

A. The ideas of the unprofitable servant.
   1. This person was a servant and he never denied this fact.
      a. What is implied in the fact that he was a servant?
      b. Remember that just to acknowledge that one is a servant and owes all to his Master is not enough. Such a one can still be found to be an unprofitable servant.
   2. He thought ill of his Master and dislikes His service.
      a. He found no pleasure in serving God, but served only as a matter of habit or as a harsh obligation.
      b. If one holds the Master to be hard and expecting too much, then *service* will be a dreaded labor. Such a one will never do his service well.
   3. He thought of himself without humility and deprecation.
      a. He came to his Master without apologies or excuses.
      b. Be aware that the verdict was the opposite of what we often pronounce upon ourselves.

B. His sin.
   1. He did not spend his talent on himself and in this he was "better" than those who love only for themselves.
   2. Nor did he waste it in wickedness as the prodigal son did in feasting and reveling.
   3. His sin was sloth, living without purpose beyond keeping up our position.

a. Notice that not to do right is to be wicked.
b. What is the significance of the fact that "wicked" and "slothful" are put together?

C. His judgment was that he was condemned to outer darkness.
1. In his heart he had been outside of God's household, and so the lord tells him to remain outside.
2. There exists an hideous maturity of hatred against God and the most horrible level of misery.

II. Luke 17:10, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

A. Instead of the Master calling the servant unprofitable, the servant says it of himself.
1. This expression comes from the heart of those who have labored fully all day.
a. He is conscious that he is only doing his duty when he perseveres all day.
b. He expects no admiration or thanks because he knows he deserves no reward for doing what he must do.
2. He thinks little of his services, confessing that he is an unprofitable slave.
a. This confession rebukes us when we think that we are worthy of praise.
b. This confession rebukes us when we think we can rest from our labors at any time because we worked hard or long enough.

B. Significance.
1. In what way can we profit God? Job 22:2, 3. How can we enrich Him to whom all silver and gold belongs?
2. Whatever service we have been able to render is a matter of debt. cf. Psalm 100:3a; I Cor. 6:19b, 20.
3. Besides, in all that we have done we are unprofitable slaves because we are imperfect. cf. Job 4:17-21.
4. Yet more, whatever we have done, is only because of God's abundant grace. cf. Ephesians 2:10.

III. Matthew 25:21 gives the verdict of grace, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

A. This reward is given to faithfulness.
1. Faithfulness is dedication to God, the use of talent or talents to His glory and honor.
2. God looks at faithfulness, not at the number of talents.

B. It is a reward of sovereign grace.
1. It is not according to works, because it was for *few* things that *much* was given.
2. Our good works are evidences of His grace within us and so God first

gives us grace and then rewards us for it.

C. What bliss is found in "Well done!"
   1. It matters little then what man has said of us in flattery or condemnations.
   2. How we shall love Him for such a gracious estimation of our cups of cold water given in His name.

Choosing Friends

by Pastor Wayne Bekkering

I. The Importance of Friends.
   A. God has created us in such a way that we need friends.
      1. Friendship is a reflection of the covenant relationship of God.
         a. Within Himself God enjoys the bond of perfect friendship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
         b. God's people enjoy the bond of God's friendship in Jesus Christ.
      2. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone. . ." Gen. 2:18.
         a. This passage refers first to marriage, earth's ultimate friendship.
         b. It also shows that friends are necessary for all of us.
   B. God uses friends in part of our development.
      1. God uses parents in the initial and important part of our development.
      2. He also uses friends.
         a. During the teen age years young people become very sensitive to their friends and peers.
         b. During these years friends have a tremendous influence on young people. Eg. What they wear, sing, think and do.
      3. There is a danger in this matter that young people put friends in God's place and commit the sin of idolatry. See H.C. q.&a. 95.

II. The Idea of Friendship.
   A. The principle idea of friendship is enjoying and sharing each other's company and life.
      1. There are superficial associations in life.
         a. These associations are based on common location. Eg., neighbors, fellow-workers, etc.
         b. These associations do not necessarily partake of the essence of friendship.
      2. True friends and true friendship are "in the Lord".

a. The love that friends have for each other is rooted in the love that God has for them.
b. Friends esteem each other because they reflect the work of God's grace in their lives.

3. God created a spiritual unity in His people.
   a. Godly friends love the same things.
   b. Godly friends share each other's lives.
      1) I Sam. 20:17, "And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."
      2) II Sam. 1:26, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

B. Friends who share the love of God have the spiritual quality which will allow them to *serve* each other in humility.
   1. A Christian friend will not choose a friend solely to enhance himself.
      a. A Christian will not be self-centered.
      b. A Christian will not ask, "What can he or she do for me".
   2. We show ourselves true friends as we help and serve each other in the Lord.
      a. Prov. 18:24, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly. . ."
      b. I John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."
   3. Jesus is a model friend.
      a. He humbled himself to the death of the cross to save us. Cf. Phil. 2:7 & 8.
      b. He laid down his life for his friends. Cf. John 15:13-15.
      c. He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Cf. Prov. 18:24.

