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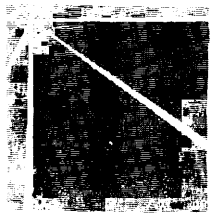
ANTICHRISTMAS / CHRISTMAS



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ANTICHRISTMAS

Rev. Chuck Terpstra

Covenant young people, let me begin by explaining the title of this article. Perhaps you judge from the title that I am against Christmas, and that this is an article which criticizes our practice of commemorating the birth of our Lord Jesus on the day known as Christmas. Such is not the case, however, and therefore, you must not hyphenate this to read "Anti-Christmas". Rather, you must hyphenate it this way: "Antichrist-mas"; for this is an article in which we hope to examine the ways in which antichrist seeks to corrupt our commemoration of Christ's birth. We want to ask and answer: How does antichrist purpose to lead us away from the proper remembrance of this great historical wonder which is the core and foundation of our Christian faith? And as we examine this, we want to gain a sensitivity to these attempts, so that we resist them and properly reflect on the Incarnation of our Saviour.

It ought not surprise us that antichrist is active to overthrow our faith in Christ's coming in the flesh, particularly at that time of year when we pay special attention to this wonder. In fact, the Scriptures reveal to us that this is one of the chief characteristics of antichrist, that he denies that Christ came in the flesh. So writes the apostle John in I Jn. 4:3: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." This is also revealed in II Jn. 7: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

Furthermore, you will recall that in the old dispensation there were prefigurations of antichrist, just as there were prefigurations of Christ. And how did these prefigurations of antichrist manifest themselves? They did so by attempting to prevent the **coming of Christ**. Rev. 12 vividly describes these attempts under the symbolism of the woman with child ready to be delivered (symbolizing the Old Testament church bringing forth the Christ), and the great red dragon which stood before her "for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (symbolic of Satan purposing to prevent Christ's advent). From your background in O.T. history all you need do is recall the devil's use of wicked queen Athaliah and Haman to see how he plotted to prevent this coming in the flesh of Christ.

And what we must understand is that, while Satan and therefore antichrist were defeated by God in their attempts to thwart Christ's coming, they have not ceased their activities with respect to this coming. For now they employ all their power and the means available to them to attack this precious truth, so as to cause it to be denied, corrupted, and concealed. And

we find ourselves in the midst of and affected by this attack, especially during the Christmas season.

But how does antichrist attack this truth of our Saviour's Incarnation? In general, it is important to keep in view that antichrist always does two things. He **opposes** Christ, and he **sets himself up in Chris't place.** This is implied in the name "antichrist" itself. This name is derived from the combination of the Greek word for Christ and the Greek preposition "anti", which may mean both "against" and "in the place of". Antichrist, therefore, is one who is **against** Christ, and one who **takes His place.** From this basic idea we may learn that wherever the spirit of antichrist is present, there Christ is opposed and His place is usurped by something or someone else. And with respect to the subject before us, this means that when we enter into the time of year when we reflect on the wonder and reality of Christ's birth and its significance for our salvation, then we may be sure that Satan and therefore antichrist are intensely active in attempting to draw our attention away from Christ by putting other things in the place of and over against Christ as the object of our reflection and worship. Of that in general we must be aware and to that we must be sensitive.

Yet we must examine more specifically and concretely how antichrist is active in opposing and taking the place of Christ at that time when we purpose to observe Christ's advent. I believe that a little thought to this will give us plenty to dwell on seriously. We want to consider a few areas together on a more practical level.

Let's consider the matter of the gift giving that takes place at Christmas first of all. We might be tempted to say that this is something quite harmless and innocent. We might also add that the giving of gifts is an expression of Christian love for one another. And that in itself is true. It is my conviction, however, that Satan works long and hard to cause this practice to be a means to direct our attention away from Christ and His birth, so that at Christmas time we worship something else, namely, the god of materialism. Satan tempts us into turning this custom into greedy, materialistic self-gain.

And so he causes the spirit of antichrist to pervade our commemoration of Jesus' birth. We become more concerned with what Christmas means to us in terms of temporal, material treasures than what it means to us in terms of eternal, spiritual riches. Whereas Jesus taught us with the words, "It is more blessed to **give** than to receive", we are prone to listen to the words of antichrist, "It is better for you to **get** than to give." In contrast to Christ's instruction, "If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**", we are apt to receive the instruction of antichrist who says, "If any man will come after me, let him **indulge himself.**" And in sharp opposition to Jesus, who came into this world humbly and in poverty, and who said of Himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head", antichrist comes in great pomp, pride, and prosperity, boasting that the entire world is his to own and to hoard, and urging us to partake of it all.

And therefore we need to ask ourselves during the Christmas season, Whose voice have we heard? Do we find ourselves worshiping something other than Christ? Are we sensitive to

antichrist's attempts to lure us away from the lowly Jesus of Bethlehem by parading before our eyes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life in the latest toys, games, and fashions? We must think seriously about these things. Let us return to simple, humble worship of the Christ child in Bethlehem's stable, praising God for **His unspeakable gift.**

A second area affected by antichrist at Christmas is music. By means of this powerful instrument Satan makes good his effort to draw us away from Christ and His coming in the flesh. In music, too, he opposes Christ and replaces Him with a christ of his own making. Not only does he do that through the frivolous ditties of the world ("Jingle Bells", "Deck the Halls", "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town"), but also through many hymns that we often sing which, if not openly antichristian, nevertheless, are distortions of the Christ of the Scriptures.

For example, there are certain hymns which, though perhaps accurately depicting Christ in the manger, weak and helpless, yet stress this to the exclusion of the fact that this Christ is the Son of God, our Saviour-King, Who came to save His people, and Who is the heir of this world. Or there are songs which present Jesus as the Saviour of every man, who brings peace and goodwill to all. It is no wonder that even the world can and does sing many of these hymns at Christmas time. After all, everyone loves a child who is mild and helpless, but who brings peace and joy to all.

But the point is, that antichrist takes great delight in keeping Christ in the manger as an impotent babe who can be fondled and talked about, but who is not to be worshiped as Lord of lords and King of kings. Of this too we need to be aware. Let us be on our guard lest we find ourselves merely admiring a baby and not worshiping the King. And let the songs which we sing at Christmas time (and sing we should!) be ones which truly reverence our newborn King and give honor to Him Who is our Saviour from sin.

