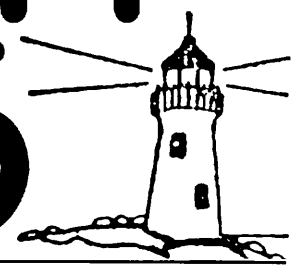
BEACON LIGHTS



FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

FEBRUARY 1991

If God loves you now, He will love you forever! If God loves you with the kind of love that is unchangeable, unconditional, eternal, it is a love that will be upon you into eternity of heaven. Then there is no possibility that you go lost, no possibility that you perish everlastingly in hell, no possibility that you are no longer loved by God. You are and forever shall remain loved by God.

"The Permanence of Love" by Rev. Barry Gritters
1990 Young People's Convention Speech

VOLUME XLX NUMBER 2

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EDITOR'S NOTES FEBRUARY 1991

by David Harbach

The Young People's Convention speech by Rev. Barry Gritters is provided in this issue. "The Permanence of Love" (or: "Love Lasts") brings to our hearts the knowledge that the permanence of God's love for us is a ground for the assurance of eternal life which is part of our Reformed faith. God's love enables us to love Him and each other and assures us of His love for us.

Some of us learn by listening and by reading. Most of us learn also by means of a demonstration, which is sometimes a powerful teacher. Rich Peterson brings to this issue another superb article on the topic "The Snares of Satan." While reading this article many of us will recall several learning experiences in our own lives that taught us spiritual truths. Read and enjoy!

"To Lose The Battle And Win The War, Chapter III, The Issues In The Battle (5)" continues with Prof. Hanko pointing out some of the wrong views to the unity of Scripture that Dr. Ralph Janssen taught. We do well to read and understand false views of Scripture so that we are better prepared to defend the Reformed truth.

Mrs. Brands also continues the study of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 with letter #10 "God Plans Opposites At Perfect Times." These are the verses of Scripture that teach that there is a time to every purpose under heaven with the words " a time to . . . ."

Once in awhile a short story comes into the editor's hands. The author of "Of A Different Kind", Mr. J.P. de Klerk is from our sister church in New Zealand. He is an architect who writes many articles in the Dutch language, and which are published in the Netherlands. This one he translated into English, using in some instances the New Zealand way of speaking. We thank Mr. de Klerk for providing us an article that shows the concern young people need to have for the spiritual well being of other young people.

God brings into our lives events that we never forget. Perhaps God wills that we need an operation. Or He gives us more responsibility at home or in school. Maybe He brings death to a loved one. Whatever God brings to us, that event makes an impression in our minds and hearts so much that we need to express what we experience in talking to others or in writing. Such is the case with the poem by Angie Schipper, a sophomore at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids. She remembers the death of Katie Brummel. She also brings to mind the all important truth that what God does in our lives is always good.

Recently I had the opportunity to stay a week in Charlotte, North Carolina. I met a young man, Lance Richter, who replied in a southern accent "Yes, Ma'am" or "Yes, Sir" to those older than he. I thoroughly enjoyed his respectful demeanor and you will thoroughly enjoy the article by S. Hoven who lives in Lookout Mountain, Georgia. She gives us a brief but candid view of life in the heart of Dixie.

Editorial

THE SNARES OF SATAN

by Rich Peterson

One of the most effective means of teaching another the inherent power of an object is by means of a demonstration. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fully comprehend the destructive power of an AK-47 assault rifle by mere verbal description alone. However, if this weapon were demonstrated for you, then you would not only understand its destructive force, but also would respect its awesome power.

Several years ago I had an opportunity to demonstrate to my children this concept of inherent power with a snapping turtle. It was a warm spring day when one of my children came running to me from the field in which he was hoeing weeds. "Quick dad, come see the turtle we found. Can we keep it for a pet?" Reserving judgment, I ran with him to the back of the field to discover a large female snapping turtle preparing to lay

her eggs in the warm soft earth. "Can we keep it dad, can we?" With a subdued "no" he responded, "why not?" "Give me your hoe, I'll show you." As the children gathered around, I prodded and poked the turtle. She opened her mouth and hissed. Again I poked. Then without warning she snapped at the handle and nearly bit it in two. The quickness and power of the turtle's attack was striking, and all thoughts of keeping the turtle for a pet were quickly dismissed and replaced with fear and respect that last to this day. Such is the effective means of a demonstration when it is used to teach the inherent power of an object.

Our Lord Jesus Christ also used the technique of demonstration to teach us the inherent power of the spiritual world. By His many miracles which we have recorded in Scripture, He teaches us the power of His Lordship over all. He teaches us that He is Lord of creation when He calmed the seas of Galilee and His disciples responded, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the seas obey Him?". He teaches us that He has power over Satan and all his host when He cast out devils. And He teaches us that He even has power on earth to forgive sins when he said to the palsy, "take up your bed and walk".

The instruction of our Lord in His Word concerning the inherent power of the spiritual world is not limited to the miracles our Savior performed. Rather His instruction is all comprehensive including the power that sin and death has over all men. A case in point is the power Satan is given to tempt man that he sin and when sin is finished, death. To demonstrate how very real Satan's power is, our Lord uses the example of the hunter's snare throughout the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and other places in Scripture.

Never in the history of mankind has such a hunting devise been conceived as treacherous as the snare. In fact, many civilized countries today prohibit their use as being inhumane to animals. Yet, the snare is one of the most effective hunting devices ever designed by man because it uses the animal's nature against itself for its own destruction. Not only is the prey lured into the snare by food its nature desires, but once captured the snare tightens its death grip firmer and firmer the more the prey tries to escape. So too Satan sets his snare when he tempts us with the hope of our destruction.

