BEACON LIGHTS

BY PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

"So I want to ask each of you a question this morning: How hard of a worker are you? I mean spiritually. How hard do you work at your spiritual life? How much toil, how much bood, sweat, and tears do you put into your spiritual lives with a view to the end? Are you a spiritual sluggard who needs to be taken by the hand and led to consider the ant? Or are you busy toiling (just as those ants with that lizard straining themselves to their limits), laboring for that rest which is promised us when the end comes?"

From "Living With A View To The End"
by Rev. Bruinsma

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EDITOR'S NOTES NOVEMBER 1991

by David Harbach

The staff hopes that you enjoy the new cover, size, and layout of the Beacon Lights. These changes have been made after much thought and discussion. We have consulted our typesetter and printer for their opinions and received their approval for these changes. Likewise the Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies has also approved the changes. We are saving one step in the printing process by having our printer, Mr. Jim Huizinga, print the whole cover. We hope that the changes will serve to encourage Reformed young people to read our publication.

The second of the Young People's Convention speeches is found in this issue. Rev. Bruinsma spoke on "Living With A View to the End." As Rev. Bruinsma puts it best, "What does 'considering the toil of an ant' have to do with living with a view to the end of time?. In light of this, it is our calling in life to be as the ant, that is, to labor and toil to enter into the rest of heaven." This excellent speech considers two aspects of living with a view to the end: living is laboring, and the labors we perform. Read and enjoy!

"Singing A New Song To Jehovah" reminds us of Psalter number 261 based on Psalm 98.

"Sing a new song to Jehovah For the wonders He hath wrought;

His right hand and arm most holy Triumph to His cause have brought.

In His love and tender mercy He hath made salvation known,

In the sight of ev'ry nation He His righteousness hath shown."

How often do you sing these words and other Psalter numbers during the week? Rev. Heys encourages us to sing the songs of Zion as young people of God. The love Rev. Heys has for the Psalter is also shown in his love for the words to the Lord's Prayer which Rev. Heys put to music and which is now Psalter #433.

Steve Lotterman takes a close look at being a servant of God. He answers such questions as, What images come to mind when you think of servants? How Is it possible for us to serve God? Can we be content to serve Him simply by doing His will and living as witnesses of his grace?

Thank you, Steve, for giving us the answers to these questions and others in your article you sent to the B.L._We hope Steve's example will encourage others to write an article for Reformed young people without being asked to write.

Lora gives us the latest in Church News sent to her. Thank you, Lora, for keeping us abreast of church life.

I found a poem in my files titled "A Pastoral Prayer." I am going to attribute this poem to Rev. Harbach, although his name was not on it.

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From The Pastor's Study

SINGING A NEW SONG TO JEHOVAH

by Rev. John A. Heys

There is, young people, a very interesting, and extremely important question that must be answered by all of us. By all means in the days when we are young men and women, but also when we were children, and all through our lives as adult confessing members of God's church, we are confronted with a very awesome and very important question.

That question is this: How many times from Monday through Saturday do you, if not with your lips, but by all means with your heart, sing the words which we find in our Psalter - songs based very strictly on the Psalms, wherein truth is presented to us by our God?

Do you instead, and because of your flesh, prefer listening to the junk noise the world calls music? Do you enjoy the jazzy songs which the world composed and sings? Or do you with the Psalter number presentation of Psalm 96 "Sing a new song to Jehovah For the wonders He has wrought"? And what about Psalter number 259, which is also based on Psalm 96? There we sing: "Sing to the Lord, sing His praise, all ye peoples, New be your song as new honors ye pay; Sing of His majesty, bless Him forever, Show His salvation from day to day."

The sad thing is that in many churches today, and by those who call themselves Gospel Singers, they go with the world in its rock and roll, banging and slamming noise that they call music. Surely our God did not enjoy such noise, but it is Satan who brought into this world that which leads men farther and farther from God's praise. He causes men to appeal to the flesh of other men, rather than to lead them in the way of sanctification of their souls. There really is no reverence and awe before our God, and His Son, our Savior, in that singing, even when the words are the truth of God's word.

Take note of what we read in Ephesia 5:17-20, where Paul wrote, "Wherefore be ye r unwise, but understanding what the will of t Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherei excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speakin yourselves in psalms and hymns and spirit songs, singing and making melody in y hearts to the Lord; Giving thanks for all thi unto God and the Father in the name of our Jesus Christ."

Now, indeed, you may prefer the melod one Psalter number, rather than of another t expresses the same truth. Thus in Psalter nu bers 262 and 263 we have the same words ba on Psalm 98, and found in both Psalter numb 262 and 263. The same is true of that which w sing from Psalm 80 in the first three stanzas number 220, and the three complete stanzas number 221.

Look up Psalm 126:1, 2 where we re "When the Lord turned again the captivity Zion, we were like them that dream. Then w our mouth filled with laughter, and our tong with singing: then said they among the heath The Lord hath done great things for us; whe we are glad."