A final area in which Satan is active and where the spirit of antichrist is to be found during the Christmas season is that of the gaiety and parties which are associated with this holiday. Certainly for the believer Christmas is a joyous time, and an opportune time to share the joy with and among family and friends. But Satan is always present at these moments to inject into our Christian fellowship and get-togethers an antichristian "party spirit". And as always his purpose is to replace Christ as the object of our worship and joy with something else. And so he diverts our joy away from Christ toward fun and feasting, drinking and entertainment, so that we come to believe that there can be no complete happiness without these kinds of activities. And when we have tried to commemorate Jesus' birth in this fashion, we go home empty and find our joy was only superficial and fleeting. What is it that gives us real joy and fellowship at Christmas, young people? Is the focus of all our activities truly Christ and the wonder of His birth? Are we like the shepherds, who have heard the good tidings of great joy, and having seen Jesus in the manger, tell abroad what was said concerning this child, that He is the Saviour, Christ the Lord (Lu. 2:17)?

The above are but a few ways in which antichrist seeks to corrupt our remembrance of Christ's birth. There

are many other ways which one could mention which I will not. But there is one thing more that must be said yet concerning this subject. And that is, that antichrist uses much deceit and subtlety in his efforts to oppose and replace Christ during that time of year when we reflect on His coming in the flesh. We must bear in mind that in tempting us he does not jump out at us shouting, "Don't believe that Christ came in the flesh." We must remember that Satan is the liar and always comes with the lie. And because of that approach we must maintain constant watchfulness over our souls and our activities. He will use all his devilish power and any means to corrupt our faith in Jesus' Incarnation. May God increase our awareness and sensitivity to the work of antichrist, and give us grace to resist it, so that we commemorate Christ's birth in true spirit and joy.

CHRISTMAS — Sign of Our Lord's Return

by Pastor Steven Key

When I was first requested to write an article concerning the observance of Christmas, I felt somewhat uneasy. Anyone who has studied the origins of our observance of December 25 as "Christmas," understands that the beginning of this festival has little to do with Christ and more to do with Antichrist. Some think that Christmas was originally good and proper, and therefore they cry, "Keep Christ in Christmas," or "Put Christ back into Christmas." But others are inclined to say, "It started with the pagans of old and it continues with the ungodly of today; let them have it." And along with many of our Reformed fathers, including Calvin, and the Puritans, I unashamedly sympathize with the latter view.

However, even John Calvin, who is often set forth as one who rejected completely the world's observation of Christ's birthday, wrote to John Haller, pastor of the church at Berne,

> Before I ever entered the city (Geneva—s.k.), there were no festivals but the Lord's day. Those celebrated by you (Christ's birth, Easter, and other festival days—s.k.) were approved of the same public decree by which Farel and I were expelled; and it was rather extorted by the tumultuous violence of the ungodly, then decreed according to the order of law. Since my recall, I have pursued the moderate course of keeping Christ's birthday as you are wont (known—s.k.) to do.
>
> (**Letters**, Part 2, p. 288, January 2, 1551)

So Calvin himself saw that there could be a proper observance of Christ's birth, even amid all the attacks of Antichrist upon the remembrance of that event.

It is not difficult for the spiritually-minded Christian to see how Christmas is corrupted by Satan. My colleague, Pastor Terpstra, pointed that out clearly. Yet for all that, we ought not

ignore the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the significance of that birth; but we ought to see the work of our Lord Jesus Christ even through the development of the anti-Christian spirit we see in this season. We ought not go through this Christmas season without becoming more eager to see our Lord returning in His glory. We must be filled with the things of the Spirit of Christ, not with the anti-Christian spirit of Christmas. For if the coming of our Lord in the incarnation provides us with joy, will not His final coming be the fulness of joy?!

Pastor Terpstra has pointed out some of the areas in which the spirit of Antichrist has entered the church in the season called "Christmas". Some, seeing that fact, have gone so far as to call Christmas "a demon holiday"; and not without reason. But I would call your attention, young people, to the fact that the One Who prevails in the Christmas season is not Antichrist, but **Christ**. I would like to point you to that truth from two points of view.

In the first place, the final judgment and the theodicy (when God and all His works will be seen as perfect and just by all men) stand inseparably connected with the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. That this is true is very plain from Scripture. In the first place in that connection, we must remember that the first coming of our Lord belongs to what the Old Testament Scriptures refer to repeatedly as "the great day of the Lord." You have, in the second place some direct expressions in the Bible. You have the words of old Simeon shortly after Jesus' birth: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34, 35b). The Lord Jesus Himself said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). Finally, there is also the fact that John the Baptist preached the coming of Christ under the aspect of judgment, when he proclaimed, "the ax is laid to the root of the tree. . ." (Matt. 3:10).

The inspired words of Simeon are true — this child is **set**. He is set by God, of course. He is set for a **sign**. Of what is He a sign? He is a sign, on the one hand, to pass moral judgment upon the world in which He is set. Through Him as a sign, it becomes manifest that the world is condemned. The righteousness and wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. And He is a sign, on the other hand, of the infinite grace of God in sending His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Zion shall be redeemed through judgment!

The Son of God, Whose birth we commemorate this time of year, is the basis for all hope and joy. It is because of Him and His incarnation and work that we do not despair, even though the world of today seems to have a terrifying outlook for the child of God. For we look beyond the manger to the cross, and beyond the cross to the resurrection and ascension, knowing that our Lord is preparing a place for us. Yes, when it comes right down to it, Christmas is a matter of the heart. Because that is so, we stretch the Christmas season until it extends the whole year round. All men do so, either

as "Antichrist—mas", to use the terminology of Pastor Terpstra, or as the season of the coming of our Lord.

Once again, the inspired words of Simeon are true—this sign of the Christ will reveal the thoughts of the hearts of men, also of your heart and mine. It confronts the hearts of men with the question: "What think **ye** of the Christ?" And at the sight of that sign, the multitude of men is divided into two camps. Also in this Christmas season, the sign of Christ reaches its purpose. As the world of Antichrist tried to prevent the first coming of Christ, so it tries to prevent the second, knowing that then they shall receive their reward. They who refused Him a place in this world, they who rejected Him, scoffed at Him, spit on Him and with wicked hands crucified Him, all the while refusing to repent, shall recognize His Kingship and shall call for the mountains to fall on them! For judgment He is come, that through it Zion might be redeemed.

But there is another viewpoint from which it is evident that the One Who prevails in the Christmas season is not Anitchrist, but Christ. When God sent His only begotten Son into this world in the fulness of time, born of the virgin Mary, that Jesus entered a world in which unbelief was at its peak. The true Church was but a remnant, and Antichrist, according to Revelation 12, stood ready to devour the child as soon as He was born. But, I say, the anti-Christian spirit we observe in this Christmas season ought not merely make us **sorrow**. It ought to give us **hope**! For when you open your spiritual eyes, you will see in this Christmas season a sign of our Lord's return! Just as evil flourished in the world when Jesus was born in the fulness of time, so it must be at the time of His return.