When the Bible speaks of a snare, it does so with two types in mind. The one is called a fowler's snare used to capture birds. The other is called the pit which was used to trap large animals. They both had one purpose: the destruction or death of its prey.

Both types of snares have several characteristics they share in common. Both are camouflaged from the discerning view of the prey. And both, with careful thought and advance planning of the hunter, are selective in the prey they ensnare. This is accomplished by placing the snare in the vicinity of the desired prey's habitat, and by baiting the snare with the type of food the prey desires most. Thus when the snare is set, the only thing seen of its victim is a few morsels of food which will lead it to its death.

The difference between the fowler's snare and the pit lies

mainly in their design. The pit is exactly what the word implies. A skillful hunter would dig a pit with vertical walls to a depth greater than the desired prey would be able to jump out. Sharp pointed staves would be placed in the floor of the pit pointing upward, so that the animal's flesh would be pieced when it would fall to the floor. Entrapped, the animal knows only one thing: this is the place of pain and agony; it must escape. And so it tries by jumping out, only to fall back having its flesh torn and ripped apart. Again the creature tries, but the pain and suffering increases. It cries out in its pain and agony for help, but in vain. The ensnared creature dies an agonizing death.

The fowler's snare is no less treacherous in its design. Once the bird becomes ensnared, its instinct is to fly away from the point of danger. But the snare's grip only becomes tighter and tighter with every beat of its wings. Finally the bird, out of exhaustion and shock, dies in the snare's web of entanglement which was spun out of the bird's desire for freedom.

Never in the history of man has such a treacherous device been so conceived! The treachery of the snare lies in the fact that it uses its victim's nature and instincts against itself for the purpose of its victim's own death. The creature's need for food, freedom, and the avoidance of pain are turned against themselves and turned into destruction. That is treachery! Thus the inherent power of the snare is clearly demonstrated.

In II Timothy 2:26 the power and ability of Satan to tempt us to sin against God is associated with the snare. There is no other object that was ever created, or device ever made by man that best exemplifies the treacherous means Satan will use to turn us away from our God. His deeds and his means are without mercy. They are inhumane. And he seeks our destruction. Yet, it is of God's mercy we are not consumed. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ uses the example of the snare: to teach us, to warn us of the power and the vengeance of Satan's temptation.

Scripture refers to the Christian's life as a narrow pathway which leads to heaven. We are in the midst of a dark and sinful world. But God gives to us His Word which is a light upon our path and a lamp unto our feet. We are given eyes to see the Light of God's Word by the power of His Spirit whereby we can see the pathway in the midst of darkness. It is the Law of God which sets the boundaries of our pathway. Outside of the edge or boundaries of our pathway to heaven, Satan sets his snares. When we stray into sin, wander off the pathway of life, we place ourselves in danger, in danger of Satan's treachery.

Never may it be said that we have wandered off our pathway unto heaven because the Light of God's Word was not bright enough so that we could not see where the pathway is. The Light of God is His revealed Holiness unto His people. It is referred to in Scripture as being brighter than the noonday sun. It is more intense than the refiner's fire. One can not but think of the time Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the glory of God's holiness radiating from his face and the children of Israel asked that he would cover his face. No, when we lose our way it is not the fault of the perfect Light of

God's Word, rather we shield our faces from the Light. Our sinful nature can not behold its glory, but being renewed by the Spirit of God we desire and seek after that Light. And through the work of that Spirit we gradually become more and more accustomed to the Light as one who walks out of a dark room becomes accustomed to the brightly lit room into which he entered.

The Light of God's Word not only shines upon our pathway and shows us the borders of that path, but also shows to us what lies beyond: sin and death, and the snares of Satan. Even though the bounds of Satan's snare are camouflaged, we are given the Light of the Word to see the bait, those juicy morsels of sin, and the knowledge of the peril we would suffer if we became a victim to his snare.

Make no mistake, Satan is a crafty hunter of men's souls. He knows what is the best bait to use. His temptations are personal in nature and not general. His snare is always baited with careful thought and preplanning. And he is selective in his desired prey. He uses our sinful nature against ourselves to the end that we as God's people may be destroyed. Yet knowing this we still wander off our pathway of life to sneak a morsel of Satan's bait, and then run back to the safety of the path. We sneak another, and maybe another still. But where is the edge of the pit? We don't know. We try again, but now he has us. We are caught. We begin to suffer pain and anguish of soul. We try to escape with our own power, only to have Satan's snare grip tighter to our souls. The harder we try to escape, the more we suffer. All human help is vain.

Ensnared, we cry out: "Save us oh Lord, for in Thee do we trust". And He delivers us. He lifts us out of destruction's pit and sets our feet once again upon the pathway of life. He binds up our wounds and heals our souls. But the scars remain with us the rest of our lives. Not until this corruptible puts on incorruption will we be cleansed from the effects of sin. So many of God's people bear the scars of sin to remind them of the time they had foolishly wandered from the path of wisdom's way.

Faithful ministers and office-bearers of God's Word, and God fearing parents and teachers know of the power and treachery of Satan's snares. They know the pain and suffering of soul it inflicts upon its victims and the scars they must bear the rest of their lives. Therefore they bring the Light of God's Word to us, not only to help show us the pathway of life that we may flee from the snare, but they also teach us how to use the Light of the Word for ourselves that we may grow in God's grace and sanctification.

GOD'S CREATION

In God's creation I can see
The wonderful things that help me
To understand the Word of God
Whose love is so deep and broad.

by Jamie Engelsma

To Lose the Battle and Win The War

The Janssen Case
Chapter III
The Issues In The Battle (5)

by Prof. H. Hanko

(In the last article, we showed how Dr. Ralph Janssen's views of Scripture led him to a denial of the miracles of Scripture. There were one or two other matters which his views of inspiration affected. To them we turn in this article.)