What then about your Sundays? Do you si with your heart, and with enthusiasm and joy Or merely out of custom and habit? Music is beautiful and wonderful creation of our God, and you may prefer one melody more than the other. Thus also God created us with preference for on color above another, and the taste of this foo above that of another kind of food. But the abso lute requirement is that we sing God's prai singing also of your needs and desire for spiritu al things. Be sure, regardless of what melody you prefer, that you sing the truth, and sing it with your soul.

Do you, young people, sing the truth with enthusiasm? Sad to say I often see lips that barely open, and often that there are those who do not sing one word of the song, ordered because it touches so richly the truth in the sermon that is coming, or has been preached. And I do not merely mean you young people. Sometimes children will be singing enthusiastically - maybe because they like the music. But they do reveal what our calling is. And even if your voices are not always what men call pleasing, and not considered to be what flesh calls beautiful music, be sure that it is your heart that is singing, and is pleasing in our God's ears. Never mind what people think of your singing. The question is whether you are singing that which pleases our God, and whether the truth is willingly coming out of your heart. What God thinks of the words which we sing in our hearts is what counts.

What we sing, as pointed out a moment ago, and whether we sing a new song to Jehovah. Take hold, young people, of that truth that God's elect, sanctified children sing a new song. We sing, by God's grace, that which Adam and Eve could not yet sing before they fell into sin. And we sing, through the wonder of God's grace, what Israel could not sing after Adam's fall into sin. We sing of what God did for us in Christ and His cross and Spirit. We sing a new song for the wonders God has wrought through His Son. And we sing requesting what by nature we cannot sing and do not want to sing. We do not sing what the old man of sin sings for and about. We sing what by God's grace is new in our lives, causing us to be thankful for our salvation, and because we desire blessings that by nature we do not and cannot want. We sing of the wonders God has wrought, and because he wrought this for us and in us.

Now music, as pointed out, is a wonderful invention and gift of our God. But it is not, in the children of God's lives, as important as the words and truth in the spiritual songs. Thus also we read in Ephesians 5:19, 20, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And if we enjoy the singing of soloists, those singing in duets, quartets, and by all means in choirs, the words must be more enjoyable and interesting to us than the music. Our flesh can enjoy the music, but what counts is whether our souls enjoy the truth that is being sung. Are we praying with our souls, when we sing the truth in Psalter number 140?, namely, "God be merciful to me, On Thy grace I rest my plea; Plenteous in compassion Thou, Blot out my transgressions now; Wash me, make me pure within, Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin."

In connection with this call to sing a new song to Jehovah, I would like to present to you young people that which you probably do not know. There is sad evidence that now and then our churches do not walk in the spiritual life which was ours in the past. In the past our churches took the proper and spiritually awesome stand that we must not clap our hands to show appreciation for the music - not the words - which soloists, quartets or choirs sing of the truth in Scripture. The main, awesome and spiritually correct point is that we must enjoy the truth which was sung, not the music. We must praise God after hearing His truth sung to us, praise Him from Whom all blessings flow, not the person or persons who sang it.

Yes, I know, and want to call attention to the fact that we do read in Psalm 47:1 of the clapping of our hands. There we read: "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." But note that fact that we are called to clap our hands because of what God did; and we are to clap our hands before HIM, not before those who sang words of His praises. UNTO GOD we must clap our hands, not to those who did the singing. We must praise God, and not tell men that they presented some music that our flesh enjoyed. It is the triumph of God, not the beautiful music which men presented to us, that calls us to clap our hands before God, and not for the praise of those who sang.

We begin our church services, always singing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." That means that we do not praise men for what they did musically but not spiritually. If we merely enjoy the music, we ought to weep after clapping our hands, because we experienced delight about the music rather than the truth sung. We have revealed our enjoyment of music, not of our God's wonderful works and grace in Christ.

It is, as the psalmist presents it; the triumph of what God did, not man. It is before our God that we clap, because we enjoy the truth of His work of grace. Clapping then must not be telling people that we enjoyed what they did, and leaving our blessed, gracious God pushed into the background. Imagine that! Placing men before God, upon Whom they depend for every breath of life and talent in singing!

We must always sing a new song to Jehovah, and praise Him for the wonderful salvation of which men sang. Our chief joy must not be because of what man did, but what our God does through His Son and Spirit.

That also means that when we sing a solo, or in a choir, we present CLEARLY and DISTINCTLY that which is sung, so that the truth which we sing can be heard and understood, and our audience can be moved to praise God and clap their hands before Him, not before the audience or singers.

In Psalter number 85 we find this wonderful truth:

Ye righteous in the Lord rejoice;
Tis comely that with joyful voice
God's saints His name should praise.
With harp and hymn of gladness sing,
Your gift of sweetest music bring,
To Him a new song raise.

