BEACON LIGHTS

Are you devoted to something? A sport? A career? A hobby? A devoted person spends time in whatever he desires to grow in.

Do you spend precious time in your devotional life? Are you as eager to learn God's Word, as you are in promoting yourself at work and in your leisure activities?

Make sure you pull out the devotional guide in the middle of this magazine. We hope this will encourage and help you in your spiritual life.

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Popcorn

Sole Mirans

"Junior, an important thing you must learn is that sin is not what you do, but where you do it."

* * * *

Once upon a time, not too long ago, there lived a group of people known as the Logicians. They lived in their own secluded country, quite apart from the rest of the world, and few of them ever ventured forth from their homeland. These people were a distinct race and had many fine characteristics. But they had one that appeared rather strange. It involved their attitude toward popcorn. They did not believe in eating it, they would not include it in their diet, and most of them had never tasted it. And they, being Logicians, had a reason. They felt that popcorn was bad for a person. It often, they said, caused indigestion and heartburn. It made people sluggish. It was habit-forming too, and its addicts usually neglected more wholesome food. The unpopped kernels might crack your teeth; parts of the popped ones might lodge between your teeth, or, worse yet, under your gums, at least if you had false teeth. The older people, for the most part, had no urge to eat it; the younger people were forbidden to eat it. This principle of not eating popcorn had great influence and for quite some time was accepted unquestioningly by all.

It began to be a problem, however, when some of the younger Logicians temporarily left their country to learn a trade or to receive a higher education. For, in the countries around them, popcorn was a regular part of the menu and was highly relished. The young Logicians were often urged to try the popcorn. For a time, they resisted. But soon a few, and the number gradually grew, began to taste it, usually on the sly so that their own countrymen wouldn't see them. They found, to their great surprise, that popcorn didn't taste so bad after all. In fact, it had a pleasant flavor. Also, none of the dismal after-effects seemed to follow. More and more of them began to try it, and more and more of them began to eat it very frequently.

Word of the young Logicians' actions soon reached their elders. They were appalled. But, being practical thinkers, they tried to find a remedy. No longer could they talk of the horrible results of such eating because the young Logicians would not believe it anyway. After much planning, however, they found a very nice solution. Since, they felt, it was obvious that the young Logicians would continue to eat popcorn, and since some of them also had an urge to try it, they said: "If you're going to eat popcorn eat it at home. Don't go to the popcorneries in the other countries. If you must eat popcorn, you'll do it under our supervision." This decision made the young Logicians, and many of the older ones too, quite happy. Many purchased electric popcorn makers so that they could make popcorn in their own homes, just by plugging in the machine and turning it on. None of the older Logicians, and few of the younger, went anywhere else to buy it. They ate at home, and they all found eating popcorn so enjoyable.

It was very, very strongly insisted upon, however, that popcorn might be eaten only at home. Severe condemnation was on those who dared to taste it elsewhere.

* * * *

"No, Junior, you may not ever go to a movie, nor to your class play. All drama is an abomination to the Lord. Be a good little boy and stay home with us and watch television."

*This article, even though it applies today more than ever, was written by Jim Jonker and originally published in the January BEACON LIGHTS in 1960 - 33 years ago.

Notes

With this New Year comes a new BEACON LIGHTS, Our hope is that these new rubrics will profit whoever reads them. May God instruct even through this magazine so that when we come upon an easy way, a busy highway, which will not lead us closer to God, we may be able to bypass that road and instead stay on that little bumpy path, on which at times we can not even see anyone else, believing that God will keep us.

This year the BEACON LIGHTS will consist of many profitable rubrics. The "Christian Living" rubric will deal with many every day Christian concerns as dating, marriage, school, and church life. "Knowing Whom I Have Believed" will consist of more doctrinal natured topics and help to explain our faith and relationship to God. "So Shall I Keep Thy Law" will be the name of the rubric that concludes the sixth thru tenth commandments that we

have been studying for the past half year. "Watching Daily at My Gates" is the new devotional pull-out page in the middle of this magazine. Pull it out and put it in your Bible and start a habit today that you will want to continue through all of life. Book Reviews also will appear occasionally. The Question and Answer column which makes its debut in this issue is one I think you will find stimulating. If you have a question please write us. Remember that if you have a question it is probably something that others wonder about too. Please write us! Big or small we will take them all.

Missing from this magazine now is the Church News column. The staff felt that this column should be updated and the news in it more current. We are looking at ways to do this. If it is possible, the Church News will be back.

While at a local store this past month, watching the "Christmas" shopping rush and hearing "O Come All Ye Faithful" blared throughout the store on the speaker system, I was totally convinced that we did the right thing raising money for the seminary addition and the new Randolph School. A special thank you to all who contributed. I am sure the blessing giving to these causes was greater than receiving a wrapped up Christmas gift. - Editor

The Final Battle*

By Dave Overway

I think I can safely say, that as young people we think of the future more than other age groups in the church. We may think of college, of getting a job, some of us may even wonder what high school will be like. We sometimes look a little farther down the road of life and wonder who we will marry, how many children we might have and maybe even where we will live.

But how often do we consider the future of our churches, and the inevitable final battle against the world that we have ahead of us? This should be of extreme concern to us as we now draw nearer and nearer to Christ's return. We are the church, we are God's people, we are the lights in the midst of darkness. As God tells through the writing of the apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 5:5 & 6, "Ye are all children of the light and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

But are these really the last days? Definitely. We are told in II Thessalonians that, "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first." And in Matthew 24, we learn that "iniquity shall abound." Iniquity is indeed abundant and sin is progressing rapidly. If sin and worldliness are the enemies that we must make war with on the battlefield of life, then it seems that technology and so-called "progress" are their horse and chariot. In other words, the more advanced that technology becomes, the more sin there is also. And today's technology is certainly advanced to life 1000 or even 100 years ago. 1000 years ago, the world was in what is now known as the "middle ages". The western world then was built largely of wood, the fastest you could travel was by horseback and only the rich could afford a horse. The majority of the population lived in simple huts which they shared with their animals. Abortion was considered homicide by all. Illness and disease was always a constant threat. Famine, rotten flour, and vitamin deficiencies afflicted huge segments of society with various malformations and physical weaknesses. A man was happy to survive 30 years and 50 was a ripe old age.

Looking back through history, from the time of the flood till the time of the Middle Ages, we realize that life was not always such a grim struggle. Take the period of the Roman Empire for example. This was a time of comparative ease for most people and just as today, art and inventions began to abound and increase. Progress was being made. But the time had not yet come in God's plan for the progress that we see today so God in His control stopped it with the destruction of this mighty empire by the barbarians, and progress even seemed to move backward for a time. History is filled with countless such exercises of God's control over man's progress. Another example would be the Tower of Babel; and perhaps the most obvious would be the destruction of all the wicked at the time of the Flood.

Just as life in the past was not always as grim as it was in the Middle Ages, neither has it ever come close to what we experience now in the twentieth century. Quoting from Time magazine in an article entitled, The Astonishing Twentieth Century; "No one could have guessed then that, in the century just dawning, new ideas would burst upon the world with a force and frequency that would turn this stately march of progress into a long-distance, free-for-all

*Holland Young People's Society forwarded this after-recess paper for publication. They found it enjoyable and stimulating for discussion. Feel free to use.

sprint. Thrust into this race, the children of the twentieth century would witness more change in their daily existence and environment than any one else who had ever walked the planet."

