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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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"HERE AM I; SEND ME?"

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EDITOR'S NOTES: APRIL 89

by David Harbach

Although this issue of the Beacon Lights contains only three articles and a poem, you will find this issue encouraging, thought provoking, and edifying.

Are you interested in becoming a minister in our churches but have fears and misgivings about attending seminary? Then read Rev. Terpstra's article, "Here Am I; Send Me". He answers three major objections that you might raise against starting your training as a minister.

The baptism form we use as Protestant Reformed Churches has been the careful study of Rev. Harbach over the years especially the clause "This, the dipping in, or sprinkling with water teaches us. . . ." Rev. Harbach presents a unique way to bringing his study of this clause to our attention.

Our request for articles to be printed in the Beacon Lights has produced some fruit. A speech given to Covenant Christian High School, May 4, 1988, by Rev. Steve Key has been adapted for printing in this issue. "Sex: Why Wait?" considers the sin of fornication and its devastating consequences. The article encourages us as young people to remain faithful to our covenant God in the area of dating before marriage. A thank you goes to Barb Bergman for her efforts in helping us to provide his speech to our readers.

Sue Looyenga has put pen to hand and produced another of her heart encouraging poems, this time about the table of our Lord, "At His Table." I especially enjoy this excellent poem and I know you will too.

As I mentioned earlier, this issue has only three articles and a poem. But you will find this issue well worth your time spent in reading it. The need for more articles is great and we pray that God will provide you young people with worthwhile reading for each issue.

I. IMMERSION IN THE BAPTISM FORM

by Robert C. Harbach

Pastor: Step into my study, Charles. Glad you could make this appointment. I looked for you the other day, but--

Catechumen: Sorry about that, Rev. Muller. . .now I'd like you to enlarge on that statement you made a little while ago. You spoke of "immersion in the Baptism Form." Would you please explain what you mean by that statement?

Pastor: Certainly, Charles. Your interest is commendable. But then, you always were, and still are, especially interested in the subject of Holy Baptism. Do you, perhaps, have a clue to what I was referring when I spoke of "immersion in the Baptism Form"?

Catechumen: Well, I'm not sure; but I think you were referring to that clause in our Baptism Form which states, "This, the dipping in, or sprinkling with water teaches us. . . ." Now I must admit that I've talked this over with a Baptist friend of mine whose father happens to be a Baptist minister. He is of the opinion that this statement in our liturgy reveals that the mode of baptism among Reformed people hangs in uncertainty. It is by dipping the person in water, yet there is an alternative mode possible: **or** by sprinkling with water. He asks me, Why is immersion made the primary mode of baptism in the Form for **Infant** Baptism? Why is that when you always and only **sprinkle** infants? You never dip or immerse them! It appears that your "covenant theology" leaves you uncertain about the mode of baptism. Strictly speaking, it is by dipping but the alternative of sprinkling is OK, for the comfort and convenience of infants to be baptized.

Pastor: Now that's interesting! How did you answer your Baptist friend, Charles?

C: I really wasn't able to answer him. So he laughed and replied, When you are able to answer me, let me know! You see, then, Rev. Müller, how I must become better informed in this matter.

P: All right. The question may be cleared up by an appeal to the original Dutch of the Baptism Form. It reads, Dit leert ons de onderdompeling in **en** de besprenging met het water. . . . In De Liturgie Der Hermvormde Kerk in Nederland, instead of the word **onderdompeling**, there is the word **ondergang**. But that makes no difference. The correct translation is, "This, the dipping in **and** sprinkling with water teaches us. . . ." By the way, Charles, have you learned at the Christian school any Dutch words, phrases or sentences?

C: Yes, I have. Our teacher has had us memorize some Scripture verses in Dutch. From that, I learn that the Dutch words for **or** and **and** are two different words, **of** and **en**. Now that brings me to ask, Reverend, Why

would the English translation of our Baptism Form have, "This, the dipping in, **or** sprinkling with water. . . ."? Why would the English translator render it **or** instead of **and**? There seems to be no excuse for **or** when it ought to be **and**!