Here in Psalm 33 the psalmist tells us to rejoice in the Lord, when men sing about His works. It is comely, that is, pleasing and beautiful to praise God, and to clap our hands BEFORE HIM, not before men and for what men did.

Praise God from Whom ALL blessings flow.

A PASTORAL PRAYER

0 Shepherd-Lord of rod and staff,
Before thee now we bleat and pray,
Who are the creatures of thy fold,
That thou wilt bring us forth today.
Thou Shepherd, whose strong voice we know,
0 guide and lead us in the way
Beside the still, reflective pool,
In sunlit fields to feed and play.

There is no shepherd like to thee
Come quiet in the dawning morn:
The one clothed in a shepherd's cloak,
The fleece of foolish wool has worn.
That we as sheep might each be called
Thou as a poor, dumb sheep wast shorn.
That he might know our every need,
Our Shepherd-King a lamb was born.

We are so weak and helpless, Lord;
Before thee now, true sheep are we:
Either to bump them or to stray,
These woolly heads do foolishly.
0 thou, who art to us as God,
Do thou in need our helper be.
Come, seek the straying, find the lost,
And gently lead them back to thee.

From butting with the horn of pride
Stay with thy rod the haughty rams;
From foolish bleating and from fear
Lead with thy staff the mothered dams;
And in the shelter of thy arms
Bring back the capering, lost lambs;
That we one flock and fold may be,
All named, all gathered by thy hands.

0 thou, who art the fold's strong door
And circling wall on Zion's height,
By day preserve our going out
And show us forth with truth and light.
From wolves, from shades of fear and doul
A strong protector be by night.
As guard and watch 'neath sun and moon
So let us hear thy voice of might.

Our bleating is but poor return
For all that thou with power divine,
Dost do for us, who many a day
Forgetting thee, in hunger pine.
So often huddled in distress
We have forgotten we are thine.
Thou Shepherd-King, of strength and song
0 let us hear, "These sheep are mine."

Convention Speech

LIVING WITH A VIEW TO THE END

by Rev. W. Bruinsma

While working in my study one day in Jamaica my children came in all excited. They took me by the arm and dragged me into the backyard in order to show me something they had discovered. We had an old rundown fire pit there with gaps, holes and chips in the mortar joints between the bricks. Inside the walls of that pit through a hole about a quarter inch around a colony of ants had made their nest.

On this particular morning these ants were performing a most amazing feat. Hundreds of them had filed out of their nest in their little column and were now busy carrying upon their backs a dead lizard about six inches long. My children and I were convinced that these ants had taken on a task far too large for them to accomplish. They would never be able to scale the wall of that fire pit bearing the weight of their burden. And surely they would never fit that large lizard through that quarter inch hole that led to their nest. As you may already realize, we were grossly mistaken.

The ants slowly but surely began to carry that lizard up the wall not dropping him even once. They labored hard and long. They toiled: they pushed, they pulled, they called in recruits. If they had been human I would have said that they were sweating in the heat of the day. Eventually they hoisted that lizard to the hole which led to their nest.

This was going to be interesting! I was certain they would never succeed. For the longest time that lizard went round and round the opening until I grew weary of watching. I felt they had been defeated so I returned to my study and work. About fifteen minutes later the kids came and hauled me back out to the fire pit. I was just in time to see the tail of the lizard disappear into that quarter inch hole. They had actually done it! They had labored and toiled until they had stored up their precious treasure in their nest!

When I returned to my study again I could not help but look up that passage in Proverbs 6:6-11, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; and consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth and thy want as an armed man." How those ants had toiled and worked for their treasure! How they had laid up in store with a view to that time when their eggs would hatch and their young would need food! What a lesson a lazy man or woman who felt that everything ought to be handed to them on a silver platter could learn!

Now, you may be thinking by now: "But what in the world does this have to do with the subject this morning? What does considering the toil of the ant have to do with living with a view to the end of time?" But when we apply the example of the ant to our spiritual lives rather than our earthly we will see the connection. We live very near to the end of this world. We have already found that out in the previous speech. In light of this, it is our calling in life to be as the ant, that is, to labor and toil to enter into the rest of heaven. We must labor by laying up for ourselves treasures for that time to come - treasures in heaven.

That takes work! That takes spiritual labor!

There is no time in our lives, therefore, to be spiritual sluggards, to be spiritually lazy. If we are, then when the end comes we will be left with

nothing!

It is this example of the ant, then, that we turn for a few moments this morning as we consider how we must live with a view to the end.

LIVING WITH A VIEW TO THE END

LIVING IS LABORING. Living is laboring. Life is work. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin this has been the case. The earth was cursed for man's sake, and God informed Adam that if he were at all to get ahead in life he would have to labor by the sweat of his face. And man has done so ever since. Our parents are where they are today because they have worked for it. God's law tells us, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work," and that in order that we might enter into the rest of the the Sabbath on the seventh day. We sing also in Psalm 126:5-6, "The sower bearing precious seed may weep as in his toil he grieves, but he will come again with joy in harvest time with golden sheaves."