At the beginning of this century, in-house electricity was a luxury, cars were nothing more than curious machines, and recreation was a trip to a concert or a play. Now, not even a hundred years later, electricity has gone from being considered a luxury to a bare necessity; who, nowadays would buy a house if it did not have electricity? Now also, every family has at least one car and many have two, and the means available today for recreation are countless. It took less than 30 years after the Wright brothers flew their first flight until the first large airliner was launched; and approximately 66 years from that day at Kitty Hawk to the day that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Consider this fact for a moment; for more than 5,000 years, the idea of flying in a plane was no more than a fantasy, and then in one-person's lifetime it went from being a mere fantasy to a possibility for the elite, and then to a very real possibility for the common man.

Relief from the ever-present list of countless diseases through numerous techniques drastically changed human existence. During the span of a single lifetime, science learned to cure or prevent a staggering list of plagues. This triumph of science was a major contributing factor to the pride of man in his apparent control over his environment.

After the end of World War II in 1945, technology also contributed to the birth of mass entertainment through film, TV, radio, records and many other inventions. This mass entertainment spawned an age of rebellion against authority (especially among the youth) like never before. In the past century, the entertainment world has probably used technology in the service of sin more than any other.

The progress of technology has given birth to many other firsts in the twentieth century, among them are: space travel, computers, satellites, refrigeration, microwaves, lasers, nuclear power, and atomic bombs to name only a few.

If this much change has taken place in just the past 100 years, imagine the possibilities for the next 100 or even just the next 50 years. The speed also of these changes has been phenomenal and all we see is an increase in this speed. Keeping this in mind, the projected achievements of the 21st century do not seem at all impossible. Some of these projected possibilities are: virtual reality, cloned spare body organs, genetic engineering, robots in everyday life, and computers with human-like personalities. All of these technologies have already been started to one degree or another but the progress that they could make is almost almost unimaginable. The future of virtual reality for example could enable you to don an electrode-filled body suit and goggles containing a computer screen with graphics so realistic that your mind will believe that you are actually witnessing a genuine object, situation or event. In other words, you could plug yourself into a virtual reality machine and take a walk through the jungle, experiencing all the sights, sounds, and smells of a real jungle. It might also be possible to go canoeing or play ping-pong with a celebrity of your choice. I don't think its too hard to imagine the dangers of a machine like this.

On the subject of genetic science, biologist Leroy Hood of the California Institute of Technology predicts that in 15 or 20 years, doctors will be able to extract DNA from a blood sample of a newborn infant and insert it into a machine that will then convey to the doctors the genetic profile of the infant. By studying this genetic profile the doctors will be able to discern if the child is predisposed to certain diseases. This test could also be performed on unborn children thus detecting serious genetic disorders before birth, enabling parents to opt for abortion.

These are only a couple examples of technology that is entirely capable of happening in the not too distant future. These are also prime examples of how the devil uses progress for his own advancement of wickedness. These inventions in themselves are not wrong but we must beware, for they can be misused by us and will certainly be used by the world in sinful ways.

In the dictionary we read that the definition of progress is, "to advance toward completion or fuller development." Looking back through History and now into the future we see that this is indeed the case with the progression of sin. The wickedness of this world is certainly nearing completion.

We do not know how long it will be yet until God halts this development of sin, but we can see that these are the last days and that we certainly do have a long and hard battle ahead of us. The war for the Church has been going on since the beginning of time, but I believe that this final battle which has already begun, will be the most heated struggle that the Church will ever fight. We can consider ourselves some of the first warriors to participate in this final battle and if we want the Protestant Reformed Churches to remain in this battle till the end then we must prepare ourselves. Undoubtedly we will not face the same level of difficulty in the challenges that lie ahead of us as our children and grandchildren will. But how can they be strong in facing these difficulties if we do not teach them, and how can we teach them if we ourselves are not strong? And how can we be strong if we are not prepared to fight?

There are two ways in which we can prepare ourselves. Number one, we must watch. We must be aware of these new inventions that the world is dreaming up every day. We must know which ones we may use and which ones are dangerous to us and that we may have no part of. We must know all the "signs of the times" and recognize them for what they are. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for

ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." And in Matthew 24:33 we are told "So likewise ye when ye shall see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors."

The second way in which we are to prepare ourselves is the most important. We must make ourselves strong spiritually. We must study the Word of God and know the truths contained in it. This point is best explained in Ephesians 6:10 & 11, "Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And in verse 13, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." If we are to fight, we must have armour. It is impossible and foolishness to go out to fight in a war carrying no weapons with us. In the spiritual war against sin we must gird ourselves with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of our salvation and the sword of the spirit.

We now realize that we definitely have a hard battle ahead of us and we know how God instructs us to fight in this battle but we must also know that we cannot lose; that we are already the victors. If we were to try to fight with our own strength alone, we would certainly fail, but all our strength comes from God. If God is on our side, we cannot lose. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Let us constantly pray that God gives us the strength to continue in the fight against the steady progression of sin and that He gives us the comfort of knowing that we will win and will someday live with Him in the new heavens and the new earth where there will be no sin. Let us also always remember the comforting words of Jesus in John 16:22, "And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

QUESTION AND ANSWER

In discovering God's will for us, how much emphasis can we place on circumstances in our lives? If, for example, I was contemplating a large change in my life which involved moving to another part of this country, would the quick sale of a piece of real estate be an indication to me that it was God's will that I move?

Steven Lotterman.

I think it is true to say that each of us face this same sort of question in our own life. We often wonder, when faced with decisions and choices, what God's will is for us in these situations. We confess and believe that God is sovereign, and that it is His will, not ours, that determines all things, but yet it is difficult to know at times what the will of God is. I think, therefore, that this is an important question, and that it will be useful to all of us to know both how we should and how we should not go about discovering God's will for us in the many different circumstances and situations of our lives.

To begin with I wish to point out that determining the will of God is a subjective exercise: it is something that is between the individual and God alone. It is also something that involves many factors. Our questioner, for example, would need to consider such things as church, family, and his occupation and calling in life, and often God reveals His will to us through all of these aspects, and not through one single circumstance. I therefore feel that it is not possible for me to answer my questioner directly, but simply to give guidelines which we can all use.

Firstly we will consider those things which we should not do.

The chief way in which we do wrong is when we determine how God should answer our prayers and show us His will. We do this when we decide on the means that God should use to show us His will. We should not set up the circumstances which show us God's answer, we must leave it up to God to reveal His will to us in His way.

We must also guard against becoming mystical. Some do this by letting their Bible fall open to a text of Scripture, believing that this text will show them God's will. This is wrong, for when we do this we are trying to force God to answer our prayers, instead of exercising patience and trust in Him.

So how does God show us His will, and how should we seek to know God's will?

God does reveal His will to us through the circumstances in our lives, and often this can be in the way that our questioner mentioned, or in some similar manner. However we can also discover God's will through other means, such as a sermon that we hear or through reading and meditating upon Scripture. God shows us His will in many different ways.

Therefore when we seek God's will for us we must first of all pray to God to show us His will. We

must then be patient, trusting that God will show us in His time, not our time, and in His way, not our way. And we must always be ready to hear God's answer, for quite often we do not want to accept God's will for us, just because it is not the answer we want or because it does not suit us. God is a gracious God to His covenant people, and He will not only show us His will, but He will also make it possible for us to do His will.

Hopefully these few thoughts are useful, not only to our questioner, but also to others of us as we seek to understand and know the will of God for and in our lives.