You see in the world and in the church of today a certain unity in the season called Christmas. They join hands in partying and in giving gifts to organizations that are decidedly anti-Christian. In this season which is ruled by the Prince of Peace, they unite in their efforts to bring about the false peace of Antichrist, wanting nothing to do with the true peace which comes only through the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. And in all their activities they fulfill the words of our Savior in Matt. 24:11, 12: "And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Further, Jesus tell us "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-39).

Rejoice, young people of God! Our Lord's return is near! The world and false church seeks to cover up this truth by its emphasis on worldly pleasure and worldly customs during the Christmas season. Be not taken in by their ungodly and anti-Christian Christmas! But remember the incarnation of our Lord and Savior. See the boundless grace revealed there! Know that were it not for that grace, grace culminating in the cross and resurrection, you and I would be calling for the mountains to fall on us. Remember that the child sent of God was born King of kings and Lord of lords! And in so doing, see that He is coming again! He is coming quickly!

Current Events and Comments
THE ROCK

by David Rau

Psalm 61:2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is high than I.

The world is in such turmoil around us. War in the Middle East, terrorism, the arms race, crime waves, and general apathy. The people of the world are trying to out-do each other in wickedness. As we reach the end of one year and get ready for the next, it is human nature to wonder what the coming year holds for us. These must be discouraging times for those who think there is to be heaven on this earth. All this chaos and wickedness would overwhelm us, except for our comfort: our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What beautiful, beautiful words, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." The Psalmist David wrote these words when his soul was distraught. His words should direct each of our thoughts back where they belong - on God. First of all, David says, "lead me". That means we cannot attain this rock ourselves, but rather, God takes us by the hand and guides us to the rock.

What is this rock that is higher than I? What is our refuge in this stormy world around us? Where can we find rest on our pilgrimage here below? The rock is God's power and promise - that rock is our Saviour, Jesus Christ. That is where we are to flee. That must be our comfort.

We get so caught up in our day-to-day living. We have to earn a living, we have so much homework, or we are so busy doing this and that, and we forget we are totally dependent on God for everything. Anxieties mount, tensions build, and stress is a word we hear a lot about today. Through all of this cuts the Psalmist's words, "**Lead** me to the rock that is higher than I". That rock is where I can be out of the reach of my troubles. That rock offers peace: the assurance of my salvation. Lead us there, O Lord, for in and of ourselves we will flounder.

Sin can rob us of the assurance of our salvation. Sin can, for a time, control our lives. Then, especially, we are distraught. Life has no meaning. Our very soul is overwhelmed within us. God often troubles us so that we do turn to him. Then God jars us into realizing that we are to rely on him, and him alone. Turn to the Lord in all things. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" Proverbs 3:5.

How does God lead us to that rock? God doesn't mysteriously pick us up, and suddenly our troubles are over. No, God has means that he has established. Those means are, first of all, the preaching of the word. That is our comfort. We must feast upon his word through the mouth of His servant, the minister. The other of the means God uses is our personal devotions. We cannot ignore these means and then

expect to be lead to the rock for comfort. Only through the preaching and prayer can we expect to be lead to the rock.

Our lives must be centered on the rock. All other things must be subservient. That rock will be a shelter from the troubles that surround us. When we stand on the rock, all of our troubles will pale. That rock is our shield from the world. Lead me to that rock that is higher than I.

From the Pastor's Study
Study to Show Thyself Approved

by Rev. C. Hanko

"Study to shew thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." **II Tim. 2:15**

Some years ago somebody gave me a plaque inscribed with the text quoted above. For some time it decorated my study wall as a reminder that a minister must rightly divide the word of truth. Quite fitting, don't you think so?

This enjoinder was given by the apostle Paul to his spiritual son Timothy, who at one time accompanied him on his missionary journey, and was now a minister in the church at Ephesus. The word "study" and the phrase "Rightly dividing the word of truth" seem to apply particularly to ministers.

Yet that does not mean that this instruction should strike a deaf ear of all those who are not called to the ministry, or that it does not apply to the covenant youth of the church, to you who are in high school, in college, in a university, or have already entered into some vocation out there in the wide, wide world.

That is evident from the fact that the word "study" does not necessarily refer merely to searching out the Scriptures, but means literally "to be zealous", "eager", "to give diligence". That fits you also, does it not? You who are so full of life, bursting with energy, should be zealous and diligent, expending your exuberance in the things spiritual and eternal! Also the word "workman" has a broader scope than the realm of ministers. In fact, I have been told more than once that I do not work, because I am a minister. The word for "workman" in this passage means "a field laborer", a "worker", "a laborer". The word is used in Matthew 20:1, 8 for laborers in the vineyard. And the expression "rightly dividing the Word of truth" can also apply to anyone in the church, as you will see, if you stay with me a little while.

A workman must have certain gifts and talents, certain qualities and abilities that fit him for his task. God has given to each of us our own unique abilities and talents. That is an amazing wonder; the more you think about it the more marvelous it appears. Millions of people have walked and do walk upon the face of this earth, yet

there never have been nor ever are two alike! Their facial features are similar, yet each person is known individually by his face. Rarely do we forget a face. Even organs, skin, or blood are not so readily transferable. Only God can make millions of people, and yet every one a distinct individual. You, too, are distinctive. There is only one of you. You are YOU. God has entrusted you with certain qualities, abilities, talents that you possess and that only you can use in the place where God places you. Undoubtedly, this will become still more evident in heaven, where each of us receives a new individual name, but that is also detectable now. One of the purposes of your years of education (educate menas "to lead out") is to bring out and develop the abilities God has given to you. Those gifts become evident already in the early school years, but stand out much more clearly during your advanced instruction. A good teacher recognizes these talents in a pupil, and tries to make him or her aware of them. Your ability may lie in the field of mathematics, or science, or music, or research, or languages, or mechanics, or business. Some people take a special interest in figures, some in economic affairs, some in machinery. Covenant young people take an interest, often keenly so, in religious matters. Many, many gifts are stowed away in us, entrusted to us by our God unto the day when we give account of what we have done with those gifts in our life time. There are a number of parables in Scripture that teach us this very important truth!

This helps us to make one of the biggest decisions that a person makes in a life-time, the choosing of a vocation. To a great extent your whole future lies wrapped up in a proper choice made during your adolescent years. This choice of a vocation is much more difficult in our modern age than it was even fifty or a hundred years ago. A farmer's son succeeded his father on the farm. A business man's son was familiarized with the business. A tradesman's son was taught the trade. A daughter stayed home to learn to cook, and to bake, and to keep house. The future was quite well cut out for each individual. But in this modern computer age things are quite different. Even professionals need much more training and specialization than ever before. A business, a farm, a trade is run far more scientifically than in times past. Even machinery and automobiles are far more complicated than when Henry Ford introduced the Model T. It takes training to run a home and a family. All of which means that extreme care must be taken in choosing a vocation that fits with a person's abilities, but also that proper preparation must be made to fulfill our task happily and properly in this world.