In order to understand the issue that is involved in this question, it is necessary first of all to say a few things about the character of Scripture itself.

Because Scripture is the infallibly inspired record of God's revelation, the whole of Scripture is one harmonious book. It has a unity about it which puts every part of it in harmony with every other part.

The one principle and truth which gives unity to the whole of the Scriptures is the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. God reveals Himself in Scripture through our Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture can be compared with a beautiful portrait of Christ with every part of the portrait a necessary and perfect addition to the whole.

Now because Scripture is that way, every book of the Bible must have something to say about Christ. Christ is revealed in every part of Scripture. As a Bible teacher said once many years ago in Bible class: "Wherever the artery of Scripture is cut, it flows with the blood of the Lamb."

But at the same time, every part of Scripture, while it is surely a part of the portrait of Christ, reveals Christ in its own unique way. Some parts of Scripture are like the background of the portrait. Other parts are like the bottom part of the face. Other parts compose the eye. But each part has its own place, and in the unity of the Scriptures the portrait is perfect and complete.

Now part of the study of the Bible includes determining how each particular book of the Bible contributes to the unity of the whole Bible; i.e., how each book helps understand Jesus Christ; how each book contributes to the portrait; what place in the portrait each book occupies.

Dr. Ralph Janssen also was busy in this work in his teachings in the Seminary. But because He did not believe that Scripture was completely the Word of God, he had wrong views too of the unity of Scripture.

There were especially two mis-

takes which he made, both of which were related to each other. For one thing, Janssen taught that the only way to determine the unique place which any book occupied in the whole of Scripture was to learn who (other than the Holy Spirit) wrote the book, why he wrote in prose rather than poetry, why he wrote the book at all, to whom he wrote the book, what were his motives in writing it, what influences were affecting him while he was writing, and on and on and on and on. . . .

Now the fact of the matter is that most of the time the Bible does not answer all these questions. We are, therefore, left to guessing. And so vast quantities of time are spent in guessing the answers to these questions, and scholars write more books than one can count to publish their guesses. But every scholar has, of course, his own guess.

All the while, because these questions are not answered in the Bible, the Holy Spirit is telling us that we do not need to know the answers to these questions in order for us to learn how any given book helps us to understand Christ. We can learn these things from the Bible itself in most instances. But when the Bible does tell us that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, then we ought to believe the Holy Spirit. The trouble is that those who think it important that all these questions need answering, will not, as a general rule, believe the Holy Spirit when He gives us the answers.

At any rate, Janssen spent vast amounts of time on these questions and came up with some strange answers.

As we noticed already, Janssen denied that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, and insisted that they may very well have come from Babylon even before Moses' time. Janssen believed that the book of Ecclesiastes was the rather pessimistic work of a very skeptical philosopher who had no hope for the future because all in life was vanity. Janssen believed that the Song of Solomon had nothing to say at all about Jesus Christ (as was true of other books, such as Judges, Esther, etc.) but was only an oriental love song, somewhat erotic. Daniel was not the author of the prophecy that goes by his name, but an unknown author used a literary device when claiming to be Daniel.

And so Janssen went about really mutilating the Bible in the interests of his own notions about inspiration.

There is a warning here. Today the denial of infallible and inerrant inspiration is very common and widespread. That it leads to heretical views of Scripture and even denials of the miracles is obvious. But insofar as it is done in our day, nothing new is really being said. It was done already many years ago when Janssen was teaching in Calvin Seminary.

"We are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts; but God is an ever-living God, and they shall find Him so who have Him for theirs."

-Henry and Scott (on Psalm 90)

"THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE" (OR; 'LOVE LASTS')

by Rev. Barry Gritters

The first convention that I attended was the convention that was sponsored in 1969 (if you can call sneaking along to Disneyland and riding atop the Kentucky Fried Chicken in the back of a pick-up to Jinx lake, "attending"). We had seven young people staying at our house, and in the back yard of our house we had a big tent with the five young men staying in it. One of those boys is now an elder in my congregation in Byron Center, and his daughter is here. Another one is a minister.

What I remember pretty well from that convention was that there was a good deal of talk about love. The boys were talking about love. The girls were talking about love. I was interested in hearing about love.

What I'm interested in now is this: what kind of love was that? Was it a genuine love? Was it true love? Was it a love that lasted?

I've got a feeling that there's going to be some thinking, if not talking at this convention, about love. And I am wondering what kind of love that is. Will it be talk of genuine love? Will it be talk of lasting love? And I think you will be interested in knowing the answers to those questions too. Whether you say it or not, I'm sure that if you date someone, you are interested in the question, "Is this a lasting love, or is this something that will dry up like the dew on the California grass?" We are concerned with a love that lasts.

THE PERMANENCE OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US

God's love for his people is permanent, ever - abiding. The love that God had for His people in eternity, is a love that never ends. The love that God had for His people when He showed it on the cross, is a love that will never fail. The love that God poured out on His people through the Spirit, is a love that abides forever!

The love that God had for you in eternity, is a love that never ends. The love that God had for you when He showed it, oh, so wonderfully on the cross, is a love that never ends. The love that God poured out on you as member of the body of Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, is a love that abides forever and ever.

The people of God in the O.T. already knew that. Jeremiah 31:3 has, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn thee."

There is good reason that God's love lasts. First, it lasts because it is from eternity. If God

loved you from eternity, He will love you into eternity. If there was no beginning to the love of God for you and for me, there can be no ending to God's love for you and me either. It is, as Jeremiah said, an "everlasting love."

