BEACON LIGHTS

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 126:6

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Cover photo: *Northwest Iowa farm and countryside at harvest-time.*

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From The Editor

Welcome to the November 1995 issue of the *Beacon Lights*. The staff and I would like to welcome Lenora Hoekstra as the latest member of the staff. Nora has volunteered to mail your magazines to you, so if you see her, please give her a word of appreciation. Welcome, Nora!

We have a great issue this month. We have two articles from Dordt students. Brenda DeJong included a warm article reminding us to live a godly life, and the rewards of that life. Michele VerMeer wrote a captivating article about a lost wedding ring, and draws a good lesson from it.

Calvin Kalsbeek included his speech from this year's convention. Since the speech is quite long, we include the first part in this issue. Look for the remainder next month. Brett VanKoevering sent in an article on the importance of discipline for the church world.

Pastor Davis penned an interesting article on whether we should call our ministers "Reverend" or "Pastor." I included some notes on the etymologies of these words, and you can take that for what it is worth. Mindy DeMeester has an article about how the Christian lifestyle can be applied to school. Daris Van Bemmel submitted an article on proper attire for church. Reverend Heys provided our meditations for us this month. I would like to give a word of thanks to Thelma Westra for this month's Thanksgiving poem. Thanks, also, to Connie Meyer for her "Little Lights."

As a post script to last month's article regarding dating and marriage, I want to let you know that there is a courting ring (no pun intended) discussion group on the Internet. If you have access to the Internet, you might want to check it out. They discuss a variety of subjects from premarital kissing to arranged marriages. If you are interested, contact Sarah Schlissel at SFSchliss@aol.com.

May God be with you in the coming month.

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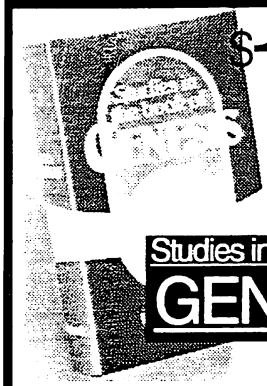

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Don't Lose Your Wedding Ring

by Michelle Ver Meer

There is one story in my family that is famous. It's a story that my grandfather loves to tell. The story is about my great-grandpa, Ed Ver Meer and his wife, Jennie. They farmed on a small acreage along what is now the "Orange City blacktop." They were a happy couple and proud of their marriage together. Ed was so proud that at times, he wore his wedding ring while he worked around the farm. One spring day, Ed got his horse and plow ready and headed for the field. At noon, he came in to wash his hands before dinner. As usual, he looked down at his hands as he dipped them into the cool water, but he noticed that something was missing. His wedding ring was gone. He traced his steps back to the barn to see if it had fallen in the grass, but the bright sun did not reflect on any gold that day.

Jennie scolded Ed quite severely, I'm told. They spent many days searching the barn and the field that he plowed that day, but they never found the ring. The lost wedding ring was always a sore spot in their marriage. I know that my great-grandparents saw not only material value in that ring, but also symbolic and sentimental worth. The importance that my great-grandparents placed on their wedding rings taught their children the seriousness of marriage. That is why my grandfather has also passed down this story to me. The story has a moral that runs much deeper than just a material loss. It shows how important wedding vows are and that marriage is something that is not to be taken lightly.

I believe that the reason my family has seen the bond of marriage as holy is because they have studied what God says in the Bible. God talks very specifically about marriage. It is a beautiful blessing that God created just for us. He said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh," (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is such a special bond because it is a picture of God's church and Jesus. Ephesians 5:22-33 talks about this symbol and mentions the oneness of marriage. Because we, God's church, are part of Christ's body, we must also carry on this symbol in our bonds of marriage. When I look at other marriages and the love that is found there, it is amazing to think of the love that will be found in our marriage to Jesus in heaven.

Since our promise to love and cherish our spouses holds such a special symbol in our lives as Christians, it is inevitable that God will have more to say about breaking the bond of marriage. He says, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put assunder," (Matthew 19:6). "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away," (Malachi 2:16). That is pretty straightforward. He is not happy with divorce. God is so faithful to *His* promises to His church. Shouldn't He *expect* us to be faithful to our spouses as well? It is very logical that He expects this of us. But no person who has ever lived is perfect, and Jesus knew this. He gave us some guidelines when divorce comes into our lives. "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery," (Matthew 5:32). In I Corinthians 7:27, 39 it says, "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife...The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to

whom she will; only in the Lord." The only justifiable reason for divorce, according to God, is sexual immorality. That is also a very clear-cut statement by God. Denying this fact would be a very blind act. God also tells us that the bond of marriage lasts until we die. That is why we say the words, "So long as we both shall live..." and "'til death do us part," when we take our vows. It would seem harsh in *our* eyes to say to someone else that they can't ever marry again until their "ex" dies. However, God doesn't have a problem with saying this. He commands us to respect the bond of marriage until death.

All sins carry consequences, no matter how severe they are. For example, young women who get pregnant out of wedlock live with the results of their sins for the rest of their lives. They can repent, move on, and make the most of their lives, serving God in the place that He has given them. That's the way that it must be with divorce. We can't justify remarriage by saying that to not marry again is unreasonable and harsh. We must all live with the choices that we have made and the consequences of our sins. However, when we look at divorce and remarriage in the Bible, we must remember that there is still a silver lining to every cloud. God's commands are never too harsh. He will always make a way for us to bear our hardships, including divorce. He will stay by our side and keep us from being lonely. God never changes. He is a faithful, strong, and loving God. He gives us commandments that are for our good. It is when we start to change His commands to what we want them to be that we run into serious trouble. I believe that when we look at marriage in the light of what God really says to us, then we are set free by the truth. He will bless us when we love and obey Him.

Eighty years later, a farmer found my great-grandparent's ring on his cultivator. After cleaning it and examining the initials engraved on the inside, he was able to find the family that it belonged to. My grandfather and great uncles were given their parent's wedding band. I'm sure that they could not help but think of what their parents would have thought of this miraculous finding. The wedding ring had outlived my great-grandparents, just like the bond of marriage outlives our own lives and becomes the bond between us and Christ. Every time I think of this special story, I am reminded of how careful I have to be when I choose a husband. When I walk into marriage, holding my husband's hand, I don't want divorce to be an option in our minds. When I get married, it is my prayer that I will always have, hold, and cherish my husband. There is also another thing that I am reminded of, that is to keep your wedding ring on your hand for as long as you live...but be careful that you don't lose it.

Michele is a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Guest Article

Reverend or Pastor?

by Pastor Bruce Davis

Calling or referring to ministers of the gospel as "Reverend" has been a long standing tradition in English speaking churches. In some circles it is more prevalent than in others; for instance, it is a deeply entrenched tradition in Reformed churches, but in many Presbyterian denominations the practice is infrequent or non-existent.

The stated reason for this is to make a distinction between clergy and laity and to show respect and honor for the office of minister and for the ministers themselves. This practice is said to be an application of I Thessalonians 5:13, "And to esteem them (officebearers of the church) very highly in love for their work's sake."

While it is indeed biblical to respect the office of minister and to honor ministers as ministers, I contend that the use of "Reverend" with reference to ministers or in addressing ministers is an undesirable and unnecessary practice because it is an

unbiblical practice. "Pastor" rather than "Reverend" should be used in connection with the undershepherds of God's people.