Living is laboring. We must work for what we receive. And if we do not, if we are lazy and sit back simply expecting our food and raiment and shelter to fall into our laps we will be sorely disappointed. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come," Solomon tells us. Or again as Solomon writes in Proverbs 20:4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."

Living is not fun and games. No doubt we have heard that from our parents many times. God did not place us on this earth to have fun. Life does not center in fun. That does not mean that a man cannot enjoy the fruit of his labors. That does not mean that there can be no time for recreation. If that were true then our conventions would be taboo. Nevertheless, fun and recreation must be kept to a minimum if we are to expect to get anywhere in this life.

The same is true from a spiritual point of view. Our spiritual life is also one of labor. It is work. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 4:11 that we must "labor to enter into that rest" that awaits us in heaven. This is a command: our spiritual life must be that of labor and toil. There is no room for spiritual laziness in this life, lest we find ourselves in spiritual poverty, and when Christ comes we will receive nothing of the riches of heaven. And that is especially true of you and me, young people, who live so very, very close to the end of time. You and I are laboring on the sixth day of the week and there is much to accomplish before the Sabbath comes. You and I are not sowing, but harvesting, and the winter is right around the corner! WE of all people ought to be busy spiritually. The day is [illegible] spent and the night comes wherein no man c[illegible] labor.

So I want to ask each of you a question th[illegible] morning: "How hard of a worker are you?" [illegible] mean spiritually. How hard do you work at your spiritual life? How much toil, how much blood, sweat, and tears do you put into your spiritual lives with a view to the end? Are you a spiritual sluggard who needs to be taken by the hand an[illegible] led to consider the ant? Or are you busy toiling (just as those ants with that lizard straining themselves to their limits), laboring for that rest which is promised us when the end comes?

To answer that question we must know the nature of this work we are called to perform. What kind of work are we to perform from a spiritual point of view which truly constitutes labor? Well, consider the ant again. What labor doe[illegible] she perform? Her efforts are expended on layin[illegible] up in store food for herself and her larvae. S[illegible] lays up in store treasure for the time to come[illegible] And so must we. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:[illegible] 20, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upo[illegible] earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and[illegible] where thieves break through and steal: but lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth no[illegible] rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do nor[illegible] break through and steal." According to what Jesus tells us, you and I ought to be busy laying up in store all kinds of spiritual treasures in heaven; not on earth, of course, as we are so apt to do, but in heaven.

And that is but reasonable too, is it not? The end of all things is at hand! The end of our houses, our lands, our possessions, our earthly relationships, our position in life. And just as this is true so also is it true that the kingdom of heaven is at hand! That is what is true of the end when Jesus comes. For that reason we ought to be laying up treasures in heaven because it soon will be our eternal dwelling place.

There are many treasures that can be laid up too. There are many labors we can perform right now as far as our spiritual lives are concerned which will profit us when we enter into the kingdom of heaven. These are not easy labors. They are work. They take up our time and talents. But they are necessary labors - labors which if you and I do not perform them will result in spiritual poverty. They are labors which if not performed diligently will result in our receiving nothing when Christ comes in the harvest of this world.

THE LABORS WE PERFORM. The character of our spiritual labor Peter explains to us in II Peter 3:11, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons

ght ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." What we are interested in is the last part of this verse which tells us that the lives of those who are looking for the end must be characterized by a holy conversation and godliness. These are, from a general point of view, what our spiritual labors ought to be.

We must labor in our lives to be godly, first of all. This means the deep love, respect, and fear for God we have been given by God's grace must be cultivated in our lives. We must use every means available to become pious and godly people. We are not satisfied with just some superficial outward show of spirituality in our lives. We are not interested only in pleasing man by our outward actions. We are not interested in looking good on the outside. But we toil to love God and fear him in our hearts. That is what God looks at, after all. He is interested in hearts filled with the fear of His name. And if we are going to enter into the joy of His rest then we must labor diligently in the fear of God. We must cultivate our knowledge of God and His commandments, we must have a deep understanding of our sin, and we must acknowledge in our hearts the deep need we have for the cross of Jesus Christ. How hard have you labored to be a young person characterized by godliness?

And how hard have you labored to be characterized as well by a holy conversation? By conversation the Bible refers to our entire walk of life. It refers not only to things we say, but also the things we do and the places we desire to go. A child of God who is looking for Christ to come soon must also labor in this way. He must labor diligently to walk a new and holy life in the midst of this wicked world. He must fight against his old man of sin within him which is so attracted to the ways of the wicked. He must avoid those places where he knows he might be tempted to walk in a way that is contrary to the commandments of the God whom he fears.

On the other hand, he must cling to the cross of Christ in faith. Only as he labors to live near the cross will he be able to bring forth good works in his life. All this is involved in walking in all holy conversation.