This is especially true for the covenant youth, because on your shoulders rests the responsibility to "study to show thyself approved unto God"! You must give diligence, be zealous, even eager to choose a vocation whereby you can use your talents to the best advantage in the fear of God! I have known people who were far too talented for the work they were doing, and therefore they were never really happy at their job. Some of them found their satisfaction in the work of God's kingdom. The question is not: how can I make the most money? Nor: how can I attain prominence, success in the world? Nor: how can I enjoy life to the full without too much work? But the question is: "Lord what wilt Thou

have me do?'' When you have received an answer to that question you can rest assured that you will be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed!

Does that scare you? It should. A tremendous responsibility is laid on your young shoulders, with tremendous consequences, not only for this life, but also for eternity!

In a sense it can be said that God lays upon you an impossible burden. You can never carry it alone! That takes much zeal and diligence, much soul-searching, and, above all, much prayer! There are certain guide lines to direct you in the way you should go!

Far too often young people travel through high school without any definite plans for the future. They enter into college without any specific goal in mind. And when they enter into the task of bread-winning they are still floundering. Why? Because they sought no guide! Paul tells Timothy to study to show himself approved of God, a workman that need not be ashamed, **rightly dividing the Word of truth**! You say, that applies to ministers? How true that is. Timothy and all ministers must cut a straight line through the Scriptures! That is what ''rightly dividing'' means. They must not listen to human philosophy and heresy, so that they dilute their preaching with the poison of the lie. They must not zig-zag, halting from one opinion or theory to another. They must always walk a straight line. They must maintain and defend and preach the truth of God's infallible Word, the truth that of God, through God, and unto God are all things, to whom be the glory forever! You must do that too! You, too, must draw a straight line through the Scriptures, know the truth, love it, cherish it, defend it, and thus apply it to every part of your life!

With the Word of God in your heart and as your Guide, you choose your vocation! Doing this prayerfully and honestly before God, it is not so difficult after all. You know, first of all, that whatever talents you possess are given to you of the Lord. God made you YOU. You know, in the second place, that God has planned your future from all eternity. If we could lift the veil that hides our future we would see the pathway that God planned for us to travel. But God does not reveal that to us, and we may be thankful for that. We do know that God has given us a unique place in our family, in the church, and in the midst of the world. No one else can take that place, since God has His own purpose with each of us. We cannot be someone else, nor should we try. Now then, if we walk in the light of God's Word and prayerfully ask, ''Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?'', God will show us the way as it opens before us step by step. He will give you the conviction in your heart as to how you can serve Him best. He will point out your particular field of labor, your task in His vineyard, where you can best serve Him with the gifts and talents entrusted to you!

In that way you become a faithful ''workman'' in your own field of endeavor. Our first question must always be: Did God give me the necessary talents to aspire to the ministry of His Word? Do I enjoy studying, particularly, searching the Scriptures? Could I devote my life to that? Am I willing to surrender myself to the work and responsibilities involved in that field of God's kingdom? If for some reason you do not feel a strong desire for that work in your heart - young people have often said to

me. "we cannot all be ministers" - then, how about teaching the covenant seed of the church? Do you have such a strong interest in the future of God's church that you will devote yourself to the task of diligently instructing the coming generation?! Only after you are convinced that God has not called you for either of these tasks you can ask yourself, do I have the desire and talent for some other profession, business, or field of labor? Yes, the church needs professionals also, as well as business men, tradesmen, mechanics, men from every field of endeavor!

It comes down to this: Study to show thyself approved unto God! Strive for one thing, and one thing only: God's approval, God's well done! I assure you that the ministry is the most difficult, painful, burdensome task, if you are looking for an easy life, the praise of men, rather than the approval of God. That applies also to the realm of teaching, as any teacher will tell you. But that also applies to any other field of endeavor. Solomon says: "I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

God's approval means more to us than life itself. Now. Right now in performing our daily tasks. But also in that great Day of days when by His grace (for it is all of grace) He will say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." That is what counts!

SONG OF CHRISTMAS

O, Jesus, Word made flesh to dwell among us,
How can I thank Thee for Thy Gift? What way
Can I in human frailty find to praise Thee best,
Who came the price for my dread sins to pay?
Thou wert despised, rejected for Thine Own,
A man of sorrows from Thy day of birth.
And grief, it was Thy closest of companions.
Who was there found to love Thee on this earth?

My sorrows Thou hast borne, though I, ashamed, turned from Thee.
For my transgressions Thou wert wounded sore.
My peace, it brought to Thee chastisement.
Thy stripes did heal me. Who could have loved me more?
I was a wandering sheep turned to his own way,
But Thou hast carried me within Thy arms.
To feed in pastures green, beside still waters,
And here I rest, safe from all earthly harms.

My cup now overfloweth with Thy goodness!
What can I render to Thee in my thankfulness?
I'll take this cup of Thy salvation, calling on Thee,
The greatness of this wondrous love confess.

Sue Looyenga

"KNOWING WHO IS ABLE"

by Mitch Dick

"EXHORTATION":
From the Latin: "An urging out of."
From the Bible: "God urging His people out of sin and into His kingdom."

The Holy Spirit in the Bible in Luke 12:29-34 **has** exhorted us and in our hearts through that Word, **does** continually exhort us "to seek the kingdom of God." Rather than seeking anything in this world we must be seeking the things that are above. You may like to read this passage for yourself.

In the January 1986 issue of the Beacon Lights I said I would next seek to study with you certain means God has given us to seek His kingdom. But before we gird up our loins or light any old light let us ponder our real ability to seek God's kingdom. This consideration I hope will lead us to consider also the One Who is able to make us able. This is a must to consider lest we despair of even having enough electricity for burning a light. Or, on the other hand, lest we in our misguided zeal seek fervently alright, but the wrong kingdom, and even the wrong king! Just think: a kingdom of DESPAIR would be ours if we thought we had no ability, not even by grace, to seek the kingdom of God; a kingdom of PRIDE we would win if we would seek God thinking we could do something or everything to seek God **without** God!

A DIRT ROAD

Consider first one road, a wrong road, the road we often take, of DESPAIR.