The word translated "reverend" in the Bible means awesome; dreadful and terrible in majesty; to be feared with the deepest reverential awe. It is used in Psalm 111:9 to describe God's name. "He sent redemption to his people, He hath commanded his covenant forever: holy and reverend is his name."

God's name is reverend. He makes His name known as reverend. Only God's name is reverend; no one else's name is reverend. Since the third commandment of God's law requires, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works," the word "reverend" should not be used to refer to sinful man but to God only. The Shorter Catechism goes on to say that the third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes Himself known. Certainly to use the word "reverend," which is part of the revelation of God's own name, with reference to vessels of clay, without any biblical warrant, is a profaning and abusing of that by which God makes Himself known. Granting the sincerity and good intentions of those who use the term "reverend" with reference to ministers and the high esteem in which this practice is held, especially in Reformed churches, the judgment of God's Word is nevertheless that this is a violation of the third commandment. Even though in such cases the third commandment might be broken in ignorance and not in a deliberate and malicious way, it is still using the Lord's name in vain.

The word translated "reverend" in the Bible means awesome; dreadful and terrible in majesty; to be feared with the deepest reverential awe.

We must discipline ourselves to use biblical terms in biblical ways. The use of "reverend" with reference to ministers is taking a biblical term and using it in an unbiblical way. One Presbyterian Book of Church Order wisely declares, "No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein; or receive an official title of spiritual pre-eminence, except such as are employed in the Scriptures."

Even though it is claimed that "reverend" is used only as a means of showing courtesy and respect to ministers in their office, this use of the word robs God of His pre-eminence and uniqueness and wrongly exalts man. How incongruous it is for the followers of the meek and lowly Lord Jesus Christ to assume to themselves titles such as "reverend" and to allow this word to be used in connection with their names.

Is there any warrant in Scripture for this use of "reverend" to refer to ministers? Do we read of any "Reverends" in the Bible? Is there a Reverend Apollos or a Reverend Titus? How about a Reverend John or a Reverend James? Is there a Reverend Peter? No, but there is a Peter who fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord," (Luke 5:8). Is there a Reverend Paul? No, but there is a Paul who referred to himself as "the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle" (I Corinthians 15:9), "less than the least of all saints" (Ephesians 3:8), and the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15).

Although there is a scriptural distinction between officebearers and other members of the congregation, this distinction is only in their function or role in the church. At the cross, officebearers and other members of the congregation all stand on level ground. They are all saved by sovereign grace through faith. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The use of "reverend" to refer to ministers makes an unhealthy and unscriptural distinction between clergy and laity.

Is there a minister who is really comfortable with the term "reverend" being applied in his case? Don't true ministers know from their hearts renewed by the Holy Spirit that they are not reverend at all? Isn't there some discomfort in the use of the term "reverend" because the "Reverends" know that they are not "reverend" but rather sinful, defiled and corrupt people? Could it be that a minister who is truly comfortable with "reverend" being used in his case or in the cases of others has a defective view of God and is failing to consider who he really is in God's sight?

What a strange sight it is in the church to have a young minister in his mid-twenties, fresh out of seminary, being referred to and referring to himself as Reverend So and So, while the older and more mature saints in the congregation have no such titles.

Apparently Paul and others in the Bible did not feel a need or have a desire to refer to themselves with titles. They took to heart what is written in Job 32:21, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's

person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man."

But is there no place to give a title to ministers, to acknowledge that they are set apart for the gospel ministry in a way that is not true of other members of the congregation? In many callings titles of respect are used, i.e. for doctors, congressmen, nurses, professors, judges, etc. Yes, there is a place for this and a biblical way for doing so. It is by the use of the word "Pastor." This is a biblical term used for the undershepherds who serve the people of God under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:11 does not declare that the risen and ascended Christ gave "reverends" to the church; he gave pastors and teachers as gifts to the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). I Peter 5 exhorts the elders to feed the flock of God which is among them, to be an example to the flock, and to look for their reward when the Chief Shepherd himself shall appear. The language here is of pastoring the people of God. Many other passages of Scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, could be quoted to reinforce the biblical point that Jehovah, whose name is reverend, is pleased to give pastors or shepherds to His people.

the word "Pastor"... is a biblical term used for the undershepherds who serve the people of God under the authority of the Chief Shepherd

Do not misunderstand. I am not encouraging inappropriate familiarity with ministers. I am not calling for anything less than honorable and respectful ways of referring to and addressing ministers. I know there are those who are concerned that using "pastor" instead of "reverend" is less respectful and not as dignified, and they fear the misuse and abuse of "pastor." They are aware there are those who begin referring to and addressing the minister as Pastor John Doe; this soon becomes Pastor John and then John. These people feel that the word "reverend" is a safeguard against this problem; yet the word "reverend," disregarding for a moment its unbiblical basis, is abused in a similar way. Reverend John Doe soon becomes Reverend or Rev. to the people so that the word "reverend" ends up taking the place of the pastor's name.

Let us acknowledge with respect and esteem the office of minister. Let us honor ministers for their work's sake. Let us show all due honor to them in the Lord; but let us do so with biblical terms used in biblical ways. Let us forsake the use of unbiblical terms or biblical terms used in unbiblical ways with reference to ministers. Let the ministers of the church lead by example by ceasing from the use of the title "reverend" in their correspondence, phone conversations, and personal interactions with others.

Using "pastor" as a title for ministers is biblical; it does not wrongly exalt man; and it gives God all the pre-eminence in the church through Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of His elect. It is a means of obeying the third commandment which calls us, in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, to "use the holy Name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence, to the end that He may be rightly confessed and worshiped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works."

The use of "reverend" which I oppose in this article is so deeply entrenched in Reformed churches today that it will not be quickly or easily removed. If the practice dies, it will undoubtedly die a slow death. May this short article, by God's sovereign blessing, be used to hasten its death.

Pastor Davis is pastor of the Grand Valley Orthodox Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

Both Pastor Davis and I are aware that this article conflicts with both the practices and ideas of many in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The word "Reverend," from the Latin word *revereri*, meaning "to revere," was first introduced into the English language around 1485. It seems to me that the word was used to refer to the preacher of the gospel rather than to his office, as is implied by the comparative and superlative forms used by the Anglican Church: "Very Reverend," "Right Reverend," and "Most Reverend." The word "Pastor," from the Latin word *pastor*, meaning "shepherd," was introduced into English more than one hundred years earlier in 1377. As a point of interest, *dominee*, the Dutch word for a preacher of the gospel, comes from the Latin word *dominus*, meaning both "lord," and "the Lord."

For further reading, see volume 64 pages 204 and 369 of The Standard Bearer. Pastor Davis and I heartily welcome your comments and opinions.

Michael

The Responsibility of the Youth

by Melinda DeMeester

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her." Proverbs 4:5-8.

Many children and young people are now in the midst of the busy school schedules. Amidst all the busyness of school, after school activities and jobs, we have quite a responsibility for our schooling. Whether we see it as this or not, all, young as well as old, have responsibilities in this life. As a young person the foremost calling in our lives is our responsibility to school. While we are busy with our schooling let us ask ourselves, "Am I fulfilling my responsibility to my schooling?"

Every day many children and young people go to school. The young kindergartners can't wait to get to class, see their teacher, and do their work. The junior high and high school students go into school thinking of what kind of challenges and work the day will bring. Every student has an attitude to school, whether it is good or bad. We must see our schools as a means which God has given unto us and therefore we must use it and perform our work to the best of our ability.