All this is spiritual work. It is toil. It is hard labor. I know this is not easy. It is a whole lot easier to be a spiritual sluggard! It is a whole lot easier to slide along without putting much work into our spiritual lives. And it is so easy to think that we have plenty of time later on in life to worry about spiritual labor. Right now it is time for fun! Christ tarries. The end is not here yet. I will work harder later on in my life.

So we grow rather comfortable, we close our eyes, we fold our hands on our chest and relax. Before we know it we are fast asleep. And as we doze off we comfortably reason to ourselves, "I am a young person, and, after all, spiritual labor, spiritual maturity is not yet required of me.

Then the end comes! Suddenly - as a thief in the night!

And we are suddenly awakened from our spiritual lethargy only to realize that we have been lazy. And there is nothing that awaits us in the end. The doors of the kingdom of heaven are shut to us just as they were to the five foolish virgins who were too lazy to put oil in their lamps. Ah, if only we had worked at our spiritual lives!

And we can! We can labor at a holy conversation and godliness. I know you can because most of you know what it is to work. I am sure that most of you hold down some sort of job. And I am sure that you work hard at those jobs. You know what work is. But I am certain that you can work spiritually especially because you are children of God! God has sent forth His Spirit into your hearts. And that Spirit has applied to you as well as me the benefits of the work Jesus has performed on the cross. Christ has justified us and gained for us the forgiveness of sins. God has through His shed blood adopted us to be His very own children.

And more, as the Spirit of Christ dwells in us we are sanctified, and therefore also able to live a new and holy life. We have the desire implanted in us to serve God. That means we have the desire to labor diligently to enter into the kingdom of heaven. WE look for and long for the coming of Christ and the end of the world. We understand and believe that the elements will burn with a fervent heat. We believe that we have no abiding place here. And it is because of this work of salvation God has wrought in us we receive the command, "Labor to enter into this rest! Labor in all holy conversation and godliness!"

In order to attain unto such godliness and holy conversation in our lives I want to place before you now three concrete and vital labors you must be involved in right now.

First of all, you must be working at knowing your Bibles. You must discipline yourselves in Bible study. This is not a task reserved only for scholars. But it does take discipline on our part - a necessary discipline. You can discipline yourselves by concentrating hard on the sermons preached for you on Sundays. This means being there for them, both of them. This means as well making sure you are not out so late on Saturday night you sleep or sit in a daze the whole service long. You can labor in knowing your Bibles also

by preparing yourselves for society meetings. You can do this by learning the answers to your catechism lessons. Not just memorizing a bunch of words, but actually understanding the questions and answers. You can learn your Bibles by taking time out for family devotions and certainly for private study of the Bible.

All of this is work. I know. But if we can discipline ourselves in our physical labors then we also are able to discipline our lives in spiritual labors too. They are, after all, much more valuable to us who look for the end to come soon. And if we cannot discipline ourselves then perhaps we must carry with us a picture of an ant.

This, remember is a vital labor. Your and my day is characterized by a terrible lack of proper knowledge in the Scriptures. This ought never be said of us. You are the future strength of our churches, young people. We must know the doctrines of our churches and we must know these to be the teaching of Scripture itself. Far too many young people today are blown about by the slight of men. They have itching ears to follow after anything that tickles the ear. You must never be blown about by every wind of doctrine that comes your way. You must be rooted in the Word of God! And in order for this to be true, you must work at it. It is spiritual toil!

In the second place, you will also have to labor long and hard to maintain a spiritual separation from the world. We receive the command from God in II Corinthians 6, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." And that command of God is equally difficult to keep, and it takes work to do so. We meet the wicked world everywhere: in our neighborhoods, at the work place, even at school, or worse yet, in our homes through the face of the TV set. And it is so easy for us not only to make friends with unbelievers, but also to follow in their unbelieving ways.

We must labor therefore at keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. We must make friends of God's people, that is, those who fear God as we do. We must say "no" to the unbeliever (even if he claims to be a Christian) when he asks us to walk in sinful ways. How hard you must work at this, young people! Far too many young people even in the church allow anything to go. That is so sad! Fornication is on the rise. Worldly amusements: devil music (sometimes called Christian rock music), dancing, drunkenness movies and more are heard of more and more in the church! It makes me shudder. When Christ returns will there be any faith in the world? Will we too follow in these ways and become spiritual sluggards? You see how necessary it is to start your spiritual labors now as you look for the en to come? You and I must fight our own sinful flesh in order to keep on watching for the return of Christ. And that takes hard work and discipline!

One other labor we must perform with a view to laying up in store treasures in heaven. W must labor to love the brother. Look at that com munity of ants together tugging at their priz lizard. There is no fighting. There is no tuggi in opposite directions. Without guides or ove seers these ants know in what direction they pulling. In perfect harmony they strive with eac other to attain unto their prize. And we mu labor in this same exact way spiritually. W must know our brothers and sisters in Christ and we must work together to attain the same goal and prize. Putting aside all evil speaking and quarrels we must know the truth and pull in that direction in perfect harmony. And that toc takes conscious effort on our part - since all o us are sinners and are quick to see the faults o others.