Second, it lasts because it is love from the heart of an unchangeable God." This only makes sense. The love of God, some say, is "the loving God." God is love. That is, God is not, like us, a person of flesh and blood who have virtues added to us. We are like that . We don't say about ourselves, "I AM love." But God does. The Bible says about God, "God IS love." Not only is it true that God is the source of love, but God is love. That is, this is what God is: Mercy, Truth, Justice, Loving kindness, Grace, and LOVE.

Now, if God is love, and the Bible says that God never changes (and it does), then the love that God had set upon His people is a love that will never change. God's love lasts because it is a love from the heart of an unchangeable God.

Third, God's love is permanent because it's unconditional love. One reason we might think that God's love is not a permanent virtue, is that we compare it to our love. Our love is a conditional love, at least from one point of view. Let me illustrate that. If you have a date this evening for the banquet, then it may be that this romance buds: you begin writing, maybe; or if you live closer to each other, you begin dating more. But in that relationship, you tell yourself (if you are wise) I will not commit myself to saying, "I love you" until I find out a good deal more about the person. I'm not going to love the person until I know that they are my type, until I know that they are not going to hurt me, until I know that they are kind, that they are committed to the Reformed faith, until I know that they love God. And if they don't, I will never be able to say to them, " I love you." Further, if you do commit yourself to someone, telling them that you love them, and finding out later that there were things that you didn't know, you will stop loving them, and direct your love to someone else.

And then we think that God's love is like that. "God loves me with a wonderful love, And I love that He loves me. But I'm afraid that He'll not love me, because He finds something out about me that He does not like; I'm afraid that He will stop loving me, because I do something foolish, or because I no longer deserve His love for me.

I tell you, young people, the love of our God for People is an eternal, unchangeable, unconditional love. It does not depend on anything in you or me. One of my favorite passages in Scripture is two verses in Deuteronomy 7:7,8: " The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Can you believe that? If you would ask your boyfriend, or someone else who loved you, "Why did you choose me? Why do you love me?" and he said to you, "I love you and I chose you because I love you," you might be flattered, but you would think, "He didn't

answer my question; his answer is not reasonable!" God says to you and to me, "I love you because I love you. That's all you need to know. I'm God. Only understand this: I love you."

THIS IS A GROUND FOR ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

This gives me assurance that I will be loved by God forever!! And I am assured of my salvation.

If God loves you now, He will love you forever! If God loves you with the kind of love that is unchangeable, unconditional, eternal, it is a love that will be upon you into eternity of heaven. Then there is no possibility that you go lost, no possibility that you perish everlastingly in hell, no possibility that you are no longer loved by God. You are and forever shall remain loved by God.

Think of it: if God's love overcame such obstacles, nothing will stop it into eternity. If God's love overcame your hatred, it will overcome all obstacles. When God first loved us, you and I were enemies of God. I think of what Paul says in Romans, in the passage that is quoted in the very end of the Communion Form: "Therefore God commendeth therewith his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, being now justified in his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath through him; for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth forever more."

If he could love me, who am so unlovable, so ugly, so miserable, He will love me forever. If He could love me with such a love that makes me what I am, that saves me from so great a death and vile origin, He will love me into eternity!!

If He loved me when it took the greatest sacrifice on His part, the sacrifice of His only begotten Son; when it took giving away in death His beloved, Whom He loved with an original love, and He didn't fail in giving Himself for me in that love, well, His love for me is a love that is guaranteed never to die. And I know that I shall be in glory the moment I close my eyes in death.

I need to know this!

There are some who deny the possibility of knowing the permanence of God's love because they deny that it is permanent. They teach that God's love is not permanent, does not abide, is not everlasting. They teach that the love of God is changeable, and changeable because it's conditional. They would make a comparison between God's love and our love, instead of a contrast, as I did earlier. Their teaching is that God's love is based on your love, God's love is conditioned on your faithfulness, God's love is dependent on your persevering in the faith of Jesus Christ. And if our love does not last for Him, His love will not last for us. If our affections change, His affections change. But I know, and I know because Scripture tells me so, God's love for me will never die.

The child of God, the young person, needs to be assured of God's love, of the permanence of God's love, for him.

When I see my own unloveliness - and oh, how I know my own unloveliness well - I need to be

assured of the permanence of God's love for me. When I see my worthlessness - I am troubled by these kinds of thought, aren't you?; "How in the world could God love me? Why in the world would God want to love me, I'm so vile, I'm so weak, I'm so filthy, that no one (if they knew what I was really like) would love me?" - then I need to know the permanence of God's love for me. Then the devil assails me, and says, "God's love is changeable; you aren't worthy to be an object of the love of God; you will not remain on His list of chosen ones whom He's going to take to heaven; you never were one of God's chosen ones; you aren't worth it. And then, I fall deeply into some gross sin, and it's confirmed, "God cannot love me any longer, because I did such a miserable thing." Did you ever think that, young people? Maybe you lied to your parents - not just once, not twice, but because the business got messier and messier, and the lies had to get better and better, more blatant and blatant, you lied a dozen times - and you say to yourself, "I can't believe I ever did that." Maybe you committed a sin in connection with your dating; maybe it had to do with your own personal private life. And then the doubts come, and the devil works all the harder, and your own conscience accuses you that you've grossly transgressed the commandments of God and, really, kept none of them - and if God loved you at one time, He loves you no longer.

The Word of God that I bring you this evening is this: If God loved you in the beginning, He will love you to the end: God's love lasts . . . and lasts, and lasts. . . .

THIS TEACHING IS THE REFORMED FAITH.

I want to emphasize this to you, young people. This is your faith. This is the faith of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is the faith you have confessed, or in the future hope to confess. This is the faith most of your parents, I trust, have confessed. This is the faith that your grandparents and great grandparents, and many of our spiritual ancestors died for - the truth of the unchangeable character of the love of God for His people.