The Bible commands us: "Seek the kingdom." Before this injunction we can ask quite skeptically: "But how can --**we**?" And in such doubt we might reflect upon how our feelings and the Devil and his army stand here accusing: so often when we should be giving God the glory, yet we in our gluttony feast on, and burp praise all over, **ourselves**; it feels like we habitually hate God because He cramps our style, and our neighbor we hate because he also makes "too much noise" in our lives; the Gospel of Jesus Christ (I can hear my conscience whispering to me now) is "dull facts and chains wrapped around our Sundays," and not the Good and Joyous News of deliverance from our bodies of death; and oh, how we so often like to dance (where angels fear to tread!), like so many Dinahs, with the very Tigers (Detroit) and Beatles (rock stars) of the land instead of to commune with our brothers and sisters born from above of the Lord (the writer refers the reader to Genesis 34 and also to Proverbs 13:20 and 27:17 - it is dangerous dancing with Tigers and Beatles!).

It is clear. If we are to listen very long to such devils and to our own mere feelings on the matter of seeking the kingdom, that is, on the matter of fellowshipping with our God as we do the good works He has given us to do, then we will have an easy answer to the question: "How can **we** seek the kingdom?" The answer will be: WE

CAN NEVER SEEK THE KINGDOM, FOR HERE WE ARE, CONSTANTLY FOUND IN OUR SINFUL DEEDS AND FULL OF GUILT, AND WE ARE SO YOUNG – LEAVE SEEKING THE KINGDOM FOR THE ADULTS! The logical conclusion would be for us, therefore: "We may as well file (circularly) this exhortation as well as countless others of Scripture." Why? Because judging from our own experience the kingdom of God that we **would** seek we do not, and so, what's the use? That's it. Instead of pretending to read the Bible, pretending to be interested in spiritual conversation anymore, we might just as well decide to throw our Bibles in the garbage and jump in after them.

And this might be an acceptable alternative for some of us. But only if we are determined to get a new Bible in place of the old one we have wrinkled so much as we may have slept on it. But throwing the Bible out as well as throwing out the God of the Bible, that choice may never be ours. For we can get a new Bible, not a new God. We must trust that God has written **for** us, and not **against** us; we must trust that He has written to quicken us, and not to make us bored stiff or in any other way hardened by His Word of the Covenant.

So if we believe these two things: that the Bible is God's irrefutable Word against which no creature may argue, **and** that this Word is the very Word of life to those who are called to believe, then why do we even entertain the question: "How can **we** seek the kingdom?" ARE THE DEVIL'S QUESTIONS OUR GUESTS? And do we feed them with our own nagging doubts about the Holy God of the Holy Bible? If so, then his **conclusions** will be our constant companions. No doubt we will be, for all our short lives, hamstrung Christians, hair-singed Christians, and, most likely, Christians complaining that God has given us something too difficult to do in exhorting us to seek His kingdom. We will have, in effect, concluded that we are not Christians at all.

THE "LOOKS" ROAD

There is a second tempting and quite twisting and hilly-thrilling road which we can take. On this road we wind and turn, bouncing up and down in hot-rods we have had custom-built and precision-tuned. In fact, so sleek and smooth-running is our rig that there is hardly another car we do not pass or could not pass on this road if we really wanted to.

I call this the road of "looks." It is, of course, a spiritual road. We drive the road of "looks" when we think there is something in us that is good and we want desperately to show ourselves to others and only vaguely to show others to God. Pretty soon after we drive down "looks" our religion becomes something like a sport or other sort of game: it is a game of comparing our own "surface spirituality" with that of others.

We take this road when we think that there is something in our own nature, in our own engine if you will, which gets us somewhere closer to the kingdom. On his road, you see, we are nowhere near despair. On the contrary we are "riding high", not needing a thing as we coast along. In fact, we have confidence in our own inherent ability, thrown out the number we once had for the tow truck: 1-800-I (NE-ED) (G-RACE). We take this road in our souped-up pride when we seek not the kingdom at all, but only **how** to

get there, and ahead of everybody else, and by hook or by crook.

Just as we compete with others on this road because we think we are pretty good at being kingdom-seekers, so also we play with Scripture almost as if it were an opponent: those who despair will run away, but those who are proud will play and play!

Where are we? We have examined two roads and searched our hearts and confessed that we have been on these roads: when we imagine that God's grace does not enable us sufficiently (II Corinthians 12:9) to seek His kingdom, then we despair; when we get it in our heads that **we** are the fountain of all good (but we are **shapen**, even, in iniquity!), then we bear the rotten fruit of pride.

Right now as we read this article, because we have discussed them, we stand before these two main roads - despair on the left, pride on the right, and also before all their little side streets and alleys in which we can so easily get lost. Fact is, we stand before such alternatives every time we hear the preaching, and every moment of our lives when we recall what we have heard from the pulpit.

And if we really love living in garbage cans or by racetracks or wandering about in alleys and looking at the peepshows there, then we may choose to take the ways of despair, or of self-centeredness, or of not caring a whit about everyday seeking the kingdom of the God of the Bible.

Or we can, very simply, and by faith, forget about our own little ability or great ability or whatever ability and **first** try to estimate the King's ability Whose kingdom we seek. Doing this we begin to see how silly it is to wonder **how we** can gird up our loins (for we can do all things through Christ strengthening us, Philippians 4:13). Nor do we glory in the dream that we have some amazing power plant in our own bodies which helps us burn our lights. Rather, we glory in the king. He is able to create (Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3), and also to condemn sinners or to commend His love toward sinners (Romans 5). With God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26), and with God **alone** is any and everything which He so powerfully wills possible (Matthew 28:18. Here Jesus says: All power is given unto **me** in heaven and in earth.)

That is seeking the kingdom: taking eyes off self first and glorying in the God of the kingdom Who made us to be citizens of the kingdom. With this type of seeking our natural clamor for **ways** of doing things is muffled by our singing of the **reasons** for our doing things.

The reason: we love one who is the Lamb-now-exalted-Lord of the kingdom Who was willing and able to be slain in the mysterious eternity of God's counsel (Revelation 13:8) and in time on the instrument of God's cursing, the cross. Slain for us sinners He was. So all our doing, all our seeking for God's kingdom is seeking to know the God and Father of the Lamb-King Jesus Christ, and to thank Him more as we know Him more, for His great Majesty and for His great salvation.

A soul in silence, or a silent soul! What a blessed gift of grace! . . .They that wait for the Lord shall never be ashamed!

Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Truth Vs. Error
APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
10. Apostate Devil Disputes With Michael

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"Yet Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.' " — Jude 9.