Daniel Kleyn

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Marriage In The Lord

By Steve and Deb Kuiper

As young people, we are faced with many decisions which will affect the rest of our lives. We must decide where or whether to continue our education, what career to pursue, and whom to marry.This last item, whom to marry, is one of the most important decisions we will ever make. The person that we marry will have tremendous impact on our lives. For this reason it is important that we seek God's will in choosing our husband or wife.

God has revealed His will concerning His people and marriage in the Bible. His will is that we not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. 6: 14) While this figure doesn't refer exclusively to marriage, a yoke is an excellent metaphor for the marriage bond. In marriage two people are joined in a union which must work with one mind and one will. Further God explicitly teaches us to marry "only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39). God's will is that His people marry fellow believers.

The Old Testament saints understood the great importance of marrying "in the Lord". In Genesis 24:3, 4 we read that Abraham sent his most senior and trusted servant far away, to the land of his brethren, to find for Isaac a wife who was not of the heathen nations of Canaan. Isaac and Rebekah also understood this importance and therefore grieved when Esau took wives of the daughters of the Hittites.

The Bible also records many of the trials and temptations of those who did marry unbelievers. In Exodus 34:16 God warns the Israelites that allowing their sons to take the daughters of the surrounding nations would ultimately lead to idol worship. This, in fact, happened many times throughout Israel's history. Before they had even entered the Promised Land the Israelites committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab; and God slew 24,000 who joined themselves to Moab's idol god, Baalpeor. Remember also Solomon who had great riches, wisdom, and power and yet was caused to sin by "outlandish women" (Neh. 13:26).

Just as Israel was tempted to sin through its intermarriage with the heathen nations, so marriage to the world today can be a great trial for believers. Imagine trying to raise children with a husband who refuses to attend Church or a wife who loves the things of this earth more than the things of God. Think of how difficult it would be to resist sin in our own lives with a husband or wife who encouraged us in our sin rather than admonishing us and building us up in our faith.

On the other hand, God has reserved many blessings for those who marry "in the Lord". In the following paragraphs we will attempt to present some things we think are important for young people to consider in choosing whom they will marry.

Guys remember that the Bible's definition of a desirable woman is much different from this world's definition. The world puts great emphasis on outward appearance: pretty face, good figure, expensive clothes. Much of our popular culture is devoted to just such "beauty" The Bible, however teaches, "Favour is deceitful, beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30). You do well to seek a woman with "modest apparel" but robed in "good works" (I Tim. 2:9, 10). Physical beauty will fade with time, but the beauty of a godlv woman will endure.

It may be hard to imagine now, but someday — with God's blessing - you will have children. Your wife will have an important place in raising these children. A godly wife won't chafe at the thought of forsaking her career but will cherish the opportunity to raise her family. This is a rare blessing in a world where being "just a mother" is belittled and an outside career is peddled as the only way to personal fulfillment. Although you are directly responsible to God for the instruction of your children and therefore must be fully involved in this work, your wife will have a great influence on them simply by virtue of the time she spends with them.

A godly wife will love her children and discipline them in a correct and spiritual way. This is a very difficult aspect of raising children. It would be much easier for her to simply ignore disobedient children or shout and threaten until she gets her way. Again, this is not a duty that a husband may shirk, but while you are away at work it is a great blessing to have a wife who understands her responsibility to "withhold not correction" (Prov. 23:13).

Ask yourself if the woman you intend to marry is up to the tremendous task of being a wife and mother in Israel. The answer must be YES!

Young women, remember that your husband will be the head of your home. In this day the idea of male headship is mocked, and women who hold to this idea are ridiculed or at the very least pitied. Despite what the world may say, this is God's plan for marriage and those who follow it do receive His blessing.

A godly husband will lead your family in worship to God. Making time for family devotions and actually leading the family in worship is not an easy thing to do. Especially in the beginning of married life it is awkward to begin family devotions and to actually lead a household in worship rather than just going through the motions He will also find the work of God's kingdom outside of the home important. He will be willing to give of his time and talents to promote the work of our churches and schools.

A husband's calling becomes even more clear after children enter into the home. A godly husband will see to it that they know their catechism lessons. He will have a deep love for Christian education. It will take strong commitment to send children to a Christian school when money gets tight, as it invariably will. Even when paying Christian school tuition requires sacrificing some things, he will not lose sight of his covenantal responsibilities. He will remember his baptism vow to see that his children are instructed in the true and complete doctrine of salvation, to the utmost of his power.

He will also insist that these children walk in God's ways. He will insist on faithful church attendance and obedience to all God's laws. We need only read in the book of I Samuel the story of Eli and his two sons to realize the importance of discipline and the sad consequences of failing to insist on obedience.

We realize that for some of you in your teens and twenties these things seem far removed. While dating, it's all too easy to leave difficult subjects undiscussed, religious differences unexamined. This, however, is a serious mistake. God requires that we marry only one whose religious convictions are consistent with our own. That certainly doesn't mean that we disqualify anyone with roots outside the Protestant Reformed Churches. Nor does it mean that someone with a Protestant Reformed upbringing automatically qualifies. Rather, it means that whomever we choose to marry must share our convictions on all fundamentals of Reformed doctrine and life. It should go without saying that we also make certain that WE are living lives pleasing to God. Just as we cannot expect to change anyone else after we are married, we shouldn't think we can live like the world until we're married and then settle down.

We encourage you to discuss your faith thoroughly and honestly. It's not enough to agree on some hazy generalities about God's grace and going to church on Sunday. Get to specifics! To marry "in the Lord" is to obey God, to avoid many trials and temptations, and to enjoy the many blessings which God has reserved for covenant families.

Watching Daily At My Gates

"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the post of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Prov. 8:34-35

This rubric, a devotional guide, is named appropriately after this verse in Proverbs. May you watch daily by conversing with God.

You ask:

Is this for me? It was a big part of Christ's life! "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mk. 1:35)

Should this consume my life? "Pray without ceasing." (I Th. 5:17) "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually." (I Chr. 16:11) "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" (Mt. 7:7) "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" (Lu. 18:1)

Will someone help me pray? "Likewise the spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought: but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8:26)

Can I keep some favorite little sin in my heart and still pray? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Ps. 66:18)

Can He forgive my sins? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I Jn. 1:9)

Will He answer my prayer? "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Is. 65:24)

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:" (Is. 55:6)

This year, Skip Hunter will be writing our devotional. Skip lives in Doon, Iowa with his wife Barb, and daughter, Beth. Skip is the principal of North-West Iowa P.R. School and has been teaching there for the past fifteen years. He also leads a Bible study at Dordt College every other week, alternating with his minister, Rev. Dykstra. In his spare time he enjoys gardening and umpiring softball and baseball games. Welcome to the BEACON LIGHTS Skip! We look forward to this study of God's Word! - Editor

Watching Daily At My Gates

By Skip Hunter

January 1

Ecclesiastes 12 January 1. A new year. For the many in the world a "new" beginning. For the child of God a time to look over the past and look toward the future. Do it by remembering your Creator. You are strong and vigorous. Use that strength to remember Him from whom all blessings flow. Don't just do it today. Remember Him every day and in every waking moment. Sing or read Psalter 244 especially verses 1 and 2.

January 2

Psalm 116 Young people do you fear death? The Bible passage of yesterday spoke of death as the inevitable end of all men. But sometimes death strikes more suddenly. Are you ready? Psalm 116:15 says that the death of the saints is precious in God's sight. Why is it precious? Only because Christ has prepared for us a room in that house of many mansions. While God is pleased to give you life, live it fully and completely to His honor and glory. When He calls you or a loved one home, be thankful because another saint has been taken to glory. Sing or read Psalter 311 especially verses 1-3.