These then are the labors we can and must perform as we live with a view to the end.

If we are busy with these spiritual labors - as busy as the ant - then when Christ comes we will be found without spot or blemish. We will have no reason to be ashamed. Only the spiritual sluggard, only the one who is lazy spiritually will blush at the return of Christ. He will be caught sleeping and he will receive nothing in that day. We who labor, on the other hand, will be watching for the return of Christ. And when He comes we will know that all that hard work we put into our spiritual lives was not in vain. WE will receive our heavenly reward.

It will be so good to rest in heaven to all eternity!

Do you want that rest?

Then we must be willing to work for it!

"The strictest churches have been the most pious, laborious, and useful churches, And the strictest age of any particular church has almost always been its best age."

- Charles Hodge

SERVANTS OF GOD

by Steve Lotterman

What is typical of the world in our day? The world in which you, as a young Christian, find yourself? Well, you might say, the knowledge of the world is increasing. Technology is making advances far beyond what anyone could have imagined or thought possible. One example of this is the computer industry. A whole roomful of equipment is now replaced by a tiny chip that can perform the same functions in a fraction of the time. What else can be said of today's world? Barriers that have been built up over years have fallen seemingly overnight. The cold war is ended, communism in many countries has crumbled, and recently the whole world was united against one man in the Middle East. Also typical is the increased awareness of hunger and poverty, and a combined effort by many lands to solve these and other problems. But is there nothing else typical of the world in our day? What else can be said, besides all these "advancements"? The world today, and down through the ages, is characterized by selfishness. Men in the world are self-seeking and self-satisfying. Their actions and deeds all point to one fact: I must look out for number one. I have to get what I deserve. We find agreement with Paul in Philippians 2:21: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." It is in such a situation that the young Christian finds himself, and that the young Christian servant must live.

As we have seen, the world has really no concept of serving. It is every man for himself, and only the strong survive. But what about the Christian? What about you and me? Are our thoughts of serving really that different? What images come to mind when you think of servants? Joseph was a servant; he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. We also read of other servants in the Bible: Hagar, the servant of Sarah, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and Onesimus, the servant of Philemon, to name a few. Other thoughts that come to mind are those of the countless slaves that were brought to this country in the 1800's. Much like Joseph, they were captured and brought in chains to a strange land, subjected to the worst possible treatment, and forced to constantly serve their master. Webster's definition of a servant is "one that performs duties about the person or home of a master or personal employer." Is this our calling? Should we as Christians become servants to others in the world? I would think not. But what does it mean then, to be a servant? If we don't serve other people, then whom should we serve? The answer, quite simply, is God. It is to God that all our praise and honor should be directed, and yes, it is Him that we must serve. And Him alone. We read in Matthew 6:24 "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The child of God is called to serve God, and not himself or any other. But how can we do this? How is it possible for us to serve God? One way is by doing God's will. The scriptures teach us that following God's will is much like walking down a path. Imagine yourself walking down a path in a field: the path divides, and you have a choice to make. On closer observation, you realize that these paths are not alike, and your decision becomes more difficult. One of the paths is broad, smooth, and easily traversed; the other narrow, rocky, and treacherous. The way of the broad path appears to be more pleasing: it is dotted with friendly people, all beckoning you to come and join them and travel the path together in peace. A glance up the narrow path reveals no people, no companions, and no safety or peace. Natural inclinations are to take the broad path; but what can we learn about that path from scripture? In Matthew 7:13, Christ teaches us "...for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that

leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Isaiah 59:7-8 instructs us further as to the "friends" that may lie along that path: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." Is this the path that you would choose?

On the other hand, the narrow path in the light of scripture is clearly the way that the Christian should go. Psalm 25:10 tells us that "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Jeremiah commands: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see,and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6: 16). There is true peace, the peace of the Christian, the peace that comes from the assurance and comfort that God is guiding our feet along our path in life. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

Our service to God also calls us to witness. This is often more difficult to do. Many times we—myself included—find it "convenient" to forget that we are called to be Christians in every aspect of our lives. How many times have we turned away when hearing someone take God's Name in vain? How many times have we failed to express our Christian views to others when given the opportunity? How many times has our walk of life given "great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" (II Samuel 12:14)? By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been chosen as His people. Should not our very walk of life reflect this salvation? And if it does, then we also should "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).