P: You are so right! It would seem that the English translator interpreted the Dutch as expressing baptism by dipping, or immersion. But that is not what the Dutch expresses. The dipping (the **onderdompeling**) is not the baptism, but is performed in order to **effect** the baptism (by sprinkling). For example, there were Old Testament baptisms effected by **dipping** hyssop in the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkling of the blood on the Book, the people, the tabernacle, and all the vessels (Ex. 24:6-8). In Lev. 4:6, "the priest shall **dip** his finger in the blood **and** sprinkle" it. Here notice that the dipping was preparatory to the baptism, which was effected by the sprinkling. But take your concordance and notice how many times in the Old Testament (Can you find **ten** instances?) you read of **dip and sprinkle**.

C: So then the baptism form's "dipping in **and** sprinkling" refers to ten instances of Old Testament baptism?

P: That's correct: but do your "homework": look up all those passages, and do **not** read the baptism form as heretofore: "this, the dipping in (comma), **or** sprinkling. . ." —omit that comma and change **or** to **and**, so that the Form conforms to the Dutch, to Scripture, and to the practice of all our ministers in their performing baptisms.

C: But, Rev. Muller, we still have not yet gotten to that intriguing proposition that there is "immersion in the Baptism Form"! I'm at a loss to see how, especially since the clause we've been discussing, properly translated, has nothing to do with immersion.

P: Not only that, but there is no ground whatsoever for making the English translation to even hint or suggest the possibility of baptism by immersion.

C: Especially within the Form for **Infant** Baptism?

P: Exactly.

C: Then why do you insist that there is immersion in the Baptism Form?

P: Let me show you—

C: Now we're getting to it—

P: Yes; turn with me to the prayer used at the administration of baptism, page 56. There we pray. "O Almighty and Eternal God, who hast according to Thy severe judgment punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world, and hast according to Thy great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family, Thou, who hast drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and hast led Thy people Israel through the midst of the Sea upon dry ground, by which baptism was signified—. . . ." Now, Charles, what are these words telling us?

C: I'm beginning to see the light, but please continue, Reverend.

P: Our prayer at baptism has in mind two cases of Old Testament baptism: (1) the Flood was a baptism, and (2) the passage of the people of Israel through the Red Sea was a baptism.

C: My Baptist friends would agree with that, and would hasten to add that here you have two pictures of baptism by immersion. Are you saying that at this point we agree, must agree, with the Baptists, the Immersionists?

P: No; not at all. For Noah and his

family were baptized, while the unbelieving and unrepentant world was drowned. God baptized those believers, but drowned those unrepentant sinners.

P: You see, Noah and his family were baptized, but not immersed. That world of the ungodly (2 Pet. 2:5) was immersed, but not baptized.

C: Oh, I get it! Then the children of Israel, including their babes-in-arms, were baptized in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10:2), but they were not immersed. Pharaoh and his host were immersed, but not baptized!

P: There you have it! Scripture distinguishes baptism from immersion. Baptism and immersion are two different things.

C: Then it stands to reason that we have much to do with baptism, but nothing to do with immersion.

P: True; and conversely, those unbelieving worlds had only to do with judgment and destruction by immersion beneath the waters of the Flood and beneath the waters of the Red Sea, but had nothing to do with baptism.

C: Then the people of God, in these two instances, were baptized; but with immersion they had no part; while the unbelieving who were immersed had no part with baptism.

P: Exactly so; for baptism and immersion are two different things.

C: And that's what you meant by "immersion in the baptism form"! I see now exactly what you had in mind. So that the teaching in both Scripture and the Baptism Form view baptism and immersion as two entirely different things—the former we accept; the latter we reject, because immersion is not a scriptural mode of baptism.

P: There, Charles, as to this truth, you have arrived! As you are beginning to see, there were many (various) baptisms in the Old Testament dispensation (Heb. 9:10, Gk.), and all, every one of them were by sprinkling/pouring. None were by immersion. In those "various baptisms" **dip** as related to **sprinkle** is **never** "dip **or** sprinkle", but is always and invariably "dip **and** sprinkle." Ten instances of this action show that the dipping was not the baptism, but was instrumental to performing the baptism by sprinkling. Whatever dipping there was, it did not happen to the baptized. It happened to the baptizer.

C: Rev. Müller, thank you so much for taking this time to make these controversial matters so plain for God's Word. Could we, at another time consider the immersionistic "Burial theory" of baptism as said to be taught in Rom. 6:3-4 and Col. 2:11-12?

P: Yes, indeed; but you will find that theory very concisely dealt with and refuted in the pamphlet, "The Biblical Mode of Baptism," pages 21-23. So "do your homework," and study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

"Oh, then be ashamed, Christians, that worldlings are more studious and industrious to make sure of pebbles, than you are to make sure of pearls."