Our Christian schools are a great blessing we have received from God. Many people toiled long and hard for us to have these Christian schools. Some times we take these schools for granted. Do we really appreciate the education that we receive from our schools? Do we realize why our schools are different from other schools in the world around us? In school we are taught the basics of science, math, spelling, grammar, etc. Do we see the unique way in which it is taught to us? Each subject is taught from a true biblical perspective. Just take a moment and think of the many classes we take which are centered around God's Word or how they relate to God's creation around us. What would class be like without that Scriptural teaching? Sooner or later many of you will find out. As we will go on into college it will become quite evident how unique and special our schools are.

Soon many of the seniors will be graduating and going out into college or the workplace. In college there may not be classes taught which are based on the Word of God. Many different kinds of teachings and doctrines may be thrown at you. Young people from every kind of background will be sitting in the same classes together. Many of them will not have the same Reformed doctrinal beliefs as you. Classes will be taught from a totally different perspective. Some will be taught from a humanistic or evolutionistic viewpoint. We will continue to fight that for the rest of our lives on this earth. College is only the beginning. We then realize how precious our days at a Christian school were. Be thankful for those days!

Whether you are in school or in college each and every one has a Christian responsibility for being a good steward. We must be good stewards of the talents and abilities that God has given to us. That responsibility includes faithfully doing homework and putting our all into it. Although you may receive a "C" on a test for which you really studied, you can feel that you received a good grade because you put your best into it. If, however, you receive a "C" without studying, by putting some time into studying you could receive an "A." We must always strive to do our best in our work and glorify God by putting our talents to good use.

Another responsibility that scholars have is to respect and obey teachers and others who are in authority over them. Even though some students and teachers may not see eye to eye on everything, we must still honor them for God has put them

over us. Give your teachers respect and even encouragement. They need it just as you do! We must also remember that our teachers have the huge responsibility of teaching the covenant youth. What a task! They are teaching and instructing the children of believing parents—the children of God. Let us pray that they will receive what they need in this great calling.

Remember that our schools are an extension of our covenant homes. Besides teaching the basic classes, our schools teach us to respect others, to be honest in our lives as well as our work, discipline and to show love toward our fellow believers. Much of what we learn in school will carry over into our life beyond high school.

Let us, then, thank God for our schools and teachers and let us strive to carry out our responsibility in school; respect those in authority, be honest and do our work to the utmost of our ability. Pray that our schools may continue to be true to the Word of God.

Melinda is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Guest Article

A Guide for Our Paths

by Brenda DeJong

Since education has begun for another season, everyone's back into the flow of work, school, sports, and extra-curricular activities. Our family lives just get busier and crazier as life goes along. A quick hello in the morning is all we may even see of each other during a normal day. Along with this hustle and bustle of the school year comes many varying decisions.

As God's people we make many daily choices as to what is more important in our lives. We have to constantly ask ourselves, "What would God want me to do...finish homework or watch T.V., get a job or play sports, even worship or sleep?" In the busy flow of today's lifestyle, we are called to live the antithetical life. This is not always an easy thing to do when we see our own friends renting questionable movies or attending theaters, or when we have to choose between attending an awesome, although ungodly, concert or obeying our parents.

But God has given us guidance in these choices to help us face them. He has equipped us with a marvelous, most precious gift—His Word. Many times it's demanding and burdensome not only to find the time in our schedules to read it but also to study its poetic language. We have to remember that if we draw close to God through His Word, He will protect us and be with us. James 4:8a so beautifully tells us, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." What more can be said? God *is* going to give us the assistance we need to make godly choices in light of His Word.

Even though God promises to help us, He never said that making choices would be easy. It's especially difficult to make godly choices when all of your close, Christian friends do things that test your morals and standards. We have to weigh things in our minds and compare them with the Bible's standards in making our decisions. We sometimes need to make a decision to follow His standards, despite the fact that our friends may be doing something morally wrong in God's eyes. If we make a decision to follow God's standards, our closer friends may even laugh at us or reject us.

But friends on this earth may come and go, but we have a friend "that sticketh closer than a brother," Proverbs 18:24b. Christ is our best friend in all situations. He guides us through temptations, and He gives us the peace after the decision that "YES, I am with you. I will still be your God."

I especially recall some verses about making decisions that really have been encouraging to me: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths," Proverbs 3:3-5. This is especially important as we, young people, choose our future callings and mates. Demanding, crucial choices about what is the most important thing to do with our lives must be made. When we graduate from high school, our futures

begin ultimately *without* parental help, and we can't be passive and refuse to be good stewards of our talents. Do we want to spend money to attend college? What do we want to do with our lives? How can we put our talents to the best use? Is my boyfriend/girlfriend God's will for a marriage partner now?" What kind of boyfriend or girlfriend should I look for?

It is so calming to know that in the midst of all these questions that bombard us that we have Someone to trust in to guide us...both in our everyday walk and in our future path. Our Lord will never leave us or forsake us. Through thick and thin, He will guide us. He will love us even though we make mistakes. What a friend our Lord is as we make choices! Let's remember to let Him be our strength and guide as we make not only daily decisions, but also crucial and important decisions. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass," Psalm 37:5. Let's make Him our strength and guide.

Brenda is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois. She is a freshman at Dordt College, majoring in elementary education.

Guest Article

Dressing for God's House

by Daris Van Bemmel

As far as I know, there's no place in the Bible that tells us exactly what is proper attire for the worship services. However, many passages refer to reverence and respect which should serve as a guide as to what we wear in church.

In Leviticus 19:30 we read: "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary."

In Psalm 89:7 we read: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all those that are about him."

In Hebrews 12:28 we read: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

In Proverbs 31:25 we read this about a virtuous woman: "strength and honor are her clothing."

It saddens me to see so many of our people walking into church wearing slacks, skorts, shorts, bluejeans, T-shirts, and the list goes on. Some look like they're ready to go to a picnic after church, they're so casually dressed. Hardly any male wears a tie anymore.

Five years ago, the occurrence of wearing this type of attire was rare. Maybe a rebellious teenager would try it. The small children, today, and sad to say, mothers and fathers, are following suit. What an ungodly example for our children.

I'm not saying an individual wearing one of the above won't get just as much out of the sermon as an individual wearing a dress or suit. What we need to remember and to stress to our children, is that we are in the presence of God.

I want to urge all parents not only to be role models for their children, but also to insist that their children dress in reverence to God. I would like to close this article with the Word of God as read in Psalm 96:8, "Give unto the Lord, the glory due unto His name."

Daris is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Rev. J. Heys

November 1

As we approach the end of this year, we come closer to the day when Christ Jesus, our Saviour, will come and bring all of His elect into the everlasting glory of the New Jerusalem. They will all dwell there with Him, and with new bodies and souls, in a heavenly blessedness, which God prepares in Christ Jesus, our Saviour. We will then have a more wonderful life than Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. In fact we will have a more blessed life than the one the holy angels now have in heaven. How often, and how deeply do you Young People look forward to the day when Christ returns with the wonderful life which He earned for all of His elect? By all means **look up, and read, Revelation 22:1-7**. Does that truth written there fill you with joy?