And so, we can serve God by being a light in the midst of darkness. But is there more? Can we be content to serve Him simply by doing His will and living as witnesses of His grace? It would be easy to stop there; however, there is one more idea of being a servant that we should consider. It may prove difficult to live according to God's will, and harder still to be a witness to all those around us, but more difficult yet is our service to other Christians. In serving other fellow believers, we must be very humble; we must bend to help those who, in our sinful pride, we feel are below us. This is not easy to do. So often we are quick to point the finger. We stand with almost the same attitude as the Pharisee in Jesus' parable of Luke 18 "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are..." We ask others "Did you hear about so-and-so? Can you believe what they did?" So quickly we all can fall into this sin of gossip; but our prayer should be "God be merciful to me, a [the] sinner." There is no other way to have true humility than for us to come to the realization of how great our sins and miseries are. And brought to that realization, to come before God on bended knee, and implore that He will remember not our sins and transgressions, but will forgive even those hidden sins and secret faults. Then we will be humble, then we can, and will serve others.

Direct your thoughts with me to one m passage in scripture: John 5: 1-15. We find he the well-known miracle of Jesus in which H cures the impotent man at the pool of Bethes At this pool, a great number of people were ga ered—not healthy people, but the helpless, bl lame and crippled. At a certain time, which v not revealed, God sent His angel to stir the wa in the pool; the first person into the pool aft this stirring was cured of his disease—thus t name Bethesda, House of Mercy. There were fi porches around the pool to shelter the many sic that were gathered there. Undoubtedly many the people had been there a long time; the ma healed by Jesus had been there for thirty-eig years. Certainly many of the people at the pc were also true believers, Jews longing for tl coming of Christ. (Immediately following h healing, the impotent man is found worshipir in the temple.) We can also draw the conclusic that many of these Jews became friends durir the time they spent together. And yet the fir response that Jesus hears upon asking the m if he would be healed is "Sir, I have no ma when the water is troubled, to put me into tl pool." After thirty-eight years,this man had r friends, and no family to help him; what is mo no one who used to be in his place, and w healed, stayed behind to assist him. They all le returning to their own lives and families. C this be said of us? How many of us have stru gled with sins and weaknesses, or have h problems, only to forget them when they w past? Shouldn't we be helping others with th daily struggles instead of fulfilling our ow whims and desires? Is this not what Christ als teaches us? Of all the places our Lord, the Kin of all glory could visit, He shuns the palace, and goes to a hospital. And how does Christ, the Ruler of all, the Son of God, describe Himself? Matthew 11:29b "for I am meek, and lowly heart." And in Matthew 20:28 "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto [served],

but to minister [serve], and to give his life a ransom for many." It is this God our Savior who Paul calls us in Ephesians 5:1-2 to "follow [imitate] walking in love." This same apostle instructs us in Philippians 2:3-5 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." And farther on we read that Christ "took upon him the form of a servant" (vs. 7) and "humbled himself" (vs. 8).

Does our walk display this same humility? Is it our goal to be imitators of this God? If we make that our goal, as it well should be, then we know that we will be truly blessed, for His word also promises that "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:3, 5). For this we must pray, that God will give us strength to be servants in a self-serving world. But we also have the assurance that in God we have an ever-present help. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21).

". . . these are the main factors which have led to the present state of confused doctrine. Expository preaching has so declined over the past 150 years as to be almost extinct in so-called Evangelicalism, and if one begins to speak of Systematic Theology most Christians today look blank. History alone will prove the point that when the Scriptures are expounded in all their fullness the Church is strong . . . but when the ministry becomes weak and patchy, and large sections of the Word of God are never studied, and doctrine is abandoned, then will the people of God become stunted, deficient and weak: prone to any and every error, with consequent confusion."

- W. H. Molland in The Link, a magazine from England

"As it is of the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God, so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to kept holy unto Him: which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath."

- Westminster Confession, Chapter XXI, 7

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CHURCH NEWS

by Lora Bouwkamp

HOPE, (Walker)

Mrs. M. Veenstra observed her 86th birthday ept. 14.

The membership papers of David Hanko were eceived from Faith PRC.

Rick and Marsha Shepherd were blessed vith the birth of Sachary Richard.

The baptism of Seth Loren, son of Tim and Teresa Koole and Alexander Timothy, son of Tim and Brenda Bomers took place Aug. 25.

Sharla Langerak and Scott Moelker were united in marriage Aug. 30. They also made public confession of faith Aug. 18.

Mrs. Anne Norris observed her 79th birthday Aug. 20.

SOUTHWEST, (Grand Rapids)

Mr. Ted Engelsma celebrated his 81st birthday July 5.

The membership papers of Calvin Dykstra from Hudsonville PRC, Mr. Arthur Kleyn from Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and Mr. Thomas Vander Woude from Grandville PRC have been received.

The membership papers of Mrs. Harv (Marcia) Ver Beek have been received from Hope PRC.

Mr. and Mrs. Doug Wassink were blessed with the birth of Trevor Douglas.

Mr. and Mrs. Dan Schipper were blessed with the birth of Erika Marie.

The baptismal papers of Jody Dean Dykstra were received from Heritage CRC.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. John MacGraw and 3 children were transferred to Faith PRC.