- Thomas Brooks

"HERE AM I; SEND ME"?

by Rev. Charles Terpstra

I want to direct this article to the young men of our churches for the purpose of encouraging you to consider seriously training for the gospel ministry in our seminary. No, I was not asked to do this by anyone else. No, this is not a pressure tactic by one of your ministers. This article is simply my own response to a cause very dear to me, namely, the Reformed faith as represented by our churches. It is written out of personal concern for the fact that we have a shortage of ministers and missionaries in our churches and therefore need students in our seminary.

I want to consider this need with you from the hypothetical yet realistic perspective of a young man who is considering the ministry but is struggling with several different personal objections to his beginning the training. This young man has just read Isaiah 6 (you should too!), the account of Isaiah's vision and call to the prophetic ministry of the Word to the kingdom of Judah. In particular vs. 8 has been impressed upon his soul. There he reads of the question raised by the Lord, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" There he reads of Isaiah's confident answer, "Here am I; send me." And this young man wants to be able to give the same confident answer as Isaiah. But instead these words are only a nagging question in his soul: "Here am I; send **me**?". This is a question to him because of those objections that keep coming up in his mind. These objections are what we want to explore together in this article. And we want to answer them by using biblical examples and references, in the hopes of settling some of your own fears and misgivings about coming to seminary.

OBJECTION #1 - "I'm not smart enough; I lack the necessary intellectual gifts."

It is certainly true that a minster of the gospel must have intellectual gifts, and therefore, every young man who considers the ministry must examine whether he is mentally competent to study and absorb the rigorous pre-seminary and seminary courses. But this must not become the all-consuming factor in your determination. Besides, far too often young men **under**estimate their intellectual abilities.

It is beneficial to bear in mind that Jesus' disciples were far from being the intellectual giants of their day. They were men of common, ordinary ability and background - fishermen, tax-collectors, and so on. A rather clear reference to this is given in Acts 4. After Peter and John had given their testimony before the council in connection with their healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, we read that the men of the council marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John because they "perceived that they were un-

learned and ignorant men" (vs. 13). They saw that they were simple men, men who had never had any formal, academic training; yet powerfully they had preached and testified. How so? The men of the council knew: "And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." That explains it - they had been with Jesus! They had spent three years in the school of Christ, hearing His Word and witnessing His miracles. And now that that training had been applied unto them by the poured-out Spirit of the risen Christ, they were equipped to preach boldly.

That is what you young men must keep in mind. The important issue is spiritual knowledge not mere intellectual ability. Have you been and do you desire to be with Jesus? Have you been taught and do you desire to be further taught in the school of His Word? Do you love His Word and truth, and desire to grow in the knowledge of it, so that you might teach and preach it?

OBJECTION #2 - "I don't have the necessary speaking gifts. I'm not a great orator and I'm not sure I can speak publicly."

This too is a legitimate concern. A minister of the gospel has to be able to speak well. He should have a good strong voice. He should have good command of the English language, so that he can communicate the gospel in a plain yet interesting manner. He must be able to face people and speak to all size groups. Yet you must realize that public speaking is something to which one must grow accustomed and in which one must develop. It is rare for a young man to arrive at seminary with the skill of a Cicero. Speaking skills are very slowly and painstakingly developed not only in seminary but throughout one's career (ask any minister!).

With regard to this too you can learn from biblical example. Jeremiah thought he was too young and immature to begin speaking when God called him to be His prophet. He said to God, "Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." But the Lord responded to that with the words, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. 1:6, 7).

You may take comfort from the example of Moses, who, you may remember, objected to his office because of his lack of speaking ability. In Ex. 4:10 we hear him saying to God, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." And God rebuked Moses, and said to him, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (vs. 12). And then God provided help for Moses in the person of his brother Aaron who became his spokesman. The point is, you must learn to depend on God also for the speaking gifts of the ministry.

Another important lesson in this connection is that the power and success of a sermon does not rest on the fine oratory of the preacher. Paul, perhaps the greatest of preachers, taught us this. In I Cor. 2:1-5 he wrote: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. . . . I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration

of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Keep that perspective of the apostle in mind.

OBJECTION # 3 - "The training takes too long. Eight years in pre-seminary and seminary is more schooling than I can handle."