November 2

In the verses considered yesterday, the souls of every one of God's born-again elect will see Christ face to face, and have His Name on their foreheads. They shall be filled with spiritual joy. And the awesome question is whether we have that heavenly joy. It is not merely deliverance from everlasting punishment in hell. **Take note of the fact that appears in Romans 8:28**. Look it up. Do you believe that truth? *All* things work together for good. Is Jehovah your God; and do you thank Him for all that which He causes to happen? Do you want to be delivered from sin, as well as from the punishment for which sin calls? Is God your Saviour spiritually as well as physically?

November 3

The awesome question is, what do you consider salvation to be? The question is not merely whether God saves His elect from punishment. He does do that for His elect, whom He chose eternally in Christ. But if that only is the salvation which you want, you do not want the salvation which God realizes through His Son. Yes, God will take away that punishment. **But look up Genesis 3:15**. God promises His elect victory over Satan and sin. And if we merely want salvation from the punishment, for which our sins call, we do not really want the salvation God promises. We must want to walk in love toward God, and serve Him with heart, mind, soul and strength. *That* is our salvation.

November 4

We do well to believe, and **hold on tightly to the truth presented to us in Ephesians 2:8-10**. Take careful note of the fact that salvation is not presented basically as deliverance from the punishment which a sinner deserves. Our sins are one hundred percent acts of hatred against God. And God saves our hearts and minds from that, and from that hatred against Himself. Salvation is that work of God's grace, whereby He causes us to love Himself. Look up the passage above. God, by His grace, and as a free gift, causes us to love Himself. And the awesome question is whether you want that kind of salvation. Read what Paul wrote in light of what God says in Genesis 3:15.

November 5

Another awesome question, besides the one we considered yesterday, is whether we consider ourselves to be born again children of God. There are in the world today so many different kinds of churches, and people who merely call themselves Christians, but act in antichristian ways. **Look up Psalm 1:1 and 2**, and find what God says about His elect. They delight in His law, and even "In His law meditate day and night." Does sin bother you? Does God's law trouble you? Do you try to defend yourself in this or that sin? As a born again child of God, you will pray to God for an increase in your faith, hope and love, which He works in His elect in His grace.

November 6

As pointed out yesterday, the true children of God keep God's law, because they love Him and in that love walk joyfully, as His law calls them to walk. **Look up I John 4:19**. There we have that beautiful, comforting statement, namely: "We love Him because He first loved us." Our salvation is that work of God's grace, which He causes us to walk in. Every bit of our salvation, with the desire for it, is God's gift to us. As we rightfully sing *by* God's grace: "All that I am I owe to Thee. Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me." Can you, and do you with your heart sing that truth? If you do, you will thank God for His free gift

of salvation. Praise Him for that gracious gift, and manifest your thankfulness.

November 7

Where, Young People, do you walk with joy and thankfulness? **Look up and read Psalm 119:1-8**. There we have revealed who are and who are not a blessed people. You do well when you find that you do walk in God's law. The question is not whether you keep God's law so that He does not punish you. Punishment does come from God; and our calling is to walk in love of God with every part of our bodies and souls. As we are not ashamed, when we have respect unto all of God's commandments, so our calling is to walk according to His commandments. How much do you find that in your life? Still more, does sin bother you? Are you merely afraid of the punishment for which sin calls? Do you hate sin, and pray for an holy walk?

November 8

God Himself, through the psalmist, reveals our calling to cleanse ourselves spiritually. **Read Psalm 119:9-16.** As covenant Young People you must take heed of this truth in God's Word and cleanse yourselves. Because of God's grace you have God's Word dwelling in your hearts. Then you want God to teach you His statutes, so that you rejoice in the way of God's testimonies. How many times did you do that today? How much of God's law did you forget as God's law, and were interested in what men say? Do you make sure, that every day you find joy in doing what God calls us to do? How much, today, have you read your Bible, wherein God speaks of those chosen in Christ, and those saved by His cross? Does God's Word make you happy?

November 9

An important truth, **which we find in Psalm 119:17-24**, is that when God opens our eyes, we behold wondrous things out of God's law. Just read that passage for your comfort. The truth here in this Psalm causes us to see wonderful things. Satan, through men, tries to get us away from God's truth. He strives to brush God's Word away; and he makes us interested in his false doctrines. That is why in the church world there are so many different kinds of churches. How much, and how carefully have you read God's Word, every day of the week? The blessed gift of God is that He causes us to know and enjoy the truth that Christ Jesus is our Saviour. Read that Word of God every day; and eat that blessed truth.

November 10

Is your heart spiritually bigger today than in the past? Is your joy greater in its thankfulness for God's gift of salvation? **Read Psalm 119:25-32**. Take note of that truth presented in that last verse. We will run the way of God's commandments, when He enlarges our hearts. Has God quickened you to do that? Do you want to grow spiritually in your knowledge of what God gives and does for His elect? You are eager to grow stronger physically. But do you more and more want to live as a child of God? Are you a child of God, or merely called such? Does Christianity fill your heart with joy?

November 11

The important question is not merely whether we can call ourselves Christians; but whether God calls us Christians. Satan got the whole human race to be antichristian, that is, be against Christ. **But look up Psalm 119:41-48**. There the believing children of God, by His grace, expressly claim to be those with delight in God's commandments, that is, having love of God's law. Do you find that in your life? Can you in your heart say, "All that I am, I owe to Thee. Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me."? Can you, and do you with your heart sing that truth? Do you daily get down on your knees, and in prayer ask God to increase in your life evidence that you are thankful for God's work of making you a Christian?

November 12

The true child of God's comfort is due to that work of God's grace, whereby He quickens him in His salvation. **Read Psalm 119:49-56.** Although we do have much affliction, during our earthly life, we flee from it when God brings our souls into heavenly glory. For God works hope in us, not merely desire for salvation, and all its blessedness. And hope is absolute confidence. When God works faith in us, He causes us to be very, very sure that what He promises us will come completely. The question is not merely whether you want relief from earthly troubles. God's believing child expects a wonderful, eternal life in the coming kingdom. Do you hope for it?

November 13

The salvation God works in us does not in this life remove physical pain. Every unbeliever wants that. **But in Psalm 119:57-64 we find the child of God** stating that God is our portion; and therefore that He will keep His word, regardless of what happens physically. Read that passage mentioned. The child of God believes that God will keep His word of promise, and will never ignore any of it. God's promises are absolutely sure in every detail. Do you find in your life that God turned you unto His testimonies? How often do you read God's Word? How often do you rejoice in His promises? Do you love God, and want to walk in love toward Him? If so, you have the assurance of His grace, and the comfort of His promise in Christ.

November 14

It is time for you **now to read Psalm 119:65-72**. Do you want to do that today? If you do, you have evidence that God has dealt with you as His servant. No, that does not mean that He makes you a slave. It means that He causes you to be born again with a new spiritual life. It means that He causes you to be righteous and holy. You are still physically alive, but are you also spiritually alive? Do you sincerely want to be taught judgement and knowledge? Is that due to the fact that you believe God's commandments? Do you believe that God is good, and that He has the right to demand of you acts of love toward Himself?

Are you merely afraid of the punishment that comes upon sinners? Or do you keep God's law because you love Him?