III. The Choosing.
   A. The Biblical directives to guide us in choosing friends.
      1. Negatively:
         a. We will not be friends with the world because whosoever is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Cf. James 4:4.
         b. We will not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers nor have fellowship with unrighteousness. Cf. II Cor. 6:14-18.
         c. We will make no friendship with an angry or furious man. Cf. Prov. 22:24, 25.
      2. Positively:
         a. The God fearing and those that keep God's precepts will be our friends. Cf. Ps. 119:63.
         b. We will seek the wise for he that walketh with wise men shall be wise. Cf. Prov. 13:20.
         c. We will choose those who are honest and faithful before God.

1) They will correct us when we err-even with a sharp wound.
2) "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful". Prov. 27:6.

B. The way we choose friends.
1. This matter is too important to just drift along without giving it serious thought.
a. We must study the Scriptural principles.
b. We must bring this important matter before God in prayer.
2. We must choose friends for their spiritual qualities, and not for natural considerations. Eg. rich, popular, good-looking, talented, etc.
3. We will talk this matter over with our parents because they love us and are deeply concerned about this area of our development.

IV. Related Questions.
A. May we have Christian friends who are not members of our churches?
B. Must we be discerning about our friends if they are members of our churches? Why?
C. May we go against what is right for a friend? Eg. to lie or to cheat.
D. Do you want a friend who will approve everything that you say or do?
E. Is there any truth to the saying, "A man is known by the company he keeps"?

Youth Serving God In The Family

by Rev. R. G. Moore

A. Our God is a covenant God. Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39
1. He has chosen His covenant people from eternity to be His children. Col. 1:14ff.; Eph. 1:3-5.
2. He has redeemed His covenant people over 1950 years ago. Eph. 1:5-8.
3. He calls, justifies, and glorifies those whom He has chosen. Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 1:6.

B. This covenant of friendship and fellowship He determines and realizes in the line of continued generations. Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; Jer. 31:33.
1. Therefore as children or youth, we belong to God's family, with all the responsibilities and blessings of children.
2. Joshua is able to say confidently "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15.

C. What then can we do to carry forth our covenant calling within the family?
   1. First, we can do nothing of ourselves, in our own strength. As covenant youth, we too, are sinners.
      a. In sin we were conceived and born. Ps. 51:5.
      b. In our own strength and ways we are dead in sins and trespasses. Eph. 2:1. Certainly this is also true of us as covenant youth.
   2. This implies the need for the mercies of Christ in order to at all serve God in the family. Ps. 13:5; Ps. 25:16-18. We too, of needs confess our sins daily and rest alone in the sovereign grace to serve. Jer. 31:18-19.

D. Positively this means that by grace we of needs obtain knowledge if we are to serve God within our families.
   1. The knowledge of God and His truth. Prov. 3:5, 6.
   2. The knowledge of ourselves - our weakness, frailties, sin, and therefore our needs. Prov. 3:5, 7.
   3. Only then is there any hope of adding to the true christian fellowship of the family. Prov. 3:13-16.

E. An important part of our serving God in our family fellowship and covenant life within the family is our learning from father and mother. This is true also of us who are older or maturing youth. Prov. 4:1-4, 10-11; Prov. 1:8, 9.
   1. Be content to learn - rather than to teach. And be assured of the rich blessings of God as you turn to father and mother for understanding.
   2. Practically this means, we are open with our parents and freely discuss matters, both of the family and of our own personal life with them, being ready to receive the instruction of our covenant parents.

F. Secondly, it is needful to live a life of prayer.
   1. The Psalms teach us again and again the need of God's children to pray.
   2. Pray for your needs, but also pray for the needs of your parents and siblings.
   3. And above all pray for grace to glorify the Name of God.

G. Thirdly, we need to worship together as a family, and in particular as covenant youth we must come under the proclaimed Word of Christ, readied to receive it.
   1. Psalm 119:9 comes to mind.
   2. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68 - These words of Peter are also to be ours.
   3. Speak in your families about the sermons you hear, and about how that Word is important to you and your family. In this we grow together in faith and grace. Eph. 2:20-22.

H. Finally, may Eph. 4:14-21 be our guide in our life together in the home.
   1. I suggest that in your discussions of this brief outline, that you:
      a. Look up, read, and discuss the texts to which I have referred.
      b. That you discuss the practical implications of the remarks within this outline. And also the ways of fulfilling these aspects of our christian life of service unto God in the home.
   2. May you have a blessed time at your convention.

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- -And anything else you might need for your week of fun and fellowship with other Christian Young People.