Your Reformed confessions teach this. If you remember that election is the eternal setting of His love upon a people, then when we read of election in the Canons of Dort, we can mentally substitute the Word "love" when we read election. Canons I-9: "This election (love) was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election (love) is the fountain of every saving good. . . ." (emphasis mine: BLG). God's love for us is unchangeable because it is unconditional.

Canons I-11: "And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, so the election (love) made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled or annulled; neither can the elect (those whom God loves!!) be cast away, nor their number be diminished."

The is what the PRC stand for - foursquare on this truth.

If you love this truth, you won't

ever leave the PRC for another church that compromises the doctrines of salvation one iota. If you love this truth, if you see the need for the assurance of your salvation, if you want to know that your God, Whose love for you means all the world to you, loves you forever, you will not leave the Protestant Reformed Churches.

You won't leave for a girlfriend or a boyfriend when they say, "But I like my church better than yours; I won't go to your church." You won't leave so that you can get a better job in an area where there isn't a Protestant Reformed Church, or because you want to find a change of scenery. You won't leave to run away from trouble. . . . You will stay in the sound Reformed denomination that reared you, which teaches the sovereignty, the unconditionality, the unchangeable nature of God's love for His people.

I didn't say that you may not leave. That's also true. For God's sake, for the truth of the gospel's sake, and the honor of God's Name Whose truth this is, for obedience to the Scripture which teaches this truth, you may not leave!! But I didn't say that. I said, "If you love this truth, you won't leave. Young people, I am in dead earnest. For the sake of your children, for the sake of the honor of God's name, for the sake of your own personal assurance of salvation, you will remain in the sound Reformed church that guards the permanence of God's love.

THE PERMANENCE OF OUR LOVE

Perhaps you say, "Well, that's all well and good, to say that God's love for His people is a permanent love. I believe that the Bible teaches that once God loves a person, He will love them to the end. My problem is this: I don't know if God loves me!!"

And then I tell you, that that also is connected with the permanence of love, and now, not God's love for you, but your love for God and for your neighbor. You are able to know the love of God for you.

Some deny the possibility of the assurance of God's love, because they don't believe it's God's will that normal church members receive it. There is a branch of the Reformed churches that really teaches her young people that doubt is the normal spiritual condition for church members, and that really encourages their young people to live their whole life with such a doubt that they never can make confession of their faith and never can come to the Lord's table for communion. And they cannot, because they can never be assured of the love of God.

That's really a hideous denial of the purpose of God in the gospel. God does not want His children to live in lifelong doubt. The Bible does not teach that church members who profess to believe the truth, who profess to live a godly life, should live all their life long doubting whether God is their father, and whether they are God's children in Jesus Christ. God wants His people to know His love for them.

You are able to know God's love for you by the love that you have for each other. Let me explain. The love that you have for God and for each other is a permanent love; true, spiritual love, lasts forever.

You can't say that about the other kinds of love that are rightfully found among us. You young people love your parents, I trust. Your parents love you. Maybe there are those of you who date and have said to your boyfriend or girlfriend, "I love you." If you marry, your husband or wife will love you and you will love them with a love that is deep and rich, But that love is not going to last. When you die and go to heaven, you aren't going to love your parents as parents any more.

Our love for each other as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, does. When you die and go to heaven, the love that you have for me as a brother in Christ will still be there. When Jesus comes again and makes all things New, burning up this old world with fire and creating a new heaven and earth, the love that I have for each one of you will still be there. The spiritual love that God's people have for each other, lasts.

This is exactly what the apostle Paul is teaching in that passage that Redlands chose as it's theme text. In verses 8-13, the apostle is speaking of the ever-abiding nature of love. Love never fails. All the other spiritual gifts that the church has - legitimate gifts - fail. But love abides into eternity.

An important implication of this truth is that we must cultivate <u>that</u> love! We are too hesitant to say, "I love you" to anyone except a family member or a boyfriend or girlfriend. We will say to our parents, "I love you dad" or "I love you mom." We will say to that very special person in our lives, after an good number of dates, "I love you." But how ready are we willing to say to each other, "I love you" and mean by that, "As a brother in Jesus Christ, I love you with Christ's love." We ought to learn to speak that way: "I tell you this because I love you as a brother in Christ. . . ."

True love for the brother, and true love for God, lasts.

<u>THAT</u> KIND OF LOVE ASSURES ME OF GOD'S LOVE FOR ME

If spiritual love lasts, and that love is in my heart, then my heart will last into eternity - I will not die.

That's Scriptural. In John 16:27 Jesus says, "For the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." What Christ has in mind here is the <u>evidence</u> that God loves us. What He is teaching here is the <u>way</u> in which the poor, struggling soul of the Christian can be sure that the Father loves him. Christ certainly does not mean to be teaching here that God's love for us <u>depends</u> on our love for Jesus and our belief in Jesus Christ, although our love for Jesus and our belief in Jesus are first, and only then does God cause His love to rest on us. God loves us because of His own free choice, as we saw from Deuteronomy. God loved us from eternity when we were still in our sins, enemies of God, hating Jesus. But the Lord teaches us the <u>way</u> in which <u>we</u> can know that the Father loves <u>us:</u> by our love for Him.

In Galatians 5:4 Paul says, "Faith worketh by love." What the apostle is saying here is that we're saved by faith, and by faith alone. But that faith, by which we are saved, and if we have which our eternal life is assured, that faith

always works by love. Love for God and love for the neighbor, which is the summary of the whole law. And if you have that love for God and for the neighbor, you have faith.