There is no question that the demands and sacrifices required to enter the ministry are great. It takes a great deal of time and commitment, and that in the prime of one's youth. But that is simply the way it has to be. Because of the importance and seriousness Scripture gives to the office of the ministry, it requires long and careful preparation on the part of him who is to enter it.

But here too you may learn from biblical precedent. If you think eight years is long, consider that Moses' training was ten times that! For forty years he was prepared by God in Egypt. And then he had to wait another forty years tending sheep in Midian before God finally called him through the burning bush. And the apostle Paul's experience was similar though not as long.. He received one of the finest Jewish educations of his day, and yet when he was converted and called to preach to the Gentiles, he had to spend some quiet years in Arabia, receiving the gospel by revelation of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 1). So do not allow yourself to be frightened by the time-factor. Once you are in the training you will not resent the years needed to prepare for the ministry.

OBJECTION #4 - "I'm afraid of opposition, rejection, and persecution."

Ministers do indeed face all of these things, and a young man who considers the ministry must prepare to face these things too. This simply belongs to the "cost" of being a servant of the Lord. Read Matthew 10 to remind yourself of what the minister of the gospel can expect to bear wherever he preaches the gospel. If you are a Christian, then you already face these things in your life to one degree or another. But a minister does to a greater degree because he is called to be in the forefront of the battle of faith. Every minister does well to remember the words of Paul to Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

Yet also in this you must not be afraid. Isaiah was called to bring a most difficult message and perform a most difficult mission to Judah (cf. Is. 6:9-12). But he obeyed in the strength of God Who sent him. Jeremiah knew that his work and mesage would not be well-received, and he was afraid. God told him that the kings and princes and priests and people would all fight against him, and that made the prophet tremble. But listen to what else God said to him: "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. . . They shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:8, 19). And Jesus, after He had warned his disciples about the evil treatment they could expect when they went out with the gospel, gave them rich comfort as well (Matt. 10:19, 20; 29-31).

OBJECTION #5 - "I'm so unholy! How could God ever use a man like myself?"

If this is truly the attitude you take toward yourself and the ministry, then you have one of the chief marks a

minister must have and display - humility. One's unworthiness for the office is absolutely indispensable to a serious consideration of the ministry. I pray that all who think about entering the ministry feel this objection in their hearts!

It was precisely this unholiness and spiritual inability which Isaiah experienced in the vision recorded in Is. 6. In that vision he saw the Lord in all His holiness, and that prompted him to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (vs. 5). I say again, this is what every aspirant to the ministry must feel in his own soul and confess before God. Have you seen the King in all His glory, young men? Then your cry is that of Isaiah, "I am unclean. I'm unfit as I am for the work of the Lord."

But then also be confident of the work of the Lord to cleanse you and make you a holy instrument of His. That too was pictured to Isaiah in the vision (cf. vss. 6, 7). Only when the Lord purifies you of your sin you are able to respond as Isaiah did, "Here am I; send me." Only when He cleanses your lips are you able to speak His Word in purity and truth.

OBJECTION #6 - "I know I should enter the ministry, but I don't want to."

This is something which probably every minister felt at one time before he actually entered the seminary. Most, if not all, have struggled with the call to the ministry. We felt the inner call; we were able to discern the basic gifts necessary for the office; the way was opened to us; but our flesh was there saying, "No, don't do it." And so we said, "No, I don't want to." But this is wrong, and the Lord showed us too by breaking our rebellious spirits. We may not resist the call of God. If every indication is there that you should enter the ministry, and still you say, "No", then you are rebelling against God.

To point you to the seriousness of this, I would remind you of the example of the prophet Jonah. You recall how Jonah refused to heed the call of the Lord to go to Nineveh, how he tried to run from the Lord, and how the Lord caught up with him, and taught him obedience through the chastisement of the storm and near loss of his life. Let that be a lesson to you, young men, that you cannot flee from the Lord's call to the ministry. He will find you and bring you to obedience, even in the way of chastisement. Far better it is to heed Him at His first calling, than to hear His call but delay to answer it.

May the Lord use this article to answer some of the objections those of you who have already begun to think about the ministry may be having. And may it inspire those of you who have not yet considered it to do so now.

The two great pizes of human life are fellowship with God and in Him fellowship with one another.