January 3

Psalm 84 The Lord's Day! 0 blessed thought! That day of days! That day when we are able to take refuge from the cares and concerns of our everyday world. God has given to us a day in which we can gather with those akin to us in spirit. He provides us with our spiritual food through the preaching of the Word. We can join heart and voice with saints young and old to praise His name. Let us use the words of the Heidelberg Catechism and make this the beginning of the eternal sabbath which we will have in heaven. Sing or read Psalter 348 especially verses 1-4.

January 4

Matthew 25:14-30 The first day of our school week or for some our work week. Each of us has a place in the kingdom of God. Our school work or other work is part of that calling. How we carry it out is our expression towards God in the way we carry out His calling for us. In Ecclesiastes 12 the last verse Solomon tells us that even the carrying out of study can be sinful and profitless if not done with a proper spirit. His last words are that in whatever we do we must do all to "Fear God and keep his commandments." How will we carry out that first task today? Will we show ourselves true citizens of the Kingdom? Sing or read Psalter 325.

January 5

Matthew 25:31-46 Judgment day! Are you scared? Sometimes I am. When I read Ecclesiastes 12:14, I tremble at the thought of every work, word, and thought being brought before Christ our judge. We confess that every Sunday you know. "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead..." But then I look at that judge and I see a lamb. I see the Lamb of God who came to take away my sins. Then I am happy. Not that I can "sin that grace may abound." No, I am happy because I have the opportunity to live a life of thankfulness yet on this earth. By God's grace I can be happy. Sing or read Psalter 162.

January 6

Revelation 5 Singing! Do you want to join the choir which numbers 10,000 times 10,000 and thousand of thousands? Are you practicing now? Handel's "Worthy is the Lamb" will never be sung like that choir is going to sing God's "Worthy is the Lamb." Are you ready to take your place in that choir? You do not have to be a sweet singer of David to do it. You don't have to have the range of an opera diva. You just need to have the love of God in your heart. He will take care of your voice. We can practice and must practice now. We must sing songs which are worthy of His praise. Sing or read Psalter 241 especially verses 1-3 and 6.

January 7

Psalm 23 A faithful shepherd! What a comfort! From little on we have been taught about that shepherd. Do you still think about Him as shepherd? We should. Christ is shepherd of lambs and sheep. When we read Psalm 23 we should breathe a sigh of relief. With Christ as shepherd we have nothing to worry about. He will guide us through all of life's trials and joys. Sometimes he uses His crook to stop us in our ways. We need that. Sometimes He stands between our enemies and us. We need that too. Our cup of His blessings does run over. We have the beautiful assurance that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. We also have the assurance that death is the entrance into His house. Sing or read Psalter 52.

January 8

Proverbs 31:10-20 Friday night. Traditionally it is the night that young people use for dates. Young men what about that girl who will sit next to you in the car tonight? Is she the virtuous woman described in the verses above? If not; why not? If not; should you be meeting her tonight? It is not too soon to be thinking of such things. One of the positive outcomes of a date is marriage. Don't you desire your marriage to be to one in the faith? Sing or read Psalter 360.

January 9

Psalm 122 It is the last day of our week. Tomorrow is Sunday. How are we spending today? Are we preparing for our day of rest from our labors? Will we be ready to spend tomorrow in God's house? There is only one way we can be glad as we hear the call to go into God's house. We must be ready for the call. As we sing the songs of Zion, we must be refreshed to do that. As we pray, we must be receptive to prayer. As we listen to the sermon, we must be ready to digest that spiritual food which our soul craves. Young people make yourself ready today. Sing or read Psalter 349.

January 10

Luke 11:1-10 Prayer is important in the life of all Christians. Prayer is a learned art. From very little, parents must teach their children to pray. But then young people must grow in the art of prayer. Even as the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," we too must learn how to pray. Our Lord has given to us a model prayer. It is a prayer to be used as it was given, but it is also a prayer on which we base other prayers. Pray, young people, often. Sing or read Psalter 31.

January 11

Matthew 6:9-18 To whom do we pray? Simple question maybe with a simple answer, but do we think about that answer? When we say "Our Father" or "Dear Heavenly Father" do we stop and think about what we are saying? What is our attitude as we pray? Do we pray as if God is our buddy? Or do we pray as if God is God? There is a big difference. We must never bring God down to our level or raise ourselves to His level. God is God and must be addressed as such. Sing or read Psalter 14.

January 12

Revelation 22:12-21 We are instructed in the Lord's Prayer to pray for the end of the world. Do we really want this world to end? If you are engaged to be married, are you willing to forego your wedding day? Are you willing to take as your groom Christ? Seniors are you willing to forget about graduation? These are just two of countless things we must give up when Christ returns. Are we ready and willing to face persecution and give up most of our earthly comforts because the day of the Lord is at hand? Please pray for His kingdom to come, and please pray for grace for all of God's people to be willing for his kingdom to come. Sing or read Psalter 32.

January 13

Matthew 26:36-46 Jesus said to His Father "Thy will be done." We know what this meant for Jesus. We, too, must say to our Father, "Thy will be done." Do we know what this means for us? Are we willing to cheerfully and obediently walk in the Father's will? According to the Heidelberg Catechism we must "renounce our own will." That is not easy. As young people and adults we often feel that we must look out for number one. Number one usually is ourselves. When we make every decision in our lives, they must be made Deo Volente, The Lord willing. Are we willing to do this? Sing or read Psalter 150.

January 14

Proverbs 30:7-9 Our daily bread. We don't consider it much except to complain about it. We have so much in this land and in this day and age. But we must because God commands us to think about it and to pray about it. Agur asks for a moderate amount of physical comforts. He wants to have enough so that he is not tempted to steal and he doesn't want too much so that he is tempted to be proud in his riches. In all our physical comforts whether they be food, clothing, shelter, or transportation, we must be moderate in our desires. If we are moderate, we will find it easier to praise and worship Jehovah. Sing or read Psalter 209.

January 15

Matthew 18:21-35 Forgiving others. This is not easy for us who think we are number one. But yet God not only forgave us every one of the sins we have committed, are committing, and will commit; He has also provided the way and possibility of forgiveness in the death of His Son. Do we think about that when someone has wronged us? Or do we only look for revenge? Turning the other cheek is not the desire of the old man, but it must be the desire of the new man of Christ which resides in us. Pray for the ability and desire to forgive those who sin against you daily. Sing or read Psalter 83.

January 16

Job 2:1-10 The sixth petition is a hard one to consider. While we pray that God not deliver us up to Satan's power, we also know He uses trials in the Christian's life for the strengthening of his faith. Job was tempted by Satan, and tried by God. Even Job's wife said, "Curse God and die." Job seemingly had nowhere to turn, but yet he confessed,"...worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." How could Job stand Satan's temptations? How can we stand Satan's temptations? Job and we can only stand by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Sing or read Psalter 390.

January 17

Revelation 7:9-17 It is fitting that on the sabbath day we conclude our study of the Lord's prayer with a grand doxology of praise. All things are God's and Christ's. And for Christ were all things created. All of our prayers must have this aspect of humbleness In them. All praise to God and Christ will be our experience in heaven, and it must also be our experience on earth as we prepare for heaven. Even as our sabbaths must be a beginning of that eternal sabbath in heaven, our prayers must be beginnings of our eternal prayer in heaven. Sing or read Psalter 374.