The apostate hot-heads, already considered, spend much time rejecting and denouncing rulership and blaspheming glories, yet Michael the archangel will not waste time or lower himself arguing with them or with the arch-enemy of the church, the devil. The angel Michael would not go so far as to hurl railing accusation against the devil. That is, he, a holy angel, would not level against this arch-fiend (a foul, unclean spirit) even "a judging of blasphemy," meaning: to pass sentence against him in "a condemning of his (Satan's) blasphemy." Not that he feared the devil, or that he thought it best to compromise with the devil. His blasphemy certainly deserves judging, condemnation and rebuke, but Michael understands that the devil is a foe already defeated by the invincible God and is destined by Him to final, eternal judgment. Then who are these blasphemers and railers who rush in where Michael in modesty and reverence for God fear to tread!

The angel Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses. Satan had butted into a matter where he had no business. As to such matters as death, burial and resurrection, God's mind is clearly revealed and known, or, where it is not, we are to patiently wait in faith until that great day when all shall be made plain. However, Michael would not presume to be a judge to censure and decide matters far above even the reach of an archangel. But these mouthy despisers of government "not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (glories) do therefore "speak evil of the things that they understand not" (II Pet. 2:10, 12). The holy angels, greater in power and might than the fallen angels, dare not bring a railing accusation against the devil and his hosts of anarchists and antinomians "before the Lord" (II Pet. 2:11). Michael's dignity and holiness would not permit him to deal so rashly and indecently with the devil. But these haters of authority blast out recklessly in curses against dignitaries and their dominions without any fear.

On the other hand, what Michael does is to refer the whole cause of their deserved condemnation to God. He said, "The Lord rebuke thee." But consider, the Roman Catholic Church has taken upon itself, under the triregnum of the papal throne, the whole judgment of the world, of things, persons and actions, as though it were

left in their hands to do as in their Decretals of the Council of Trent, namely, pronounce dreadful anathemas against every fundamental of the Reformed Faith and all who believe them. That railing church calls us "separated brethren", out of one side of its mouth, but out of the other side, "Accursed!" It is a proud impudence for men contemptuously to go cursing and anathematizing other men when the highest in angelic hierarchy will not do this. But they are presumptuous (II Pet. 2:10), actually **darers** (Gk.) who dare to throw themselves against the sharp bosses of Jehovah's buckler!

Who is Michael the archangel? **Michael** is his name and **archangel** his office. The name means not "Who is God", but "Who is as God?" Michael then is not God, but is like Him. If "Michael" were to be interpreted as referring to the (incarnate or pre-incarnate) Lord, then we would have the **Lord** saying, "The Lord rebuke thee" at the same time that the **Lord** dares not to bring a railing accusation against Satan! There is a Beelzebub, the prince of demons; also there is Michael, the archangel, highest of angelic beings, or certainly one of the highest.

What is meant by the words, "Michael. . .disputed about the body of Moses. . ."? It is likely that the devil would have delighted in having Moses' burial site revealed to the Israelites in order to tempt them to embalm the body of Moses and erect there a shrine where idolatrous respect could be given the dead saint. If it be objected that this sort of thing was never an Israelite custom, it must not be forgotten that the devil is always attempting to turn a new saint into an old heathen idol. Satan surely is gratified in the case of great men who lived hated but died sainted. Scripture informs us that the idolizing of famous men caused the rampant rise in idolatry. Commenting on this, Thomas Manton wrote, "Ninus, or Nimrod, the first idolater, set up his own dead father, Belus, whence came the name of **Baal** and **Bel** for an idol. The **teraphim**, stolen by Rachel, Gen. 31:35, were the images of their ancestors, whom Laban worshiped." Later, the Jews worshiped the brazen serpent in offering incense to it. II K. 18:4. The worship of the true God is replaced with these heathen counterfeits and continues in the veneration of relics of "saints," such as pieces of hair, bones, old garments and burial shrouds. Soviets still offer superstitious respect to the body of Lenin. Good reason is very evident then as to why the Lord Himself buried Moses and kept secret the place of his grave, why Satan was interested in this saint's body and why Michael detected and opposed the devil's purpose.

Eventually, the Antichrist, no saint, but a Beast of a man, will demand and receive worship of himself and of his image. Idolatry and image worship in this age are proof that God has given men up to believe the lie. The church of Antichrist is called the synagogue of Satan, or Babylon, Sodom and Egypt. Babylon represents idolatry, Sodom filthiness and Egypt ignorance and darkness. Here dwell in active wickedness and vileness the children of disobedience. Their father the devil goes on in perpetual sinning, his whole existence a continual history of apostasy.

Michael, on the contrary, said, "The Lord rebuke thee." He dared not bring a judgment in condemnation of blasphemy, but left that matter to the Lord. Blessed angels and godly men

have a right in controversy to "earnestly contend for the faith," but it is not their prerogative to damn. That belongs to God alone, Michael does not allow Satan to go walking boldly and brazenly to and fro in the earth unchecked; neither must we let errors go unchallenged and the devil run as though the field is his. Sometimes we are deceived into relaxing behind a facade of false humilty to remain silent and inactive in the cause of Christ. A good watch dog will not only bark when the wolf comes near, but will snap at and nip the intruder with its teeth. If the sleepy world is annoyed at this, we can better bear that than the ravaging of the wolf. The world calls on its patron saints to fulfill its petition and needs. We need not fear for the safety of the Ark of God, but may well refer our case to God Who is the best patron of His own cause. Perhaps one of the signs of apostasy is that such apathy, indifference and coldness prevail that controversy is about as rare as the California Condor. Yet when it is necessary to enter into controversy for "the cause of God and truth," the Lord must be sought for His presence, approval and blessing. Times of controversy must be times of seeking God in prayer. If the devil is not prayed down, he cannot be argued down.

These last days are times of apostasy. This end-time evil is defection from the truth. The devil is the first apostate because he abode not in the truth (Jn. 8:44). Then our first parents, Adam and Eve, became apostates at the instigation of the ringleader of all defectors. When they disobeyed, they fell away from God, and with them the apostasy of the whole human race is described in "turning back from following the Lord" (Zeph. 1:6). So that apostasy, we may agree, is revolt from God and obedience to Him. In the garden, while Adam and Eve obeyed God they were His friend-servants. Adam was God's servant-king. But the great falling away of the original pair opened the floodgates for the surging in of all the world's apostates right up to the coming of Antichrist. These profess the Christian Faith but are worldly, carnal hypocrites who have the spirit of Antichrist. The great head of the apostate churches is Antichrist. In these churches doctrine is despised, then corrupted; worship is also detested and mixed with the idolatry of both physical and spiritual whoredom.