- C. H. Brent

AT HIS TABLE

by Sue Looyenga

Moved by Thy Spirit, Lord, O, how I hunger after righteousness!
I see the table that Thy grace has furnished me.
And drawing near in sweet communion with Thy saints,
Together lay the mountain of our sins beneath the Cross, take hold of Thee
And taste Thy goodness. What wondrous love is this, my God,
That Thou hast given Thy Son, for me, unworthy sinner that I am -
His body broken and His precious blood poured forth in agony
In that accursed death upon the cross. O perfect sacrificial Lamb!

By faith we cling to Thee and all salvation's merits claim
Because of Thee; Flesh of Thy Flesh, Bone of Thy Bone
At one with Thee in Spirit. And as diversity of grains does form the loaf
And berries, mingled, flow into one wine, we take Thy Life to be our own.
So feed and nourish us as we partake, undoubting. Thou hast promised
That as surely as we taste and see this bread, this wine,
So surely Thou wilt satisfy our souls unto the everlasting life
That Thou has purchased with Thy flesh, Thy blood, For we are Thine.

"No man is so regenerate, but that continually he hath need of the means which Christ Jesus, the wisdom of His eternal Father, hath appointed to be used in His Kirk (Church): to wit, the word truly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered. The word and the sacraments has Christ Jesus ordained and commanded to be used in His Kirk, therefore ought not the bold presumption of man to separate the same."

- John Knox

SEX: WHY WAIT?

by Pastor Steven Key

Read I Corinthians 6:9-20

My beloved young people, who must live as Christians in a world that surrounds you with temptations:

A few months ago, I was driving to Holland on a Sunday morning to preach for a classical appointment there, and I turned on the radio and caught a brief conversation between Dr. James Boice, a well-known Presbyterian pastor in the Philadelphia area, and Josh McDowell, an internationally known author and speaker for the organization Campus Crusade for Christ. The conversation concerned premarital sex. McDowell stated a statistic that was rather shocking. He said that surveys have concluded that 93,000 acts of sex (in various forms) are viewed on television by the normal child from the time he is 10 years old until he is 20.

Immorality has been made the norm! That is true not only with television in its programming and commercials, but also with the books that are readily available to you in bookstores today, not to mention the public libraries, as well as the magazines you can buy in any grocery or drug store. And I am speaking now not only the the **Playboys** and **Penthouses** and so on, but the women's magazines and magazines for teenage girls and hot rod magazines and sports magazines and so on. I challenge you to go through even a **news** magazine and find it without one page or advertisement containing sexual innuendo. I don't think you can do it. Sex **sells** in this day and age. That is a well-known fact, taught in the advertising classes of any college or university today. So it was even more than 10 years ago, when I was studying business administration and marketing at Western Michigan University. But today, even greater and more openly wicked strides are being taken in those areas.

In fact, when I think about the tremendous change in this aspect of society in the past 15 years, it is absolutely astounding! Although the 1960s were a tumultous decade with the hippy culture and the growth of rock and roll and rebellion, and although there was something of a sexual revolution, a proliferation of fornication, in the United States during those years; even so, when I was a teenager, things were still pretty tame. Most every one in my environment was either saying, "It's sin; don't do it;" or, "It's not acceptable; don't do it;" or they were keeping quiet about it. But today that is not true. Young people today—and I speak to you—may hear your pastor say, "Sex outside of marriage is sin; don't do it." If your parents say anything about it, they will say, "It's sin; don't do it." **But** you turn on the television and **everybody's doing it!** You turn on your music, and hear, "Do it!" You look at your magazines and see the ads, "Do it

safely. Use condoms. Promote safe sex!" And maybe even your friends say, "We're doing it, and it's great!"

Now, I don't write this to accuse you youthful readers, most of whom, I have no doubt, are children of God. And yet, I wasn't born last night either. I know that fornication is a temptation to most, and a sin into which many find themselves having fallen. And you who think you stand had better take heed lest you fall.

A recent national study among **churched** youth revealed that by the age of 18, 65% of the unmarried youth have fallen into fornication and become involved sexually. In my work with young people prior to my entering the ministry, I dealt often with the effects of fornication. And in my brief ministry in our Protestant Reformed churches, I have found that we are not so pure as many of us would like to think. I have had **several** times to give counsel to those both unmarried and married who are suffering the emotional and psychological and spiritual consequences of having been sexually active, from petting to intercourse, before God-ordained marriage.