November 15

When things go wrong, as far as your flesh is concerned, be sure that you **agree with the Psalmist, who wrote in Psalm 119:73-80** that God's judgement is right. Read those eight verses, and take note of the fact that God is faithful when He afflicts those walking in sin. We are tempted to go to God and complain, when He afflicts us. But take a strong hold on the truth that God's judgement always is right; and that He is faithful to His promises when he afflicts. Yes, He is merciful when He afflicts us, for He then deals with us as His servants. Do you consider yourself a servant of God? Or do you prefer doing what Satan tempts you to do?

November 16

Do you, and can you, agree with the Psalmist when in Psalm 119:81-88 he states that all of God's commandments are faithful? Go and read that section of this Psalm, wherein God speaks to us. God's commandments demand of us what our sinful flesh does not want. But remember that we owe God thanks for every one of our heartbeats. Get down on your knees and pray to God for desire and power to keep every one of His commandments. God made us to be His servants. And He has the absolute right to demand constant obedience from us. Do you love Him as your God? Or do you love Satan and sin? Do you want to "keep the testimony" of God's mouth?

November 17

Read Psalm 119:89-96, and take note of the fact that a true child of God will "never forget" God's precepts. He will more and more, the older he gets and grows spiritually, remember God's law. Bear in mind that every one of God's elect will never forget God's precepts. The wicked will try to destroy them; and we are rushing toward that day of the Antichrist, who is soon coming. The awesome question for us today is how much do we love God's law; and also whether we try to keep it merely because we do not want the punishment, for which sin calls. Do you love God's commandments, and keep them in that love? Do you love God, and strive to keep those commands which He gives us in Exodus 20?

November 18

It makes a world of difference in us when God causes us to be born spiritually. When He has done this we can honestly say with the Psalmist that we love His law. Can you sincerely **say that, as the Psalmist does in Psalm 119:97-104**? Look up that passage and read it carefully. Can you honestly and joyfully sing: "How love I Thy law, O Lord! Daily joy its truths afford?" Can you, and do you sing that sincerely? Then you will also say that you hate false doctrines, and sin in every form. Is it your meditation all the day? Has God made you wiser than all our spiritual enemies? We cannot love Satan and sin; and at the same time, and in the same way, love God and a holy, righteous life.

November 19

What an amazing life we now have, compared with the life of our grandparents. With all the new inventions we are attacked by Satan more cleverly than God's people were in the past. **Read what we find in Psalm 119:105-112**. The Psalmist declares: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." How true is that in your life? The question is not whether your mouth can say that. Can and does your heart say that? Is Scripture more precious to you than that radio or television set? Is Scripture precious and holy in your judgement? Is Scripture more precious to you than to those not born again by God's grace? Can you with your heart sing: "Thy word sheds light upon my path. It guides my feet"?

November 20

A very awesome question is whether with the heart **we can and do say what the Psalmist says in Psalm 119:113-120**. Do you love God's law, and hate vain thoughts? What is more, who is your friend: and why is he or she your friend? Does he or she love God, or is he or she one used by Satan to get you to enjoy breaking God's law? What about on the Sabbath Day? Is that day enjoyable to you, because it gives you time to enjoy your flesh, and its pleasures? There is so much that Satan uses today. Does he now get you into more sins? Do you love God's Word? And on the Sabbath are you very active in that Word, not simply in the church services, but every hour of that day, making it indeed a holy day?

November 21

What do you want God to do unto you? Can you with the psalmist say that you love God's commandments? Do you love it above gold? **Look up Psalm 119:121-128**. The awesome fact is that if we do not love God's commandments, we do not love God, Who presents these commandments unto us. When in the church services God's law is read, how much attention are you paying to that law? It is easy to think of the breaking of God's commandments by others. But are you reminded of your own sins, when that law is read? Does the reading of that law make you sad? How much of that law do you have before you, and in your heart and mind every day? How often every day do you pray for forgiveness of your sins?

November 22

Look up and read Psalm 119:129-136. There the Psalmist presents God's testimonies as being wonderful; and that his soul therefore keeps these testimonies. Do you consider God's law to be wonderful, or abhorring? Remember that every time we break God's law, we are abhorring it. In fact we are saying that Jehovah is not God; and that we have the right to decide what we will do. When we break God's law, we say by that act that He demands of us what is not good. But every sin is an act of hatred against God. We do call God's testimonies wonderful; and therefore we keep His law. When we keep God's law, we reveal our love of God.

November 23

The awesome truth is that unbelievers are thankful only when material things are given them, and they enjoy walking in sin. Satan got Adam and Eve to do that. And although for us today is what is called Thanksgiving Day, we must be very careful to thank God only for the gifts which He bestows upon us through His Son, Christ Jesus our Saviour. What a blessed victory, calling for thankfulness, that God has caused us to be born again spiritually. **Look up I John 5:4**. There we read what victory God gives us. He gives us faith, which causes us to overcome the world and its sin. Be thankful for salvation and deliverance from Satan and sin. Thanks be to God for that blessed victory.

November 24

The awesome question is whether by your walk you reveal that God has made you righteous through His Son, Jesus Christ. **And in Psalm 110:137-144 we find that righteousness is in us by God's grace**. Indeed that righteousness is everlasting. Having begun it in us God continues to bless us with it. And we correctly sing: "All that I am I owe to Thee, Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me," Psalter Number 383. Do you sing that with your heart, and not merely with your mouth? Find it in your heart, and you will be thankful, singing with your heart, and revealing that God has begun salvation in you. Are you thankful for that spiritual gift of righteousness? Do you run to God in prayer, seeking this righteousness?

November 25

We do well to **hold on tightly to the truth which we find in Psalm 119:145-152**. Read it carefully. For we must, cry unto God with our whole heart. What we must constantly cry for is that desire to keep God's statutes. Now crying to God means hating every kind of sin that is in us, which Satan has gotten into the whole human race. And the question is whether you enjoy sin, or whether you delight in salvation from sin of every kind. It is not merely the desire to be saved from the punishment which we deserve. It is the desire to walk in love toward God. And the Psalmist prays, not merely for deliverance from the punishment which we all deserve. It is the desire for deliverance from Satan and all love of sin. Do you have that desire?

November 26

Our God does save us from all the torment that is in hell, and which we deserve because of our natural carnal nature, wherewith we were born. **Read Psalm 119:145-152**. In verse 149 we find the awesome calling of the Psalmist. He calls God to hear his voice, according to His own will. He prays to be quickened according to God's judgment. We must not merely want to be saved from the punishment which we deserve. Our calling is to be saved from Satan, and the sin into which he got us. That salvation God has begun in all His elect, chosen eternally in Christ. Do you want to be saved from your sin and be given love of God? Is that love in your souls?

November 27

That we desire salvation is because God has already begun it in us. **As the Psalmist states it in the section of Psalm 119: verses 158-160**, God's tender mercy is very great. In that mercy we want to be quickened to God's judgement. God's mercy is eternal and unchangeably great. In it God deals with us in a blessed, comforting mercy. And in that mercy God judges every one of those whom He eternally chooses in Christ Jesus our Savior. His love is great, and His work upon us and in us is eternally blessed. Take note of the fact that in verse 160 we do read that His Word is true, and every one of His judgements endureth forever. Take a strong hold on that truth, and thank God for all that He has done, and will do for His elect.

November 28

We should **take note of the truth God presents in Psalm 119:161-168**. The man who wrote this Psalm declares that seven times a day he praises God. This he does because he loves God's law. The awesome truth is that we love God's law because we love Him. And this places us before the awesome question as to whether we do love God. We will love God's law only if we love Him. We do not keep it merely to escape punishment. We do it because God has made us love Himself. Unbelievers do not kill others because they do not want others to kill them. As believers we love God; and therefore love God's law. If you love God, you will love His commandment, and strive to keep it.