Worship of a man was never an Israelite custom? This is like saying that Israel was in all kinds of sin, but idolatry was not one of them. The truth is that Israel was constantly falling into idolatry. They had been redeemed from the land of Egypt, yet they "mingled among the heathen and learned **their** works. And they served **their** idols, which were a snare unto them" (Ps. 106:35f). Some of them were idolaters (I Cor. 10:7), especially those who had in them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. That departure was to take up with idols, and that's what apostasy is all about. The evil heart of unbelief hates the true God, yet is deeply conscious of the need of a (replacement) god. Necessity is the mother of invention. So a man without a true God gets busy and makes gods for himself. These do not bring him a fulfillment even though he is a member of a greatly advanced civilization and part of a very highly developed culture. He still moans, All is vanity and vexation of spirit. Where then does he look in his search for

satisfaction? He delves into his own imagination, imagining a super-being. The highest exercise of his imagination is in first creating imaginary beings, from an imaginary planet in an imaginary galaxy. These imaginary beings then become real to him. He attributes to them powers beyond those of mortal man. These powers are exerted for the benefit of mankind. To believe and trust in such images is to bow down to idols. Children watching Saturday morning television see portrayed terrific supernatural battles of gods against gods and demons against demons, or gods against demons. These are bush-level images. The university philosophy professor holds in mind more mental and intellectual abstractions which are very real to him, such as Fate, Fortune, Chance, the Force, the Ideal Self. This is university-level idolatry. No one really escapes idolatry unless he is turned to God from idols. (I Thess. 1:9, 10). "Ye know that ye were Gentiles (heathen), carried away unto these dumb idols (I Cor. 12:2). . .Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I Jn. 5:21).

The Hearing Ear
The Willing Heart

by Rev. G. Lubbers

"He that hath an ear to hear let him hear that the Spirit saith unto the churches." [Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17;2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22]

The gift of hearing is from God.

It is a marvelous gift not only to hear sounds, but also to be able to interpret them, and to be able to comprehend the meaning of sounds. God has not only made sounds but he has also made distinctive sounds. We believe that there is such a thing as objective sound in the world, just as there are objective objects which the light rays bring upon the lens of our eyes.

Lights and sounds are not merely subjective in our eyes and in our ears. If this were not true the entire world would be one terrible confused delusion. There would be no revelation from God in creation. The creatures would not be "a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely His power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Rom. 1:20" (Art. II of the Belgic Confession).

If the sounds of God's creation were not objective, heaven would not be heaven and hell would not be hell; there would be neither objective reality about us, nor would there be reality to the subjective testimony of man's conscience.

But now there is a depth of arresting grandeur in the words of Him Who walks between the seven candlesticks: he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!

The Bible can, therefore, speak of

an **attentive** ear. We must pay attention. It is a debt which we owe to God in the **new** obedience of faith and love. The disobedient will not hearken, will not be attentive. Sometimes there are parents who are like the foolish father, who would not send his boy to school because he had **to pay** attention. Perhaps, in all seriousness, this is a very hard debt to pay, unless we love to hear the thing which are said. When the Gospel was preached by Jesus concerning the kingdom of heaven, those who paid attention were those who had a great spiritual need to be fulfilled. They needed to hear concerning the free-grace of God of the forgiveness of sins. And Jesus preached very powerful sermons; He authoritatively preached: come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest! What a message of hope and life! Rest for weary souls! Jesus preached the old and tried way to publicans and sinners!

Do we not read: and there were drawing near to him all the publicans and sinners for **to hear** him''? Luke 15:1) The hearts of these sinners, by nature unwilling and unable to hear, were made very willing by the Lord Himself. Do we not read ''and a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, **was hearing**, of whom the Lord opened the (her) heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul'' (Acts 16:14).

Lydia belonged to those who had an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Such hearing is indicative of spiritual sensitivity.

It is an **attentive** ear. A gift from God's grace to the deaf sinner. When Jesus was on earth: the blind received their sight and the deaf were made to hear. Such a hearing ear, a gift of divine grace, we need.

Then we go to church as covenant young people, and we are like the tender youth Samuel in the Tabernacle, who hearing God call to him in the night said: Speak LORD, for thy servant heareth. (I Sam. 3:3-10)

Such who have hearing ears, are taught of God Himself.

When God says in His Decalogue: I am the LORD thy God, Who hath brought you forth from the Egypt of sin, death and hell, from the cruel bondage of death and the grave, do you then also say: I am thy child Father, and we all are Thy children and people, we shall not have other gods before Thee? For when the minister reads the Law on Sunday morning in the divine worship service, and he reads, ''Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may go well with thee and thou mayest live long upon the earth'' do you pay attention to these words, and reflect upon them and seek to know the implication of these words for yourself and for your spiritual peers? Have you ever taken the Psalter in hand and read attentively, what we read in Question and Answer 104?

There are young people who stand at the death-bed of their father and of their mother. They speak of their thoughtful father, their loving mother, but they never really **honored** them. They did not **obey them** in the Lord Jesus. They did not say: Those parents represented the authority of Christ my Lord and my God in my life; hence, their sorrow was only natural. They could not say: I bless the memory of my parents because they never cease to warn and instruct me, neither did they spare the rod to treat me like one would treat a bastard child.

When one has such a wise ear, one

has also a reasonable ear. We read "a wise man will hear and will increase learning" (Ps. 1:5). To be a wise man, one tries words. A wise man will be willing to be taught. Jesus says in John 6:45, 46 some very instructive words: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God." This is a spiritual hearing of the Word. Isaiah predicted some very wonderful blessings: he spoke in glowing terms of the greatness of the children of God in the New Covenant composed of **Sarah's Freeborn Sons**. Writes Isaiah in lofty strains, "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Of this Jesus speaks in John 6:45, "every one that hath **heard** and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me."

You learn of the Father from our Lord Jesus Christ!

Then you are coming unto Christ, as did the above mentioned publicans and sinners; yes, then you come unto Him because the heavenly Father has drawn you powerfully in irresistible love. Did not Jesus say to the unbelieving Jews of His day, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day". When one is hearing, he knows that he has received, from God the Father, hearing ears. It is given unto him to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, while those who reject the things heard in the Gospel-preaching were not given to know these mysteries!

When we have attentive ears, yea, willing **ears**, it is because we receive from God grace to observe in ourselves with spiritual joy, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in God's word. (Canons of Dordt, First Head of Doctrine, Art. 12) Yes, thus we make our calling and election sure! (II Pet. 1:10)

The other side of the coin is what we read in Isaiah 48:8, "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened, for I knew that thou wouldest deal treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." Only those whose ears are opened in sovereign grace have ears to hear. These are given the opened, the pierced ears of Christ. This is the hearing of the new man in Christ Jesus into whom we have been ingrafted in sovereign grace.