This, too, is the Reformed faith. For the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that by our love, which is the shiniest and ripest "fruit of faith" (see Mast. 22:37-40), "every one may be assured in himself of his faith. . . ." (see Lord's Day 32). (See also the Canons of Dort, Head V, article 10.)

Now, most often this doesn't come about in a formal exercise of logical reasoning from premise to conclusion. It usually doesn't happen that you sit down at the end of the day and say, "Well, let's see, there was this good work in my life, and I did this today and I didn't do that, and therefore I conclude tonight before I go to bed that I am a believer and I'm saved." Usually it doesn't go that way. It can happen, though, like that. It can happen for a deeply troubled child of God who doubts his own salvation often. Then he better sit down and ask himself some serious questions about his relationship towards God and his neighbor.

But usually it goes like this: almost unconsciously, walking in the way of God's commandment, we are assured of our faith and of our salvation. And the more we love God, and the more we love our neighbor with the true, spiritual love of Jesus, the more we know, "I am a child of God."

If you are one who is struggling with the certainly of God's love for you; if you even for a long time now have had doubts whether you are a child of God, let me ask you some questions. Do you love Jesus? Do you love the Jesus set forth in Scripture? Do you love Him in His truth of salvation? "Ah," you say, "I don't love Him like I should; but I can't deny that I love Him." Do you believe that Jesus came into the world from God? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by God to deliver His people from death and hell? You say, "I don't believe Him like I should, but I don't deny Him. yes, I believe that Jesus came forth from God."

Do you love your brother? Do you desire that he's forgiven of his sins, that God works everything out for good for him? "Oh," you say, "sometimes I hate my brother and wish evil in his life; but then I hate myself for hating him, because I know I should love him, and I really do, deep down love him, even though I'm afraid to tell him that."

Well, you people, then you have it, from Jesus' own lips, Who cannot lie: The Father Himself loves you; the Father Himself loves you personally (John 16:27).

Now, there is no assurance of God's love if I cannot say, "I love the brother." But what a wonderful thing when I can feel in my heart about a brother or sister in Jesus Christ who hurt me, hurt me badly, did me wrong, "Although he wronged me, I still believe that he's a brother in Christ, and I wish him good; I pray for him that he will repent and turn from his evil ways: I love him in Jesus Christ."

The world can't do that; the unregenerated heart won't do that; the unbeliever knows nothing about that, because he has no love of God in his heart. God doesn't love him.

But I love my brother with the

love of God in my heart. By this in part I know that God loves me. And if He loves me now, He will love me into the eons of eternity.

OF A DIFFERENT KIND . . .

by J. P. de Klerk

Nola had looked forward to the end of the chilly winter half way into her first year of marriage. Therefore she was glad, that she and her husband were going to spend some early Springtime days with a former school friend and her husband, who owned a luxurious beach house.

What a pity, neither of them were real Christians. Previously Nola had talked to Diane about this on several occasions, but Diane had always quickly brought the conversation to a conclusion with a funny remark.

Perhaps this time Nola would succeed. John, her husband, thought the four of them should try to come to an open-hearted exchange of thoughts. After all, they were not backward and the father of Diane's husband had been a minister in their church - it should be possible to reason with David. . . .

With mixed feelings Nola pulled the front door shut behind her. John quickly took a photo of her, before they stepped into the new Volvo; he was a successful architect. The sky was clouded and the wind was a Northerly, and the weather bureau had said that it would be a fine day. Nola wondered if it would be fine in every respect. . . . Sheep and cows everywhere grazed peacefully. She saw farmers busy plowing their land; there were fruit trees in full bloom. As they passed a wide river she got a fine view of the pasture lands.

When they reached the beach house, they found that David and Diane had already set the table for lunch and there was a smell of bacon and eggs. The guest room, which looked out over the sea, was filled with the smell of freshly picked narcissus and daffodils.

That afternoon the four of them went for a long walk along the sea, but suddenly a cold south-wester sprung up, and John caught a cold. Later that night, the soup that Diane had made with a lot of leek and capsicum did him no good. During the night he had to go to the lavatory frequently. . .

The next day it was Sunday. John and Nola had two carefully chosen church services on tape with them, but when Nola put one in the tape recorder David and Diane exchanged looks and said

they would sooner prefer to explore a piece of coastline where they had never been before.

"Whereabouts is that?", inquired Nola casually, but her face showed disappointment.

"About fifteen kilometers from here, next to the estuary. We have heard there is a small island of rocks and sand, where young seals go sunbathing. We will go in the jeep", Diane said.

"But that area is a swamp. It will be flooded at high tide. . . . Stay on and listen with us to the sermon. You will find it quite interesting", pleaded Nola trying to persuade them to change their mind. . . .

"You mean, that is what the Sunday is for", said David grinningly.

"You have had a Christian education. You should be a witness for the Lord", observed Nola, tapping him on the shoulder.

John only looked at them and listened, a blanket wrapped round him, sitting in an easy chair, feeling too miserable to take part in the conversation.

David and Diane left, throwing shells at each other and carelessly laughing, just like little children. They jumped into the jeep outside and roared away over the wet sand and driftwood. . . .

At noon they were not yet back. Also not at two o'clock. At three John said: "This is ridiculous. It will soon be high tide. If they are still over there, they will get into trouble. It is not yet holiday time; at the height of the season they have look-outs and life savers on watch, but now there is nobody at all".

"I could go with our car and have a look", suggested Nola.

"Perhaps they will think our anxiety is exaggerated, but suppose they have forgotten how the time is going, they will soon discover they have a problem. The current is strong. If I were not as sick as a dog I would go. . . . Yes, you take the car, and don't forget the binoculars, and take that coil of rope of his with you that is lying next to his boat; it may be just what you need there", answered John.