November 29

Read carefully that last section of Psalm 119, namely, the verses 169-176. There we are called to pray for the gift of understanding according to God's Word. That gift of understanding is becoming aware of all that God demands of us, every second of our life, not merely part of the time. Go to sleep at night, but do so in order that tomorrow you have the strength to walk in love before God. He creates us, and gives us strength so that we can walk in love toward Him. Our tongues must speak His Word. Our hands must serve Him in all that we do. Our calling is to love God, and serve Him every minute of our lives. We must constantly and joyfully by our works thank God for our blessed salvation.

November 30

In Revelation 22:14 we find a very wonderful, comforting truth. There we read: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to enter to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." This happens because Christ earned it for us. God has made us to be citizens of The Kingdom of Heaven. We do not bless ourselves, but God blesses us with a free gift which He gives us through His Son. When you do thank God for this blessedness, you do show what God eternally decided, and in time made possible in every detail. Thank God then, for what He does in His grace. Yes, Praise God from Whom all blessings flow. Praise Him ALL creatures here below!

Daniel: Godly Choices

Part I

by Calvin Kalsbeek

So, he had to go. It didn't matter that he didn't want to go. It didn't matter that he was a godly man. It didn't matter either that his parents didn't want him to go. It didn't matter that he was only a very young teenager. Nor did it matter that he was of the noble class of people. And it didn't even matter that it wasn't his fault that this trouble had come upon them. He had to go. He had no choice in the matter. Daniel had to go to Babylon!

Babylon! If there was a worse place to go, he didn't know about it. Babylon, the capital city of Judah's arch enemy. Babylon, a place where other gods ruled; rivers, stars, kings, and a host of other gods were worshipped. Babylon, where the creature rather than the creator was honored. Babylon, which means gate of the gods, or gate of Satan. To Babylon, this God-forsaken place, Daniel must go!

Which meant, of course, that he had to leave the land of Canaan. Canaan, where he had a godly home with God-fearing parents. Canaan, the promised land, with whose people God had established an everlasting covenant. Canaan, where God had revealed Himself as the only God, and where the Creator rather than the creature was worshipped. Canaan, where God was pleased to dwell with His people; where they could fellowship with Him in their worship of Him at the temple in Jerusalem. Yes, Jerusalem, the city of God. The city whose name means, "possession or foundation of peace."

So Daniel had to leave Jerusalem, the foundation of peace; and go to Babylon, the gate of Satan. That, friends, is the situation which stared Daniel in the face, and which stares us in the face this morning as we consider the theme: DANIEL: GODLY CHOICES. Though I am not a minister and this is not a sermon, I have three main points for us to consider in connection with this topic: 1.) Daniel's choice, 2.) Daniel's choice as a model for our choices, and 3.) the possibility of making Daniel's choice ours.

DANIEL'S CHOICE

Daniel did not choose in a vacuum! Although Daniel didn't know it at the time, he had been prepared to go. Daniel knew what had happened years before in the Garden of Eden. He had been taught that God had put enmity between Satan and the woman. He knew that enmity continued between Satan's seed and the woman's seed. He knew Babylon was a dwelling place of Satan's seed, and Jerusalem was the dwelling place of the seed of the woman. He knew that as part of the seed of the woman, he was headed for enemy territory. He knew that Satan was interested in more than a physical victory over Judah; the physical victory would serve as a means to achieve spiritual victory as well. Therefore Daniel knew he must be on his guard. His spiritual antennae were up, so to speak. The battle of the ages was being waged, and Daniel knew that he was caught in the middle of it!

As a result, Daniel was prepared for Nebuchadnezzer's scheme. He saw through Nebuchadnezzer's attempt to lead Him and others to forget their place in Jerusalem by changing their names. He saw through Nebuchadnezzer's education program for him and other youngsters from the noble and royal families of Judah. What a slick plan! Nebuchadnezzer would manipulate these young men in order that they could be used to lead Judah (the church) into Babylon body and soul, so that eventually Jerusalem, the foundation of peace, would no longer exist. All that would be left is Babylon, the gate of Satan.

In addition to his knowledge of Satan's purpose and Nebuchadnezzer's role in it, Daniel knew *himself.* That becomes obvious in Daniel 1:8. Twice in that verse we find that Daniel is concerned "that he might not defile himself." Clearly Daniel was well aware that he had a sinful nature which was at risk. The problem was *not* that he would be defiled by Babylon; it was that he would defile *himself.* His eyes were open to the reality of his own sinful nature which was attracted to the sensuous lifestyle of Babylon. So Daniel makes a resolution!

Yes, Nebuchadnezzer could bring him to Babylon, but he could not force Daniel to adopt Babylon as his own. Daniel had to go to Babylon, but he went determined that he would not be lured by the enticements of Babylon to fall away from

piety and the worship of God, and degenerate into the lifestyle of the Chaldeans.

What is amazing concerning Daniel's resolve is his ability at such a young age, not only to *see* that actions have consequences and that one action often leads to another, but also that he had the wisdom to *act* accordingly. Notice Daniel's amazing choice in Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the kings meat nor with the wine which he drank..." Why is this a problem for Daniel? Why does he make such a big deal out of this? We might be tempted to say to Daniel, "Get a life! Lighten up a little, don't have a cow, it's not that important." What could possibly be wrong with drinking the King's wine? The people of Judah were allowed to drink wine, so what if it's the " king's wine?" And the people of Judah were allowed to eat meat, so what if it's the "king's meat?" Could it be that the meat had been sacrificed to idols, or that it was meat from unclean animals? If that was the problem with the meat, how could Daniel have said to Melzar, the prince of the eunuchs in chapter 1: 12-13, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants (Daniel 1:12-13)." If the act of eating the king's meat would have been a sin, certainly Daniel could not have eaten of it under any circumstances. However, Daniel's request for a test implies this: "If we fail the test and it's your desire, Melzar, we will eat the king's meat."

It seems, therefore, that Daniel was not confronted with a choice of principle, that is, whether or not it would be sin for him to eat the king's meat; but he was confronted with a choice of propriety, i.e. what is the best and safest thing to do under these circumstances. Daniel's concern was that he not be brought under the power of Nebuchadnezzer and ultimately Satan. He understood well the truth of Proverbs 14:12, repeated in Proverbs 16:25, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the *end* (emphasis mine, C.K.) thereof are the ways of death." He understood that if in the beginning of his sojourn in Babylon he joined the activities of Babylon, in the end his lifestyle and that of the Babylonians would be no different.

So, Daniel had to go to Babylon, but pulse (something grown—vegetables) and water was his choice, not the meat and wine of the king. He drew his line in the sand. He would live *in* Babylon, he had no choice on that, but he would not be part *of* Babylon.

DANIEL'S CHOICE: A MODEL FOR OUR CHOICES

It sounds familiar doesn't it? What we face today is essentially no different than what Daniel faced. The battle and Satan's goals are the same, it's just that Satan has had about 2500 more years of experience. Revelation 12 makes this quite clear. In verse 17 we read: "And the dragon (Satan) was wroth with the woman (church), and went to make war with the remnant of her seed (you and me), which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." And Satan often uses on us the same method that was used on Daniel. With Daniel we are exposed to the enticements of Babylon: what this world has to offer with its treasures and pleasures. With Daniel we too have sinful natures that are very much attracted to what this world has to offer. With Daniel we are in the Babylon of this world, and commanded to be spiritually separate from it.