You go to church, do you not? Do you know that faith cometh through the hearing, and hearing comes by the Word! Not all who heard the very clearly spoken word of the prophet Isaiah believed the things heard. They did not all believe. It seemed to the Christ, in Isaiah 53:1, that nearly no one believed. No man believed "the report", hearing they heard and did not hear. The more they heard, the less they believed. Yet, faith cometh by truly hearing the Gospel-preaching, and the report comes by the preached words of God (Rom. 10:17).

Catechism time is here again. Society meetings are a weekly experience. We have just heard the Word at the Young People's Convention. Now be honest: what was the great attraction for you at the Convention? The instruction from the Word of God? If so this means that you really have basically ceased listening to the alluring words which come to you from the world, Satan and from your own sinful flesh.

Yes, the Lord Jesus says: he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what

the Spirit saith to the churches.

To these hearers is given the victory of faith. They overcome the world. And theirs is a reward of grace for works of grace.

1. They are given to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)

2. They shall not be hurt with second death; they shall not be cast into Hell with the false prophets and with the beast. Yea, they will be given a crown of life, the victor's laurel! (Rev. 2:10, 11)

3. It shall be given them to eat of the hidden manna, and will be given a white stone, and in the stone a new name, which no man knoweth saving he who receiveth it (Rev. 2:17).

4. They shall be given power over the nations. . .to rule with a rod of iron. . .they will be given the morning star (Rev. 2:26-28).

5. Their name shall not be blotted out of the book of life, but Christ their Saviour shall confess their names before the very angels in heaven (Rev. 3:5).

6. They will be made a pillar in the temple of Christ's God, and they shall go out no more; yes, Christ will write upon them the "name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 3:12).

7. They will be given to sit with Christ in His throne, even as He overcame, and is now set down with His Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

Behold, then, the sevenfold laurel-crown which is set before you to hear the Word of God unto salvation and to reach out for the victor crown, the goal unto which you have been called.

We must not assume the false notion that we have already attained. There is but one thing to do. In the words of the Holy Spirit through Paul we say: I count not that I have already attained, to have fully apprehended that for which I have been apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching out unto those things which are before I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

The motives of all you do and strive to do may never be in your desires, but always and unconditionally in the Lord. . . .

When you have learned thus to obey, the battle for the Lord goes on without pause, yet calmly and steadily. It is labour that looks not upon the results.

You are no longer striving for what **you** want or deem necessary; you are not impatient, not wearied with complaining or unmanned by disappointment. You simply obey. You are not less zealous but more; not less constant, but more presevering.

And God, who is merciful, will crown your efforts, in home and heart and church, with His blessing.

A Kuyper

†††

When God bears us on His wings, or when He carries us in His bosom, it is easy to pray; but when we seem to be cast into the deepest gulfs, if we thence cry to Him, it is a real and certain proof of faith and hope.

-John Calvin (on Lam. 3)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

by Nancy Van Baren

BIRTHS: The Lord Blessed:
-Rev. and Mrs. Flikkema with a son, Kyle Richard, on July 9.
-Mr. and Mrs. C. Kuiper of Hope Church, Walker, with a son, Randall James.
-Mr. and Mrs. Rich Reyenga of the Northwest Mission with a son, Nathan Abel.
-Mr. and Mrs. Rich Regnerus of Randolph with a son, Joseph Richard on October 3.
-Mr. and Mrs. Peter VanderSchaaf of Faith with a daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, on September 16.
-Mr. and Mrs. John Dykshorn of South Holland with a son.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:
-The papers of Rev. and Mrs. Russell Dykstra and 5 children were transferred from Hope, Walker, to Doon.
-The papers of Mr. and Mrs. Ron Koole and family were transferred from Hull, Iowa to Loveland.
-South Holland received the baptism papers of Mr. Robert Buiter from Randolph.
-South Holland received the papers of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Kraker from Hudsonville. They will worship at the Northwest Mission.
-The papers of Mr. George Vroom were transferred from Randolph to South Holland.
-The papers of Mrs. Dawn Zandstra were transferred from Faith to South Holland.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:
-Mr. Stephan Hoving of Southwest made confession of his faith on October 19.

O God, give us patience when the wicked hurt us. O how impatient and angry we are when we think ourselves unjustly slandered, reviled and hurt! Christ suffers strokes upon His cheek, the Innocent for the guilty; yet we may not abide one rough word for His sake. O Lord, grant us virtue and patience, power and strength, that we may take all adversity with good will, and with a gentle mind overcome it. And if necessity and Thy honor require us to speak, grant that we may do so with meekness and patience, that the truth and Thy glory may be defended, and our patience and steadfast continuance perceived.
—Prayer of Miles Coverdale, early Reformer, Bible translator, and exile for the Faith

‡‡‡

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AUTHOR'S KEY

AB - Allen Brummel
BK - Bernie Kamps
BW - Ben Wigger
CB - Cheryl Blyenberg
CEC - Current Events and Comments
CH - Carolyn Hudnut
CRIT - Critique
DD - Don Doezema
DK - Deb Kuiper
Do D - Dorothy Doezema
DR - Dave Rau
DW - Deane Wassink
ED - Editorial
EL - Ed Lotterman
JKJ - John Kalsbeek Jr.
JMF - John M. Faber
KF - Ken Feenstra
KK - Karen Kuiper
LVK - Lisa Van Koevering
MBL - Mary Beth Lubbers
MK - Mitch Dick
MHB - Mrs. H. Brands
MIV - Mrs. Irv Velthouse
NVB - Nancy Van Baren
PF - Paula Faber
PRD - Prof. R. Decker
PS - From the Pastor's Study
RBG - Rev. B. Gritters
RCH - Rev. C. Hanko
RCT - Rev. C. Terpstra
RDE - Rev. D. Engelsma
RDK - Rev. D. Kuiper
RE - Rebecca Engelsma
RG - Rick Gritters
RGL - Rev. G. Lubbers
RJH - Rev. J. Heys
RJS - Rev. J. Slopsema
RMK - Rev. M. Kamps
RRCH - Rev. R.C. Harbach
RRVO - Rev. R. Van Overloop
RSK - Rev. Steven Key
SL - Sue Looyenga
SO - Sarah Ondersma
TVE - Truth Vs. Error

PRAYER

Lord, make my life just one long prayer,
My need of Thee my constant care,
At home, abroad, at work or rest;
My aim to lean upon Thy breast.

Lord, make my life just one long trust,
The table full, or ne'er a crust,
Knowing that He who died for me
Still lives that I supplied may be.

Lord make my life just one long work,
From early dawn to evening dark,
Telling His fame to all I meet,
Until my service is complete.

Lord, make my life just one long song
Of sweetest praise the whole day long,
My heart and voice exulting Thee,
In one continuous meoldy.

Lord, make my life just one long look
For Him who all my sorrows took,
Who bore my sins upon the tree,
And promised to return for me.

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