And because I hurt to see the sheep of God's flock in pain and misery, I write to you in the love of Christ concerning this matter. There are many, many different perspectives concerning this subject. But I will limit myself. I hope that with most of you, there is enough openness at home to talk about some of these things with your parents. At the same time, however, I urge those of you who need help in this area, or who need a listening ear and who are **unable** to talk to your parents, to talk to your own pastor or to contact me or to talk to a spiritual leader in your congregation. And especially you girls, do not forget the capable mothers and older women in the congregation, who have gone through such temptations and raised their children to face them, and who have been given the calling by God also to help the younger women in these matters, according to Titus 2.

I first want to call your attention to the law of love. You understand that **everything** in this life functions according to the law of God.

There are many different laws. You learn that in whatever subject you study. When you study biology, you learn that the fish must live within the sphere of the water. That is God's law for the fish. If the fish jumps out of the water onto the ground, God kills it. You learn in physics another law ordained by God. There is a certain law that God has ordained that says 2 things cannot occupy the same space at the same time. So if a man in rebellion against God jumps off a bridge and hits the rocks 100 feet below, he is going to die. Because the rocks are not going to move, and 2 things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Now there are also spiritual laws which God has ordained. **The** law for man is this, as we read in Matthew 22 (and Lord's Day II), "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That is the law within which you and I have life. When we move one step outside the bounds of that law, we die. God kills us. That is Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

That law of love is **the** law for us. But there are other spiritual laws. In **light** of the fact that you and I **are** sinners, condemned to death, except we stand before God's law and live within the sphere of that law in Christ Jesus, one of the most beautiful and comforting laws He has ordained is found in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That is beautiful for you who believe, but who have fallen into fornication, into sexual sin.

But there are devastating consequences to violating the law of love.

Death, you understand, is alienation from God and all that that means. That has all kinds of terrible implications for every sphere of life. Because we are discussing the sphere of your sexuality, I want you to consider some of the implications of being outside the sphere of God's love.

For one thing, outside the sphere of that law of love, **God's** love, your life style is going to be without the resources of **God**. That means also with respect to your sexuality and the outworkings of your sexuality, that you are brought down to the level of simply sensual response and of learning to get along with people who think like you do and who make you feel good. In fact, we read in Romans 1 of those who live outside of the sphere of His love, that He also **gives them up to uncleanness**:- that is a terrible thought! And Paul goes on to give examples—**God** gave them up unto vile affections. Shocking—isn't it?! They are without excuse. God made Himself known to them as God. But they said, "God, you are God, but I don't want you in control of my life. They thought **they** had control of things. They thought **they** had control of their sexuality and their bodies. But **God** gave them up to vile affections—not just affections, they are not bad; but **vile** affections. When affections are taken out of the context of the sacred relationships which God has instituted for His people, they become a toy and they become vile.

Devastating are the consequences of fornication, young people.

As you read in I Corinthians 6:18: "Every sin that a man doeth is without (outside of) the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." I would not be exaggerating by saying that I could come up with close to 50 different consequences of fornication, of violating God-given sexual relationships outside of the sphere of marriage. And I am not talking about the obvious consequence of pregnancy. Most of you, if you are going to **walk** in the sin of fornication, are probably sophisticated enough to avoid pregnancy by the use of means that are readily available to you today. Nor am I talking about venereal disease, which is so readily picked up today, undoubtedly as God's judgment upon this sin of fornication. But I am talking about the devastating consequences upon the **soul** of the young man or young woman who falls.

I am not going to kid you. Should you fall into this sin, you may even find it enjoyable. One man described it this way: "Premarital sex is rather like picking blossoms in spring. It seems beautiful, right and natural. But when autumn comes, there is no fruit." (Trobisch, quoted in McDowell, **What I Wish My Parents Knew. . .**). That description is only partially true. When autumn comes, there **is** fruit. But it is rotten fruit. You think participating in sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend is

going to be terrific? Don't forget, you do all things before the face of God. The **guilt** will consume you, if you are a child of God.

Have you fallen? Then you know what I am talking about. Do you **walk** in that sin? Then you have no assurance of your salvation. I don't care if you are a baptized member of the church. I don't care if you go to church every Sunday. If you continue to walk as one who hates God and spits upon His Word, you can have no assurance except that of facing God in His wrath and being cast into everlasting hell. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). Solomon, in Proverbs 9:17, 18 speaks of fornication with a whorish woman, and in picturesque and figurative language describes it this way: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant"—oh yes, it feels so good! "But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell."