January 18

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 Giving to the poor. Is this a strange subject for young people to consider? I think not. God puts poor among young people. Young people have jobs and therefore a duty to assist those who need help. God gives the command of verse 11 to all believers; God also promises the blessing of verse ten to all believers. Pray for those in need and also help them. Sing or read Psalter 113.

January 19

Jude Young people do you fight for the faith? Last convention the topic was raised about the Christian soldier. What have you done since then? Have you resolved to put on the whole armor of God? Jude in verse three tells us to earnestly contend for the faith. How are we doing as we walk in the world around us? Are we active in such contending? Pray for this special grace to fight and for others to fight with us. Sing or read Psalter 407.

January 20

Isaiah 40:28-31 Verse thirty is striking. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary," are not words which we by nature speak. Young people seemingly are full of vim and vigor. Yet the word of God says that even youths become weary. There is a spiritual weariness implied here. But God gives a great comfort in verse thirty-one. Reread that verse. Take it to heart and pray that you may wait upon Jehovah. Sing or read Psalter 72.

January 21

I Corinthians 6:1-8 Do you have a matter against a fellow believer? Will you do anything to get that believer so that you might come out ahead? Paul reminds us that we who are to judge angels must also take care of matters on this earth. How will we take care of these matters? Will it be by love or by the rule of me first? Love is powerful as I Corinthians 13 states. Love is also necessary in the church. Sing or read Psalter 371.

January 22

Ephesians 5:25-33 Friday night again. Young women, do you want a husband who will love you even as Christ loves the church? Who can be such a man? Is he necessarily the strong one? Is he necessarily the star of the basketball team? Is he necessarily the one who is handsome? None of those attributes are spoken of in Ephesians 5. A godly husband, if you desire one, can be identified as one who shows he loves God. Ask your date tonight if he loves God and ask for evidence of that love. If he doesn't and you want a godly husband, demand that he take you home. Sing or read Psalter 360.

January 23

Daniel 3:13-18 I think the story of Daniel three Is well-known to all Christians. Would the answer of verse 16 be ours? Would we have the confidence to answer as these three young men? Their faith was strong even in the face of terrible death. We need to study these words and pray for this faith. If we don't we would bow; in fact we would not even have been brought to the king in the first place. Sing or read Psalter 87.

January 24

Acts 17:10-14 How is Young Peoples? You do go, don't you? How is the discussion? Are there great periods of silence? Is the leader forced to preach or teach? The Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians because "they received the word with all readiness of mind and search the scriptures daily." How about us? Could the Holy Spirit say that about us? I hope so. The day is coming when meeting to study the Bible will be forbidden. Let us desire to be ready for those days by studying today. Sing or read Psalter 333.

January 25

Habakkuk 2 Habakkuk is prophet to Judah in the days before the captivity. He is concerned about the lack of godliness amoung God's people. In chapter 2 God answers him. In that answer are the battle words of the Reformation. "The just shall live by faith." We, too, stand In a day of apostasy. We, too, must live by faith. We must pray that God will show us the way knowing that we can only walk the way by faith. Sing or read Psalter 187.

January 26

Philippians 4:4-9 Peace. Kind of a nice word. We hear it a lot. Do we desire the peace of verse seven? That's a different peace than the peace of the world. That is a peace which helps the child of God through many difficulties. That is a peace which is not understandable without the aid of the Spirit. It is a peace that comes when everything is brought to God in prayer. It is a peace that is found when we search the Scriptures looking for God-given answers to our problems. It is a peace that is found only when we bow to those answers. Pray for it through Christ. Sing or read Psalter 8.

January 27

Ezekiel 2 What will be your future occupation? Ezekiel was given the occupation of prophet to wicked Judah. Ezekiel had been carried away captive, but yet he had the task of speaking the word of God to those captives. If you read the whole book, you will find many hard sayings which Ezekiel was required to speak. Are you ready to take on a calling that may make you unpopular? If you are not sure, consider Ezekiel and pray for God's grace that He help you in whatever station in life He puts you. Sing or read Psalter 60.

January 28

Acts 28:11-15 Friendships. Do you have any? Do you want any? Are they valuable? Paul felt they were. As he was making his way to Rome, he had to realize that death could be near. Friends came out to meet him on the way. Paul thanked God for them and took courage to face what was ahead. Paul had friends because he was a friend. Are you a friend? Sing or read Psalter 24.

January 29

Genesis 39:1-6 How was your work week? Did it go well? Joseph could say things were going well even though he was a prisoner in Egypt far from home. Potiphar could see his obedience and the blessings of that obedience. Potiphar even saw that Jehovah was with Joseph. That's quite something. I hope all the employers that I have had saw that about me. We need to pray that the world can see that we love God and are eager to serve him. We also need to pray that our actions speak louder than our words. Sing or read Psalter 26.

January 30

Hebrews 12:1-3 Saturday. Often a day of recreation. Many times that recreation includes sports. We often are participants or spectators of sporting events. The writer of Hebrews knew of man's fascination with sports. He used this fascination to teach the church about our life on earth. He calls it a race in which we run. He tells us how to run and what the prize will be. He encourages us with the promise of Jesus. Are we running? Sing or read Psalter 35.

January 31

Proverbs 8:1-11 You have now read a month of meditations. Did you find wisdom in them? I hope so. I hope this not because I gave them, but because they were based on God's word in which all wisdom is found. Your minister today, too, hopes that you find wisdom in the sermon. Again not because of his word, but because he brings Christ to you. Christ is true wisdom. We must desire that wisdom with all of our beings. That wisdom is far better than anything we can imagine on this earth. Let us make that our desire even on this day which God hallowed for us to worship Him. Sing or read Psalter 337.

The Sixth Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Kill

By Rev. H. Veldman

We are all, by nature, murderers. In Rom. 8:7 we read: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Notice: the carnal mind, man as he is by nature, is enmity against God. This is what we are. Enmity against God characterizes our being. We do not merely kill or hate occasionally. We are enmity. And, we are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. This, of course, also applies to the ninth commandment.

In Matt. 22:37-39 Jesus explains the law of God, and we read: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God will all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This second commandment is like, essentially like unto it. It is the same as the first commandment.

In the fifth commandment we must love the neighbour in his authority. In the sixth commandment we must love him in regard to his person. In the seventh commandment we must love him in the state of marriage. In the eighth commandment the Lord commands us to love him in his possessions. In the ninth commandment we must love the neighbour in regard to his name and reputation: we must not bear false witness against him. And in the tenth commandment the Lord emphasizes the heart of the law of God: we must not covet; in other words, whereas coveting comes up from within us, we must love him with the heart, not merely externally, but internally, from within.

We must love our neighbour. Who is my neighbour? Of course, in a certain sense everybody is my neighbour. The Hottentot, the Chinese, the Japanese, etc., are surely my neighbours. And then we imagine that we are a good neighbour to them when we contribute in the collection plate as for foreign missions. However, specifically the neighbour is he who crosses my path. This is evident from the sixth commandment. Of course, we do not hate or desire to kill a foreigner who lives far from us and whom we never see, whom we do not know and never meet. Hence, my neighbour is the other man in my life. He crosses my path, is in conflict with my interests. He occupies the same position I do in the shop or office, in the school or church or state, has received gifts and talents I have, has probably received more than I. He limits me, strives for a better position in life than I have; if it were not for him, I would probably make greater headway in life. He is my competitor in business; in fact, he may be my enemy who hates me, speaks all manner of evil against me falsely. So, my neighbour is the man whom the Lord places in my path.