Nola drove the car over the slipway to the beach and saw at once, that strip of wet sand had become more narrow. . . . "Lord, protect all of us", she prayed and pushed down the accelerator. . . .

The first thing she saw when she had reached the estuary, was the jeep of David. Through the binoculars she watched what was going on on the island. Several seals were returning to the water, but David and Diane were standing in the midst of a bunch of others and big penguins. They were feeding them pieces of fish, which they obviously had taken with them. The distance was too large for trying to attract attention by shouting. In several places boulders were protruding above the water between the beach and the island. There were also some tree trunks. If she would take the rope with her and if she went immediately, she would be able to reach the pair in time. . . .

She decided that she had no time to lose. She threw her coat off and kicked off her shoes. Fortunately the sun was shining. She put her hand and her right arm through the coil of rope, which weighed heavily on her left shoulder. She ran into the cold sea and tried to jump from one stone on to the other but the tree trunks were greasy and she fell twice into waist

deep water. . . .

Soon she heard the noise made by the seals and the laughter of Diane, because the wind brought them to her. . . . When she was close to the island she fell again and this time she went head under for a moment. She gave a yell so that David and Diane heard her. . . . Nola said nothing but threw the coil of rope in their direction. She pointed at her watch and to the beach. The three of them fastened the rope on themselves and went back jumping and helping each other up again - only a few tops of the boulders were yet visible in the foaming sea water. Hovering above their heads were some noisy sea gulls. . . .

As soon as they had reached the jeep David threw the rope in the back. Nola went back into the Volvo, and both cars roared back to the beach house. . . .

After they had spruced themselves up, with dry clothes on, they drank coffee and David caught John's reproachful eye. He hesitated a moment, looked at Diane, and said:"We offer our apologies. We have treated you badly. . . . It is also meant for us that we should be of a different kind, separate from the world. . . . We have made fools of ourselves. . . . You were right. . . . Tonight we want to listen with you to that other sermon you have with you."

Nola smiled. . . .

LIVING BELOW THE MASON - DIXON LINE

by S. Hoven

It's a Friday afternoon here in Georgia - about 3:15 or so. School is finally out for the day. And all the teachers are breathing sighs of relief. No doubt that's pretty much the way things are where you are also. However, some things are definitely different and I thought I'd fill you in on a couple of them.

People always ask me if I like living in the south - the heart of Dixie - and they always seem a bit incredulous when I answer in the affirmative. Of course, there are differences, some more obvious than others, but that only serves to add to the charm (and sometimes frustration) of being a transplanted "Yankee".

Probably the most obvious difference is the accent - that slow Southern drawl is sometimes hard to understand. Even after living here for two years and being consistently surrounded by folks who speak with it, I still have trouble with some of the words. Of course, that works two ways; they don't always understand what I'm saying either. I call those carbonated drinks "pop" and everyone else calls them "soda". I have whole days where I must repeat every-

thing I said because no one understood a word I said the first time.

A less obvious difference is the pace of life here in the South. You've heard the phrase, "Take time to smell the flowers", haven't you? Not only do Southerners take time to smell the flowers, they take the time to plant their own! ! ! ! ! Summers are long and warm and folks like to sit on the front porch, sip lemonade, and talk.

I live in the rural South where everyone knows everyone and their families. Speaking of families, they are very important. Folks visit their "kin" and keep in close touch. Along similar lines, church attendance is common. I teach at a small public high school and the vast majority of the students here are active in their church. That includes worship services (Sunday A.M. , P.M. and Wed. evening), youth groups, Sunday School, and choir.

Another noticeable difference here in the South is the courtesy men of all ages extend to women of all ages. If I am walking across campus with one of the male students and we come to a door, I never have to open it. The guys always open the door and wait for me to go in first. That is normal behavior for most of the guys on this campus and in this area. I bet right now all you guys are thinking "wait a minute, that's not such a big deal. I always open doors for my dates." Right? In the interests of fairness, let me further point out that this happens all the time, not just on dates. It is, however, the attitude toward these little courtesies that makes all the difference. When these guys open a door or carry a chair or do whatever for the "weaker sex" it is a natural sort of action - not something they do as if to say, "aren't you impressed with how polite I am?"

Guys are not the only ones who are polite, however. The student body as a whole is a polite bunch of kids. "Yes, Ma'am" and "No, sir" are common replies to questions asked by anyone older than the students - parents, teachers, coaches, salespeople, etc. It is something that I have found is very easy to get used to and I appreciate it very much.

In some ways life here is much the same as it is where you are. My students complain about having too much homework, too many tests, and not enough time, as I imagine you do. They like to play football and basketball and baseball and almost every other kind of sport. They have school spirit and classes they don't like. And, like you, they all look forward to the day when they can get that all important driver's license. But for all those similarities, there are some very real differences that can only be appreciated by living here in the heart of Dixie.

CREATION

God's creation so fine and true
As the sky so fair and blue
A bird in the sky you see
God gave this creation to undeserving me.

by Chad Engelsma

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8
LETTER #10
God Plans Opposites At Perfect Times

by Mrs. H. Brands

I know this letter will be long enough just covering today's material and so I'll get right down into the heart of today's Bible study: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Since I already introduced the idea of the section in the last letter, I'll assume this letter is a continuation of that one and not introduce the idea again, right?

(3:1) "To everything there is a season,and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

I sometimes express this idea like this: God is making sure every possible circumstance occurs so that in eternity no one can say there was something necessary omitted in history. To the world, God will give every possible opportunity to sin. For his children, God will provide every possible temptation to sin and every possible way of suffering so that it is clear that His grace will always triumph in our lives. Everything that occurs is necessary in His perfect and complete plan of the ages!