Mr. Walter Griffioen celebrated his 85th birthday Sept. 8.

Rev. and Mrs. H. Veldman celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary Sept. 9.

)SONVILLE, (Michigan)

Rev. and Mrs. John Heys celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary Aug. 20.

Mrs. Sophia Arens celebrated her 90th birthday Sept. 5.

Dr. and Mrs. Cliff Van Putten give thanks to God for the birth of LeighAnn Renae Sept. 3.

The membership of Mr. and Mrs. Peter (Mary) Kamps and their children were received from Hope PRC, Walker.

A special person, Angeline Schut celebrated her 65th birthday Sept. 13.

Mr. and Mrs. Rick Lubbers give thanks to God for the birth of Whitney Rachel Sept. 9.

GRANDVILLE, (Michigan)

The consistory has received the membership of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Vander Lee from Hope CRC.

The membership papers of Becky Kleyn (Lotterman) were sent to her new home with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Andy and Donna Peterson rejoice in the birth of Courtney Christine.

Jim and Brenda Peterson were blessed with the birth of Blake Andrew.

Sem. Mitch Dick and Grace Faber were united in marriage Sept. 7.

HULL, (Iowa)

Mr. Loren Gritters and Nancy Van Baren were united in marriage June 23.

On June 30 Kara Joy, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Kroese and Katelyn Renae, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marlin Westra were baptized.

Mr. Kimmy Kooiker and Miss Cheryl Rau were united in marriage July 19.

Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Oostra were blessed with the birth of Vernon James, who was baptized Aug. 11.

Mrs. Ben Bleyenberg celebrated her 90th birthday Aug. 2.

The membership papers of Nancy Gritters

were received from Doon PRC.

Mr. and Mrs. Gustave (Ramona) Streyle joined as members from Isabel PRC.

Joel Moore and Anita De Leeuw were united in marriage Aug. 23.

RANDOLPH, (Wisconsin)

Bill De Vries, Sherri De Vries, Eric De Vries, Nita Greeno and Jennie Huizenga made confession of faith July 21.

The consistory has received the membership papers of Pastor and Nancy Key from Southeast PRC.

Baptism was administered Aug. 11 to Lukas Ryan Buteyn, infant son of Brian and Becky Buteyn, born July 27.

Mr. and Mrs. Eric De Vries were joined in marriage Aug. 10.

FIRST, (Edmonton)

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Van Gelderen were blessed with the birth of Nathan Luke Sept. 2.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Huising were blessed with the birth of Kevin Andrew July 24.

SOUTHEAST, (Grand Rapids)

Craig and Thea Glupker were blessed with the birth of Rebekah. Baptism was administered Aug. 18.

The consistory has granted the request of Robert and Bonnie Velting, with their daughter, Heather, to transfer to Byron PRC.

SOUTH HOLLAND, (Illinois)

Thad Lubbers and Lisa Koop were united in marriage June 28.

The membership papers of Rich Van Kalker have been received from Cottage Grove CRC.

Daniel Gerrit, infant son of Andy and Sheryl Birkett was baptized Aug. 4.

The consistory has received the membership papers of Barry and Mary Warner and their 4 children from Bethany CRC.

FIRST, (Grand Rapids)

Congratulations to Mrs. Lena Baar who celebrated her 88th birthday Aug. 18.

Mrs. Hattie Dieterman celebrated her 85th birthday Aug. 21.

Tim and Joan Kaiser were united in marriage Aug. 23.

Mr. Ralph Meyer celebrated his 86th birthday Sept. 1.

Mrs. Alice Beiboer celebrated her 94th birthday Sept. 6.

The congregation extends its sympathy to the Dan Baldwin family in the death of his brother.

Mrs. Catherine Booth celebrated her 87th birthday Sept. 10.

LOVELAND, (Colorado)

Mrs. Louise Griess celebrated her 84th birthday Aug. 19.

Mr. and Mrs. Milt Alsum celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary Aug. 26.

HOPE, (Redlands)

Mrs. Jeanette Feenstra celebrated her 89th birthday July 29.

The congregation welcomes the Richard Span family from Alberta Canada.

Mrs. Kate Veldman celebrated her 88th birthday Aug. 12.

Mrs. Ann Van Meeteren celebrated her 76th birthday Sept. 7.

EDGERTON, (Minnesota)

Mrs. Dorothy Brands turned 89 years old May 10.

On Aug. 25 Stacy Bleyenberg, Shelley Brands, Nathan Brummel, Jodi Brummel, Joy Hanson, and Heidi Hilton made public confession of their faith.

Mr. and Mrs. Dan Gunnink were blessed with the birth of a son, Justin Dale, Aug. 23. The membership papers of Mrs. Gunnink were received from Ebenezer CRC of Leota, MN.

FIRST, (Pella, Iowa)

Kevin and Lisa Rowe rejoice in the birth of Jacob Conrad July 11. Baptism was administered July 28.