And now I must love that neighbour. The opposite of this is to hate him. However, we ought to understand that all hatred is not sin. First, we must hate all sin and evil. God is surely characterized by hatred. God is love. God Himself is love. This means, fundamentally, that the Lord loves Himself. And this means that He hates all evil. God's hatred is the reaction of His love to all sin and iniquity. This, of course, must also characterize the people and the church of God. We now refer to Ps. 119: 1-4, 113, 128. We may also refer to Amos 5:15 and Romans 7:15. Secondly, however, we must also hate people. Notice what we read in II Chron. 19:2. And very familiar are the words of the psalmist in Ps. 139:21, 22. Fact is, unto this hatred of men the people and the church of God are called. Loving God, we understand, it is impossible for God's people to love the enemies of God. It is true that Jesus admonishes us in Matt. 5:44 and 45 to love our enemies. However, there is no contradiction between this passage in Matt. 5 and Ps. 139: 21 and 22 where we read: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." In Matt. 5 the Saviour exhorts us to love our enemies. In Ps. 139, however, the psalmist declares that he hates God's enemies. Now it is true that these enemies may refer to the same people. However, we may never hate anyone who is our enemy, because of what he does to me. But God's enemies who reveal themselves as haters of God, must be the object of our hatred, be repulsive, to us.

What is the idea of this hatred of our neighbour? The hatred of sin and the wicked sinner is hatred for God's sake. We hate sin and evil men because we love God. But this hatred, condemned in the sixth commandment, is the hatred of the neighbour for my own

sake. Hatred is murder. We read in I John 3:15: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Hatred is not merely feeling or sentimental emotion. Of course, it is this, too, a feeling of intense dislike, of loathing and abhorrence. But this feeling of hatred is rooted in the heart, and out of the heart, is an activity of the intellect and of the will. When we hate we desire to kill. We hate him because he crosses my path, stands in my way, interferes with my interests, stands between me and things I want. Fact is, I hate him because I hate God. In this hatred I am in rebellion against the law of God, this sixth commandment. God has placed that neighbour upon my path. God gave him his talents and gifts, probably superior to mine. And now I hate him, want him out of my way. I say, as it were, to the living God: I resent that you placed him there: I do not want him there. I hate him, desire to kill him.

And now we must love the neighbour, also and especially my enemy. First, we must love ourselves. Does not Jesus command us: love the neighbour as thyself. So, we must love ourselves. Of course, this does not mean that we seek ourselves, do what we do for the sake of ourselves. But it does mean that we seek the good for ourselves; we must seek God for ourselves. Failing in this, we do not love ourselves. And, secondly, we must love our neighbour as ourselves. This means that we must seek the good, God, for him. We must reveal to him the love of God, seek for him that love of God. And this also applies, and this emphatically, also to our enemies. This is, positively, the idea of this sixth commandment.

Indeed: "thou shalt not kill." On the contrary, we must love our neighbour, also and emphatically our enemies, as ourselves. What an impossible commandment! Hatred and murder are so deeply embedded in our nature and being, in our hearts, the center and source of all our life. This sin of murder is set before us in Lord's Day 40 of our Heidelberg Catechism. We cannot treat all these sins now in detail. We read of anger, envy, and desire for revenge. Besides, this hatred one can and does reveal in various ways and degrees. We can kill our neighbour in our thoughts. And this is murder before God. Or, we may kill him in our words. These words need not necessarily be backbiting and slander: these particular sins are covered by the ninth commandment. But these words are words of hatred, words which we speak to him with hate and murder in our eyes. Or, we may also kill by our gestures. We may reveal our hatred by a wave of the hand, or turn up our nose at him, or a smile of utter contempt. Then, there is also the act of suicide. The actual taking of one's life. We read of this in Answer 105 of our Heidelberg Catechism. Suicide is not an act of bravery but of cowardice. Because he does not trust in God, cannot cope with the situation in which he finds himself, one takes his own life. Samson, we understand, did not commit suicide. He did not take his life as contrary to the will of God. But he prayed to God. And now, in answer to that prayer, the Lord gave him strength to pull down the temple of the god of the Philistines, destroying more of the enemy in his death than in his life, and in this he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Victor over all His enemies in His death. And our Lord Jesus Christ, of course, did not commit suicide. He did not take His life, but He gave His life, in harmony with the will of God Who had sent Him. And this also applies to the sword of the magistrate. He does not kill a murderer; he executes him.

Again: "thou shalt not kill." We must love our neighbour, also and even our enemies, as ourselves. How is this possible? This is possible only of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Love is divine. God is love in Himself. God loves Himself. And we can love only if God has first loved us and pours out His love into our hearts. Then we will also love our enemies, especially our enemies. Did not God love us while we were His enemies? Can whatever a neighbour does to us compare to what we have done to the Lord? And when the Lord pours out His love in our hearts, and we love Him because He first loved us, then we will also love our enemies, seek their good, seek God for them. If God loved us while we were His enemies, despite our great sin against Him, shall we refuse to love our enemies because of his little sin against us? May this characterize us, also as young people. Indeed, love God, and, in that love, love your neighbour as yourselves.

There is a form of self-control that says *yes* to what we should do as well as that which says *no* to what we shouldn't do. For example, I seldom *want* to study the Bible when I first begin a study. There are too many other things that are mentally much easier to do, such a reading the newspaper, a magazine, or a good Christian book. A necessary expression of self-control, then, is to set myself down at the dining room table with Bible and notebook in hand and say to myself, "Get with it!" This may not sound very spiritual, but neither does Paul's exclamation, "I beat my body and make it my slave"

-p. 162, "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges, Navpress 1983

Witnessing in the Workplace

By Tom Bergman

Walking a holy life before God is a constant test of faith. God tells us in His Word how to go about such a Christian life, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This is our calling - the wonderful calling which the Bible describes as letting our "light shine before men", showing our fruits, and witnessing (Matthew 5:16, 7:20; John 15; I John 5:6-10). With this call to witness, we must ask ourselves, "How does this instruction apply to us?" The teaching of Christ, "Ye are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14) is pertinent to us at home, at church, and at work. For those of us young people who do hold jobs today, the call is extended to us that we must show the fruits of a holy walk even while we work.

The discussion at hand concerns active and passive witnessing in the workplace. They key to witnessing in the workplace is being a good example to your fellow workers. This can and should be achieved actively on the part of the child of God (see Proverbs 19:15 about the evils of idleness). Good witnesses are doers of the Word (I John 5).

Active participation in conversations is one good way to do this. We must be vocal about our beliefs and then follow up by being proper examples. A sound witness is one who heard. Let them hear what you believe! Making friends and helping to guide them in the truth is another invaluable form of active witnessing. Active witnessing means sharing and loving, helping and caring.

Witnessing in the workplace is also passive. Since men of the world and other Christians as well can see us by our fruits, everything we say and do is a visible segment of our witness life in the workplace. Let them see how you walk! Fellow workers and employers know if we work on Sunday or not. They can see if we steal from others or not. They notice the presence or absence of cursing and swearing in our mouths. They will notice when you thank the Lord in prayer before lunch break or when you fail to. Laborers around you take into account whether you work hard and honestly for your earnings or not. This is passive witnessing; it is the good works they see in us, and the evils they cannot see in our walk.

Witnessing in the workplace is not bragging about all the wonderful feats of faith you have performed. Faith is not in and of ourselves, it is a gift of God. It is not keeping silent when a fellow worker falls into sin. That would be a sin of omission and a failure to witness.