(3:2) "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant,and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

Just as we accept birth as being God's gift to us, so also we must accept death as being perfectly under God's control and equally for our blessing. In a later passage of ECCLESIASTES, Solomon will even instruct us that the day of one's death is, in certain ways, better than the day of one's birth! It is of more profit!

It is easy to see that life and death are totally in God's sovereign hands but...all the rest of the things mentioned in this list seem smaller, like things we control. By faith alone we realize that these smaller choices are also under God's rule and that we must submit to that rule to receive His blessing in our labor. We must even plant our seed or pull out our plants according to His timing of these things!

(3:3a) "A time to kill, and a time to heal;"

This is not speaking of euthanasia, for sure! Nor is this speaking of any form of wicked murder. Rather, in history, due to sin, a Christian must kill in times of war as well as for justice to avenge criminal sin. "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6).

(3:3b) "A time to break down,

and a time to build up;"

Many things may need breaking down: houses, cities, nations, bad friendships, or anything at all when it is earning judgment and wrath (Matthew Henry here). But if there is repentance, then the time comes to build these same things back up with tenderness and patience.

(4) "A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;"

God calls us first to sober reflection on life and out of such proper sobriety will also arise joyfulness. All circumstances of testing and danger and trouble and death lead us to see our human depravity and to weep and mourn. But when God comforts us and leads us to see His salvation in these things, then He also gives us joy which causes heartfelt singing and laughing and "dancing."

This kind of dancing, of course, has nothing in common with the modern, sex-centered dance. It is the spontaneous leaping of joy by one who is overwhelmed with the praise of God.

(5a) "A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;"

Here in Minnesota, and even more so in Wisconsin, we know well what it is to walk the fields and remove stones which pop up every year but don't belong there! (I recall one young man in Wisconsin insisting that "stones grow" because every year he could see them coming up all over again.) We also throw stones—or anything else, for that matter—away if they are useless in anyplace. But we gather them together for any needful purpose: sometimes merely to study them but usually to use for such purposes as jewelry, building walls or dams, landscaping or architecture.

(5b) "A time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing"

Embracing is proper in any faithful expression of honorable friendship but improper when that friendship is no longer trustworthy or when there is any public feeling that supercedes the friendship. It is obviously proper to embrace when meeting a family member or when married. It is also obviously improper to be embracing at a funeral or even in any public service.

(6) "A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;"

Whenever God gives us anything (friends, children, spouse, money, things, wisdom, knowledge, love...), it is the time to get it. When God takes it away, we must lose it and willingly give it up, laying all on the altar of love for Him.

(7a) "A time to rend, and a time to sew;"

Garments were to be rent in olden days as tokens of grief. Later they were sewn back up when the grief was over. This can be applied figuratively to many situations.

(7b) "A time to keep silence and a time to speak;"

We have to learn when to keep quiet and when to speak up! It takes God's grace to learn this. Our hearts must always learn to "keep silence" before every Word of God, whether in worship services or in any other hearing of His voice or even in hearing His voice in nature or through events. Once this Word humbles us, we must in responsive meekness speak that same Word wherever God calls us to speak it, applying it to all of our lives.

(8a) "A time to love, and a time to hate;"

We must love all that is of God and hate all that opposes Him. This love-hate antithesis is true first of all towards ourselves, for we must hate our old nature of sin but love all that God works within us according to His Word. This love and hatred then unfolds also in the same way in our relationships with everyone else: if they are showing responsiveness to God, we love that; if they display hatred towards God and break His commandments, we must have nothing to do with that but rather rebuke it. We must love righteousness and hate sin, always!

(8b) "A time of war, and a time of peace."

Because of sin, God sends His judgments in wars and rumors of wars, which are a fact of all earthly history and which we must accept. But God also ends these wars for short periods of time to remind us of our hope for a final, lasting peace in eternity, in Christ.

As we said in the last letter, wisdom on our part is to seek to "redeem the time, for the days are evil". May God grant us contentment with His rule and wisdom to discern His will.

Letter #10. Theme: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8:

"God Plans Opposites at Perfect Times"

1. Restate 3: I In your own words. This is an amazing thought. Do you believe it?

2. a. What does it mean to "pluck up"?

b. How does God control the time for planting and harvesting? Apply GENESIS 8:22,

c. What does 3:2a have to say about "birth control"? Anything?

3. a. What is meant by "a time to heal"?

b. How do the two halves of 3:3 fit together?

4. Some people deny that it is proper to express our emotions. What does verse 4 say about this?

5. When is it right and when is it wrong to embrace? To what extent is this "Christian liberty"?

6. What are the things which verse six says we "get . . . lose . . . keep, and . . . cast away"?

7. How could anyone non-sinfully tear things up?

8. Show that we usually "keep silence" and "speak" just the opposite of when we should.

9 What must we love and what must we hate?

10. Is 3:8b limited to the wars of nations?

GOD'S CREATION

When I think of God's creation,
I think of pure, gentle, streams,
Graceful swans and their young swim,
Thin, tall, green trees of all sorts,
But most of all, without fail,
I think of our wonderful God,
Who created each and every detail.

by Dan Boone

In beloved memory of Katie Brummel

(October 9, 1989 - April 2, 1990)

by Angie Schipper

There's a highchair in the corner
With a bib on the back
There's a spoon in the drawer
And a diaper bag in that room.

All these have and never will be used again
For she died.
I cried when I heard she'd never be here
But there were reasons:

God had decided that it was her turn
God had decided and it was His will
God had decided and we must obey
God had decided and we must understand

She is in heaven now
Where we will be soon.
God love her
'Cause we love her too.