But let's be specific! Just how *are we* confronted with the lifestyle of Babylon? What are the king's meat and wine today, which if accepted by us will lead us, our children, and the future church to citizenship in Babylon? The king's meat and wine can easily be compared to the productions of Hollywood and the popular music of today. Make no mistake, these are the primary means Satan uses today to sell Babylon to you and me!

Is it necessary to prove that Hollywood provides king's meat? Maybe it is! I've been told that a large percentage of our young people regularly attend movies. Exactly how many of you are involved only the Lord knows. Nevertheless you and I both know that a goodly number of you regularly attend movies, and/or see the same things in your homes on T.V. Do Hollywood productions echo how God commands in His Word that we should live? or do they promote the lies of Satan? It probably wouldn't be fair for a prejudiced Christian like me to make that evaluation, so let's let Babylon evaluate herself. In the movie section of every *Grand Rapids Press* Babylon provides a "Movie Attendance Guide." Notice, please the different ratings:

"NC-17—No children under 17 admitted" I wonder *why* many of you here this morning would not be allowed to attend a movie with that rating? Surely if the movie portrayed how to live a godly life, you would be allowed to see it.

"R—Restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian" Hmm, why would it be necessary for your parents to be with you to see "Judge Dredd" now showing at the Holland 7 , or "Die Hard with a Vengeance " at Woodland? If these

movies are God-glorifying surely there would be no problem!

"PG-13—Parents strongly cautioned, some material may be inappropriate for children under 13." What is there that God commands that could possibly be inappropriate for your little brothers and sisters in "Batman Forever," "Circle of Friends," and "Waterworld?"

"PG—Parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children." Jesus said, "Let the little children come unto me." It must be that Jesus isn't calling any of His children to see "Apollo 13," "Indian in the Cupboard," "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" or "Operation Dumbo Drop," because material contained in them may not be suitable for children in general, much less *His* children.

"G—General Audiences, all ages admitted." Yes! Finally we have the good ones, right? "Gordy," and "Pocahontas," must be okay! Wrong! Even here there is no suggestion that movies with this rating are good and wholesome. It only tells us that people of all ages will be *allowed* to see it. And coming from Babylon that's not much in which to put your confidence. What do you think Daniel would call "Gordy" and "Pocahontas? Pulse or king's meat?

In addition to meat, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, provided wine at his table for Daniel and his three friends. Wine is addictive, just like the popular music of present day Babylon! It becomes a part of those who listen to it; so much so that it is nearly impossible to stop listening to it once you acquire a taste for it. In my opinion the world's music is even more difficult for young people to handle than the productions of Hollywood. I say this from my experience in the consistory room during times of confession of faith. Almost without exception when questions concerning a walk of faith are discussed, it becomes clear that the most difficult struggle for our young people involves leaving behind the world's music.

That the world's music is an exercise in promoting the lifestyle of Babylon is not difficult to prove. Let me site some examples:

—A pleasant little tune by Melissa Manchester called "Nice Girls Do," for example. What is it that nice little girls do? Well, if it's the right guy, and in the right situation, she has sex.

—Turn on a popular music station and perhaps you'll hear Olivia-Newton-John telling you to "get physical" and "communicate "horizontally."

—Listen a little longer and maybe you will hear a duet with Barbara Streisand urging women to leave their husbands when they get bored with them.

—Phil Barber wants these lyrics to rattle around in your head: "Hello, my name is Rock 'n' Roll/ And of people just like you,/ I always take a high toll./ For I covet you see/ Damnation, to your soul./ Yes, enjoy my melody/ As I take you through/ The gates of hell./ I'll sift your minds/ With vulgar rhymes,/ Cause my far out beat/ Carries brain-washing heat./ Yes, by my words/ I'll scorch your brain,/ And chuck your morals/ Down the drain."

—Have you listened to Ozzy Osbourne's "The Suicide Song?" "You're living a lie/ Such a shame/ Wonder why/ Why don't you just kill yourself/ Cause you can't escape the master reaper."

—Rigor Mortis sings, "We are instruments of evil/ We come straight from hell/ We're the legions of the demons/ Haunting for the kill/ Doom is all you see/ We have come to take the world/ And give you misery."

—Listen to "Wild Side" by Motely Crue, "Kneel down ye sinners, to streetwise religion/ Greeds been crowned the new king/" and a little later, "Forward my mail to me in Hell."

—Guns N' Roses sings, "Welcome to the Jungle," but I don't dare read the words.

Need I read more? But we must not be judgmental! They probably don't really mean what they sing. Instead let's apply the "Fruit Test." In Matt. 7:20 Jesus gave us this test, "By their fruits ye shall know them." What really makes these people tick? A look at their beliefs and lifestyles should help us apply the "Fruit Test."

—Lars Ulrich of the band Metallica brags, "It's very easy to get involved in endless partying and a lot of drinking when you're only playing an hour..."

—Madonna says, "As long as I'm riding high on the charts I don't care if they call me trashy or a slut. I'm proud of my image."

—David Coverdale of Whitesnake says, "Isn't sex what rock and roll is all about?"

—Prince says, "I wish there were no rules."

—Alice Cooper crows, "Rebellion is the basis of our group."

—Ex-Beatle, George Harrison suggests, "The idea is to become one with God through meditation and yoga."

—Then there are the countless examples of drug abuse, suicide and gross sin (example Hugh Grant and Elizabeth Hurley) found among these "artists." (I use the term very loosely.)

—Malcolm McLaren of the "Sex Pistols," was quoted way back in 1970 in the October issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine: "Rock & Roll is not just music. You're selling an attitude too... The kids need a sense of adventure and Rock & Roll needs to find

a way to give it to them, wham out the hardest and cruelest lyrics as propaganda..."

Yes, indeed! By their fruits you shall know them. Babylon is selling an attitude and a lifestyle. Are you buying? Oh, it may not all be as blatant as some of the examples that I used, but rest assured if the foundation of peace (Jerusalem) is not being promoted, it must be Babylonian Blather from the gate of Satan. It has to be one or the other! And let's face it, just because our flesh is aroused by and attracted to what Hollywood produces and the popular music of our age, doesn't make it good. We may not allow our emotions to control us. God's Word alone must do that. Maybe it's time to exercise a little sanctified suspicion of that which is attracted to our sinful flesh!

But, does it matter? Does it really make any difference? So what if we watch and listen to Babylonian Blather? It doesn't have any effect on our behavior does it? Maybe you agree with the position of Calvin as expressed in a recent "Calvin and Hobbs" comic. Says Calvin to Hobbs, "Another thing to remember about popular culture is that today's TV-reared audience is hip and sophisticated. This stuff doesn't affect us. We can separate fact from fiction. We understand satire and irony. We're detached and jaded viewers who aren't influenced by what we watch." To which Hobbs responds, "I think I hear advertisers laughing." Right on, Hobbs, advertisers think that stuff affects us! They are so sure that what people see and hear has an affect on their behavior that they are willing to spend millions of dollars for just a few minutes of time to promote their products before our eyes and ears. Obviously they think it matters.