Witnessing requires dedication and hard work. Hard work, indeed. The labors involved in active, as well as passive, witnessing are a burden. It takes God's blessing of strength upon us each day. The work never lessens - the calling is always before us. Thankfully, this constant test of faith becomes a source of vast wealth in our lives - the sort of wealth that enriches our faith.

Just remember to always come to God in prayer and find answer in His Word. Ask for His guidance and blessing on your work. Alter all, we cannot do anything of our own strength.

Active and passive witnessing work together. Vocal participation clarifies what coworkers see in your job life. Dedicate yourself to this task in the service of Christ. Others will know you by your fruits. Your efforts will be evident to all - not only your fellow workers, but everyone you come into contact with at home, at school, and at play.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."

For yesterday is already a dream, and tomorrow is only a vision;
But today, well lived, makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope.

The Church: A Glorious Structure

By Bruce W. Miedema

God's work in this world is in the way which He has chosen to reveal himself, His triune nature. The father promises, the son procures, and the spirit secures the work of God. The ground of the church is the triune God. The purpose of the church is the glorification and enjoyment of the triune God. Therefore, the church emerges out of the ground and purpose of God because He takes enjoyment in the way of the glorification of the church.

Many today when asked to explain the idea and reality of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ would begin with a very clear and convincing account of the church invisible and the church visible. It may not be improper to speak of the church as characterized by attributes that are invisible; however, only God infallibly knows who are His and whom He has given unto His Son. No person could take a census of the elect or regenerate. The church itself cannot even do this. God alone sees the inward parts of a man and scrutinizes the heart. Man is not even permitted by God to do this but rather commanded to try the spirits, confess his faults one to another, and build up the brother (or sister) in the faith. This is the area of the perceptible fruit of the church member; the activity of man rather than the spirit of man. The terms "visible church" and "invisible church" are not well grounded in scripture and have lead in many ecclesiastical circles to abuse or misunderstanding. The church is better understood as administered upon earth wherein its many members minister to one another for the purpose of glorifying God.

The church is everlasting, but it emerges in time-space history through the person of Jesus Christ and the apostles. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). The apostles are foundational to the church but only to the event that they were taught of God (Matt.16:17) and lined up with the person and work of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (16:22,23).

The apostles are a strong foundation. The apostles are unique in that they were eye and ear witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22). The apostles are powerful because they received the Spirit (John 20:22) and their very word is sharper than any two-edged sword.

Those built on this foundation are in terms foundational for future generations, but only in as much as they also are taught of God (Jn. 6:45, Is. 54:13, Jer. 31:34) and in line with Jesus Christ. The church then can be viewed as a superstructure with many "generational tiers."

Today the superstructure of the church has many generational tiers. These tiers can be read of in church history. They are the many church fathers who have succeeded the apostles and have formed the basis for the church yet to come. These generational tiers have been forming throughout the ages and even include the history of denominations and individual congregations all around the world. Yet the church is more than a structure, it is personal.

Church leaders are part of this superstructure and foundational to those for whom they are responsible before God. Men who proclaim the truth must do so in love (2 Cor. 5:14) out of holiness (Rom. 15:18, 1 Thes. 2, I Tim. 3:16) and in full dependence upon God in prayer (Rom.15:30). Parents and teachers are a part of the superstructure and also foundational. The apostle Paul reminds his spiritual son Timothy, that he has known the scriptures from childhood (2 Tim. 3:14) and here parents and teachers are reminded of their responsibility regarding the covenant children of the church. Every member of the church is called to activity in the Biblical injunction, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The church is yet under construction. This is a process which will one day be complete. It is out of the ground and purpose of God that the church has emerged and come into being. When this church is fully glorified, we shall be a part of the vision of Rev. 7:21,and 22 because God will enjoy this and be glorified everlastingly.

. . . the primary objective of our quiet time should be fellowship with God - developing a personal relationship with him and growing in our devotion to him.
-p. 78, "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges, Navpress 1983

Salvation's Basic Purpose

By Rev. J. A. Heys

Can you young people, without hesitation, present the basic reason why God saves us from our sins? Can you point out the chief purpose of the salvation which He realizes in Christ? Do you know what must be presented as the basic purpose of salvation?

There are in Scripture, as you have been taught - or will soon be taught in your catechism class - seven elements in our salvation. It begins with regeneration. And that is God's work of causing His elect to be born with a new spiritual life. We all come into this life spiritually dead, as Paul points out in Ephesians 2:1. There we read, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." And, according to I Corinthians 15:22, "In Adam all die." Since Adam died spiritually, every earthly father brings forth a spiritually dead child. And that is why Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." John 3:3. What an awesome truth! How necessary then is regeneration, that rebirth wrought by God in His grace!

Having caused us to be born again, God causes us to be called to walk and live as His covenant children. He calls us to the consciousness of a salvation He realizes in His Son. And He also causes us to believe this glorious and comforting truth. Having caused us to be born again He calls us and realizes faith in us. We believe that He regenerated us and calls us as His elect children.

Then, having worked in us these three elements of salvation, our God causes us to be assured that all our sins have been blotted out. He causes us to know and believe that we are justified by what His Son did for us. Many years ago, and over the radio on a religious program, a man - whose name I do not know - said that to be justified means that God deals with me just as if I'd never sinned. That is true! That is a wonderful gift of God's grace. For by it He makes us legally perfect through His son, Who never sinned, and Who loves only that which pleases God. To be justified means to be legally right in God's eyes; and therefore that we will not receive, even for one split second, one bit of punishment for the sins which we committed; and that Christ Jesus, His Son, suffered all the torment which we deserve because of our sins.

What our God also gives us in His grace is called sanctification. Our Dutch language presents that word sanctification very beautifully. It calls sanctification "heiligmaking." And that element "heilig" means holy. The other element in that word, namely "making" which is pronounced differently than in our English language, does mean what our words making means. Sanctification is that work of God's grace whereby He makes us holy, makes us able and willing to walk in love in His holy law.

There are two more elements in our salvation, and are presented in Scripture as preservation and glorification. Thus in Philippians 1:6 we read, "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Not one elect child of God will, after he is born again, die spiritually and become an unbeliever. Jehovah, the I AM - for that is the meaning of that name Jehovah - will keep us in the faith. We may slip and slide like Peter did, when he denied Jesus three times. But when the cock crowed, he went out and wept bitterly because of his sin. Matthew 26:74, 75.

And the last element in our salvation is glorification. Just read Revelation 21 and 22, and see what a glorious life we will have when Christ returns. All tears will be wiped away from our eyes. There will be no death, no sorrow or crying. There will be no night there, no curse; and we shall receive beautiful bodies, far more beautiful than Adam's and Eve's before they fell into sin. In fact, according to Hebrews 1:13, 14 we shall be above the highest angels.

Now the basic question is: "Why does God do all this? Why does He save us from our guilt, and pretty soon from all sinful activity? What is behind all this wonderful work of salvation? And the answer is: So that He, the one and only God, may be served and glorified.

Young People, if we do not want salvation, as the gift that makes us able and willing to glorify God, we do not want salvation. And churches that simply preach and teach deliverance from punishment, and not from sin, are not Christian churches. The world wants salvation from the afflictions, pain and misery of the body, which Adam's sin brought into this world. Even Satan would like to have that kind of salvation. He, and all in his devilish kingdom, both men and angels, want escape from the everlasting torments of

hell, into which they are going to be cast. Unbelievers do not want to be saved from hatred against God, but merely from its punishment.