Perhaps you do not realize the great magnitude of that sin. **All** our sins are great. **Every** sin we commit is a slap in the face of the Almighty God. After all, He is the Holy One, Who will not abide with those who walk in hatred of Him. Do you understand why sexual intercourse outside the holy bond of marriage is such a heinous sin in God's sight? It is because fornication and every appearance of fornication is a devilish imitation of the covenant bond of holy marriage given by God Himself. It is **spit** in God's beautiful face!

That is why Paul writes in I Corinthians 6, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God!" And he goes on to write, as we read, "Flee fornication! Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

But enough of the negative. I could fill the pages of this magazine with the negative, my beloved young people; and that will not help you to face the temptations of this world. Again, I write to you as children of God. Any readers who are not God's children are not going to listen anyway. They have every reason to be terrified. But the blindness of their minds and the searing of their consciences will carry them into hell, by way of God's judgment seat. But I want to look at things a little more positively. Because I do not want you, either, to have a negative view of sex.

God's law of love is most beautiful, when we stay within its sphere. Sexuality is a beautiful thing, as is the sex act, provided again that it is within the sphere of God's law of love. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

The truth of the covenant God with us is the most beautiful and practical truth in all of Scripture and our experience—friendship and fellowship within God Himself, as He brings us **in** Christ into His own blessed life. For our own good, God has set sex aside for the marriage relationship. For the beauty of the covenant is shown us by God within the marriage bond. I cannot begin to describe for you the beauty of

sex within the marriage bond with a husband and wife whose marriage is firmly established upon Christ and built upon the Word of God, as the Apostle describes it in Ephesians 5, e.g.

And what I want to emphasize at this point, Christian young people, is this: God has established that covenant with **us** in Christ. Is that your confession? That means that He loves us. In **love** for us He created us as we are. He knows what makes us tick. David, in Psalm 139, marvels at God's intimate knowledge of him. Oh yes, we turned our backs on Him, still do. But He loved us with an infinite and eternal love. In love He gives us His law. And by that law He tells us who are in Christ Jesus, "Listen, I don't want you to do that which will hurt you; I seek your well-being at every turn. Sexual activity is for marriage. Do you doubt my Word? I who have loved you enough to send my Son to the cross for you, do you doubt my Word?"

You see, guys and girls, we are really talking about a much larger area than the area of sex.

That which I am most concerned about is your thinking, your thinking as the expression of your soul. And that is my concern because I know that there is a big battle going on today. That battle is being fought on the battlefield of your mind. Everybody wants to control your mind. But the devil wants to control your mind because he doesn't want you to **think**. When it comes to the temptations you face to commit fornication, the devil doesn't want you to think. He wants you to **do it**. Because if you **think** about it, you will realize that there is no rational basis for become involved in promiscuous sexual behavior. You don't even have to be a Christian to know how destructive that is. Even many ungodly psychiatrists and psychologists will tell you that fornication is a dead end street.

Think about it, young people. Only, **think** about it in the light of what God tells you and me about the beauty of marriage and riches of His love. **Think** about it in the light of I John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." **Think**, Christian young people, as Paul writes to the Romans in Romans 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your **mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." And remember, knowing God's will is a matter of personal commitment and the development of the mind in relation to Jesus Christ. That is my concern with you today.

Now, I want to conclude this article with some concrete examples of how to flee fornication.

First of all, it is necessary that you have a right relationship with your Lord. If your lord is a boy or girl, you are setting yourself up for a terrible fall. Let the mind of Christ be in you. If your relationship with God and His Christ is not right, neither can any other relationship be right. And in order for you to experience that beautiful relationship of friendship with God, He has given us means to use. The chief means is the preaching. Listen to the voice of Christ, that you may know Him. But then, there are also many other means. Meditate upon the Word, Christian. Don't just sit there at the dinner table while dad reads the Bible and say, "We got our devotions in for the day." Make those Scriptures your own. Consider them,

ponder them in relation to your own personal and daily life. Learn to say with the psalmist, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

Seek godly counsel. Scripture speaks often of the need to edify one another. Also concerning our relationships, it is necessary to seek counsel from those older and wiser, who have "been through it," again, preferably a parent. And if you cannot talk with your parents, seek an elder or your pastor, or a godly saint in Christ's church who has been through it all before.