The truth, to which by God's grace we can and must cling, is that He saves us so that we can consciously and willingly serve and glorify Him in all our thoughts and will and actions of the body. Do we not in Psalm 139:14 read? "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." And if we do not want to praise God with our hearts as well as with our mouths, we do not have the beginning of salvation.

In Psalm 65:1 the psalmist correctly states: "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion; and unto Thee shall the vow be performed." God saves us so that we may everlastingly praise Him in His new creation. And that word translated as "waiteth" means "is silent". The idea here is that the psalmist, David, declares, that when by God's grace we are saved from sin, our souls are silent, in the sense that we do not and will not boast about what we did, but that we praise God for what He did. God saves us, and we when saved will not boast about what we did, but what God did in us and for us. In the new Jerusalem those who are saved will do with their mouths that which their hearts were by God enabled to do.

Young People, do not leave our churches and go where salvation is only presented as that which brings joy to man's flesh. Our churches rightly sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." Note: ALL blessings flow. And it is important that we sing that with our hearts, and not simply with our mouths.

Do not let anyone teach you, or even preach to you, a god who can be changed by men, and be frustrated by a spiritually dead man's works. The striking thing in the Old Testament is that in the original copy of the 39 books thereof, the name Jehovah is presented hundreds of times. That name means I AM. And surely that means that He never changes His mind or His will, or His works. It means that He always was, is and will be what is expressed in His other name, which is Lord. For He is the Lord of all lords, the King of all kings. Let NO ONE tell you that Jehovah, the I AM, is changed by spiritually dead people, and caused to stop doing what He is trying to do. Cast away all that false doctrine that spiritually dead men can and do frustrate the almighty God. As the I AM, God is not frustrated by offering salvation. He does not offer it! He is not a fool to offer salvation to those spiritually dead. He knows that they are spiritually dead. He told Adam that the day he would eat that forbidden fruit he would die. And He did die spiritually that day. Can the almighty I AM become an I Was, because a creature does not accept His offer? If God only offers salvation, He is not the I AM. Then thousands upon thousands of people make Him the I Was. Jehovah does NOT offer salvation. He commands all men to believe He is God and to serve Him. But He does not offer salvation even to those whom He chose in Christ. He causes them to be regenerated, called, have faith, be justified, sanctified, preserved and glorified. And even the desire for salvation is His gift to us.

Let us go a step further. Let not man teach you that God sends His grace for a time, on unbelievers whom He did not eternally choose in Christ. Reject wholeheartedly the teaching that Jehovah, the I AM, exercises in this life a "common grace" upon those whom He did not elect in Christ before He created the world. If God is gracious to those whom He did not eternally elect in Christ, He was wrong when He told Adam that he would die the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit. Giving death to a man cannot mean that God will still be gracious to him.

The word grace means favor; and if our God is going to favor those whom He did not eternally choose in Christ, then, because He is the I AM, He would have to do that even after they die. How can His grace be upon those whom He casts into hell? He will, indeed, give those not chosen in Christ things that appeal to their flesh; but not in His grace. As the I AM, He does not change His attitude to those not chosen in Christ. The gracious I AM does not become that I Was a gracious God!

The word grace refers only to those for whom He sent Christ. In Romans 9:13 He says - not simply Paul - "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Can God's grace be bestowed on those whom He hates? Since God is Jehovah, the I AM, which means that He does not change, dare we change His name into I WAS, one Who was in this life gracious to the reprobate, but changes His attitude after they die? Dare we since He is the I AM, even think that there might be a little grace, a common grace, in hell? Will the I AM change?

In Psalm 5:5, 6 we read, "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful men." Does God's hatred cause Him to deal graciously, and favor those whom He hates? No, Young People, it is either . . . or! ALL of God's grace comes through Christ; and falls only on those for whom Christ died. Salvation's basic purpose is God's glory. And, as the I AM, He does not deal in His grace, that is, in His favor, upon those for whom He did not send His Son to redeem them. Those not chosen in Christ deserve His wrath, because He is the I AM, and not the I Was. We can change, as so often we do, in thinking and willing. But Jehovah never changes His mind or will; and God saves us because, as we read in Ephesians 1:4, He, before the foundation of the world, elected us in His Son.

Jehovah, the I AM gracious to those chosen in Christ, never becomes the I WAS gracious to those I eternally did not choose in Christ. In no way and to no degree, or at any time does Jehovah change in any way!

Book Review

CHILDREN OF THE LIVING GOD, by Sinclair Ferguson (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1987; 163pp.; price?; hardcover). Reviewed by Doug Kuiper.

You all know the parable. A farmer had two sons. One day the younger son asked his father for his inheritance, and after receiving it, he spent it on riotous living. Being hungry and broke, he decided to return home and to ask his father to take him back as a servant. But the father refused. Instead, the father took him back as his son, restoring to him his place in the family.

This is a beautiful truth: God has done that to us! We are God's children! He is our Father! Does that matter to you?

Sinclair Ferguson is a conservative evangelical Christian who stands in the Presbyterian tradition. In this book he develops the truth that we are God's sons, not only His servants. He is orthodox in his development of this truth; he realizes that God is not, nor does He wish to be, the father of all men, but is the father only of those whom He has saved.

The fact that we are God's sons means that we have been born; else we would not exist (obviously to be a child one must exist). We have been adopted; else we could not be called children (by nature we are children of wrath, not of God - cf. Ephesians 2:3ff.) And because we are sons, we will receive an inheritance from our Father - a perfect life in heaven, which life we begin to live now on earth by being at the same time conformists and nonconformists: conforming to Christ and God, and not conforming to the world.

Yes, we are nonconformists to the world. He who does conform to the world has not conformed to Christ. He is not God's child; God is not his Father. Does that matter to you?

Ferguson makes the doctrine which he develops very practical. If God is our Father, we are members of His family. We have brothers and sisters who are also His children. So this doctrine affects all aspects of our spiritual family life and thus all aspects of our walk on earth as Christians. Our Father rules the family: His Word is law. As children, we had better know that Word. He talks to us in love. As children, we must talk back to Him in prayer. He disciplines us when we do wrong. As children, we must submit to such discipline, knowing that He does it out of love for us, and in order to mold us to be the person He wants us to be. But He is not a slave master, and we are not slaves. He is our friend and our Father, and we are His friends and His children. And so He gives us an immense amount of freedom to do as we please, as long as it glorifies Him. And in all that we do, in every way in which we exercise that freedom, we must remember that we are free only because He is our Father.

The great strength of this book is its application of Scripture's teaching about adoption to our everyday life. This makes it an ideal devotional work. If after reading it one is not more deeply conscious of the special relationship in which he stands to God, with all that that relationship implies, he has not understood what he read.

Uphold Me, Lord

By Linda Pikkert

Oh, dear Heavenly Father
I sorrow all day long
for the sins I have committed
for all that I've done wrong.
My sins are ever countless
I've nothing for myself to say
but thanks to Thee, oh glorious King
for blessings day by day.
Have mercy on me, oh Father,
for this I pray to Thee
that thou wilt ever have mercy
on a sinner such as me.

I need Thy help, uphold me
when I'm drowning in my pain
I pray Thee, carry me out
for my own work is in vain.
I listen to Thy word, Lord,
and things Thou hast revealed
sovereign from eternity
Thy covenant is sealed.
Down on my knees I bow
humbly before Thee, heart and soul
beseeching for forgiveness
Dear Father, make me whole.

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