If lust is beginning to burn and to consume your relationship, break up and flee, at least for a time. Get your thinking straight. And if on a date, that young man begins to put his hand where it doesn't belong, tell him to stop. And if he doesn't stop, it is time to leave. Because the so-called little sins lead to big sins. And then you young woman, whom God created with bodies particularly attractive to men; don't dress and paint yourselves up like whores waiting to lay a man like Potiphar's wife waited for Joseph. Both Paul and Peter write about your proper adornment. You better read I Timothy 2 and I Peter 3. And do not tempt your brother in Christ to stumble.

Set you standards **now**, before a relationship begins. Set them according to what is right in the eyes of God. And then remember, God is not **cheating** you by forbidding sex before marriage. He wants the absolute best for you, His child. With that in mind, commit your way unto the Lord. I wonder how many of you young people have committed your way unto the Lord in prayer, when it comes to dating and marriage. Do you pray that God will provide you with a godly husband or wife, if that is His will? Do you pray that if it is not God's will that you marry, that He provides for you and gives you contentment and freedom from sin outside the bond of marriage? Do you?

There are many, many other things, but I have to quit; so let me just mention a couple more. In connection with that idea of **thinking** and putting on the **mind** of Christ; I would remind you to cultivate more and more a sense that God Himself is present wherever you are. In Proverbs 15:3 we read, "The eyes of the LORD are in **every** place, beholding the evil and the good." The more we are conscious of that, the more we will pray with the psalmist (Ps. 119:37): "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way."

But above all, young people, be conscious of the friendship of God in Christ. How valuable is that friendship to you? Would you jeopardize that friendship? Consider His love shown to you in Christ. You know, I think there is probably no bondage more difficult to break, than the bondage or entanglement of sexual sin. I feel sorry for those who do not have the friendship of God in Jesus Christ. But for those who **do, mighty** is the love of God through Christ! It can and has in many cases broken even this sin. And I have rejoiced with the angels in heaven, to see the tears of true repentance flow and the burden of sin and guilt lifted. Have you fallen? Mighty is the grace of God, demonstrated in one who is enabled by the Spirit to break from this sin against the body! Therefore, hear the Word of God. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy

upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon'' (Isa. 55:7). Go and sin no more.

Prayer is the clasping hands of God and man.
Prayer is completion of the eternal plan.
Prayer is the stairs by Bethel angels trod.
Prayer is the bridge that leaps from man to God.
Prayer lifts us up when all else drags us down.
Prayer is our throne, our scepter, and our crown.
Prayer starts us off, and praying pulls us through.
Prayer is the greatest thing a man can do.

Who boldly plan and masterfully dear
Find energy and confidence in prayer.
Prayer is their armory, their weapon stout;
By prayer they put all enemies to rout.
If storms assail, prayer is our shielding home.
Prayer is our compass when afar we roam.
On sea or land, where darkest perils are,
Prayer is our sun by day, by night our star.

If we are poor, prayer is abundant gold.
Prayer keeps us young if we are growing old.
Prayer is our medicine if we are ill,
And all our want suffices to fulfill.
Teach us to pray, great Source of every good!
Bring us within Thy sheltering Fatherhood!
Amid all changes of life's troubled way,
Lord, teach Thy needy children how to pray!

Is it nothing for a man to be employed in comforting, relieving, and supporting others? This is so great a service that the very angels are employed therein.''

- William Bridge

LEAN HARD

Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee.—Psalm 55:22.

Child of My love, Lean Hard,
And let Me feel the pressure of thy care;
I know thy burden, child, I shaped it;
Poised it in Mine own hand, made no proportion
In its weight to thine unaided strength;
For even as I laid it on, I said,
I shall be near, and while he leans on Me,
This burden shall be Mine, not his;
So shall I keep My child within the circling arms
Of My own love. Here lay it down, nor fear
To impose it on a shoulder which upholds
The government of worlds. Yet closer come;
Thou art not near enough; I would embrace thy care
So I might feel My child reposing on My breast.
Thou lovest Me? I knew it. Doubt not then;
But, loving Me, Lean Hard.

Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.—I Pet. 5:7.

Is hardship involved? "Our journey is up-hill, with a dead body upon our backs, the devil doing what he can to pull us down."

- Philip Henry

SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

May 21	Hope
August	Pre-Convention
September 17	Southeast
November 19	Faith (Thanksgiving)
December 17	Hudsonville (Christmas)