Does it matter? Public school teachers think it does. In an article titled "Hero Worship" in *Education Week* (April 26, 1995) numerous teachers express concern because their students often emulate T.V.'s super-heros at school. Of particular concern to many of them is the program *Power Rangers.*

Does it matter? 67% of the people polled by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University think our popular culture encourages and contributes to drug use.

Does it matter? Ray Allen, author of a book titled *They're Out to Steal Your Children,* thinks so. In that book Allen quotes former rock performer, David Crosby, as saying, "I figured the only thing to do was to swipe their kids... By saying that, I'm not talking about kidnapping, I'm just talking about changing their value systems, which removes them from their parent's world very effectively." This book is replete with other examples of the impact which rock performers believe they have on you, their unsuspecting audience.

Does it matter? Rock star, Ice T, apparently thinks so. He gloats, "Hey moms, it's too late! Your kid's had his head in that walkman for a long time now. You have no idea how deep we're into your house. We're sitting right there at your dinner table and you don't even know it."

Does it matter? Tom Freston, chairman of the board at MTV thinks so. He brags, "At MTV we don't shoot for 14 year old's—we own them."

Does it matter? Leslie Jackson, a 17 year-old Afro-American from Houston, Texas thinks so. In answer to the question: "Should Hollywood rethink how it portrays sex and violence?" He answered, "Music has a strong influence. It is directly related to the soul. Whatever you ingest will come out."

Does it matter? The Bible says so in Proverbs 6:27, "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" Actions *do* have consequences.

Young people, more and more we see that Babylon itself is finding incontrovertible evidence of the disastrous affects of its own meat and wine. How much more should not we, spiritual citizens of Jerusalem, be able to see it, and consequently purpose in our hearts not to eat and drink of it?

But there's an even greater challenge which faces both you and me, and I would be remiss this morning if I said nothing about her. She pretends to be our christian friend. She is the whore of Babylon, concerning whom our Lord warns us in the book of Revelation. You can read about her in chapters 17 and 19. John in the power of the Spirit describes her as one who has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. I don't have time to go into detail on this this morning, but the obvious explanation of this whore is that she is the false church which has given herself over to the service of antichrist. In verse 5 of chapter 17 John writes, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Clearly this whore is working for Babylon, but pretending to be the church. She seeks to deceive the church such that the church is led to join her in Babylon's service.

For those who know what's going on, it's not hard to see the whore in action. Let me provide a few examples of her deceptive influence.

Some in the church suggest that it is the Church's task to redeem the film arts for Christ. In a book titled *Roaring Lambs* Bob Briner writes, "In-

stead of running from it (Hollywood) we need to rush into it... we need to be right smack dab in the middle of it."

Ted Baehr writes in the March 1995 issue of *Focus on the Family*, "Hollywood, slowly but surely, is making more movies that please the real lion king." Later in the article, "Miracle on Main Street," he states, "We are finally starting to see some fruit from the positive alliances being forged between the film industry and Christians in Hollywood." Sounds good doesn't it? But let's be careful! Could it be that these folks are falling for the old Germany Schaefer trick? Schaefer, playing for the Detroit Tigers in 1908 was on first base. With his teammate on third Schaefer determined to steal second. When the catcher threw to second, the man on third would come home. It was simply the old double steal strategy. However, Schaefer's plan was foiled when the catcher failed to make a play on him at second. Schaefer, not to be denied, ran back to first on the next pitch and stole it cleanly. The surprised catcher let him go, but did attempt to throw him out when Schaefer stole second for the second time. The result? The original goal was achieved when Schaefer's teammate scored from third on the play. Like Germany Schaefer, sometimes Satan takes a step backward in order to achieve his ultimate goal. Don't ever fall for the lie that Hollywood will give itself over to the service of Christ and His Church. Be not deceived!

Then there's so-called christian rock! Those employed in christian rock claim that they minister to those whom no one else is willing to minister. Some of the band members claim that they preach salvation through Christ between sets. Bob Samuels' response in the *Grand Rapids Press* to this claim is to the point, I think: "These young people are being ministered to all over the world. But because they don't want to alter their lifestyles they go their own way. They relate to these bands because they don't require any change in the way they live. God is not a God of confusion but of order. Too many young people today want to put their salvation in what another man teaches them without searching the Scriptures to find out if what they are hearing lines up with the Word of God." Amen, Bob, it sounds like you have it all together. But don't take my word or Bob's word for it, read *The Devil's Disciples* particularly chapter 11, "Rocking for Jesus," and see what you think.

One of the whore's most successful methods is her message that tolerance is a Christian virtue. Accordingly, the child of God is encouraged to join with others in their common goals. Its all about holding hands, drinking coffee, and singing "Throw Out the Life Line" together. Ignored is fact that real unity cannot exist on the basis of emotion alone. Apart from the truth of Scripture there is no unity. However, if you question these unholy alliances, invariably Matthew 7:1 will be thrown into your face, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." As if Jesus meant by this that we may not evaluate on the basis of His Word, these organizations and their teachings. It is true that eternal condemnation and judgement is reserved for God alone, but it is not true that we must not be discerners of the times and seasons or evaluate every wind of doctrine and life with which we are confronted. That's exactly what Jesus has in mind when He warns us to watch for the signs of His return so that we will be ready and not deceived.

These kinds of deceptions should not surprise us since we have been warned of them in the Bible. In fact, we are told that Satan will make himself appear as an angel of light. I'm reminded of the Adolf Eichmann trial where one Jewish survivor of Auschwitz entered the courtroom, looked at Eichmann and collapsed to the floor sobbing violently. When he was asked later about his behavior, he said, "...what struck me was that Eichmann did not look like an evil monster at all; he looked like an ordinary person, just like everyone else." Let's remember, Satan and those in his service are not wearing black hats to distinguish themselves from us good guys in the white hats.

Mr. Kalsbeek is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church and a teacher in Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Believing that God has brought them together
we joyfully announce the marriage of our children
John Douglas Howard and Linda Eileen Pikkert.
The ceremony took place on Saturday, July 8, 1995
at the 2nd CRC in Abbotsford, BC
Rev. M. Joostens of the Protestant Reformed Church,
Lynden, WA officiated.

Parents: Mr. & Mrs. Peter Howard
Abbotsford, BC
Mr. & Mrs. Garrett Pikkert
Lacomb, AB

Address: #309-1755 Salton Road
Abbotsford, BC V2S 7C5
604-854-8240

True Discipline: A Manifestation of God's Grace

by Brett Van Koevering

Genesis 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 17:7 "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

This article is about that little form in the back of the Psalter. It is a form which is unlike the Baptism or the Lord's Supper Forms or really any other form in the Psalter. It is a form that, thanks to God's grace, is not read as frequently as the others, but serves an equally important role for the Church of Christ. It is a form which, when read, causes a deep, spiritual sadness. Even more sadness than the news a loved one has died. It does so because it is only read when a member of the Church is hardened in his or her sin. The result of this form (or rather, the sin which mandates its reading) is the separation from the life blood of *faith* not only, but also, to a certain extent, separation of physical relationships. It is the form for Excommunication.

Church discipline is not some man-made procedure in which a church may throw out unwanted men from its pews. It is taught by Christ Himself. In Matthew 18:15-20 we read "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Also, in Titus 3:10-11, Paul writes, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." Lastly, the whole chapter of I Corinthians 5 gives instruction in this truth. From these and many other texts, it is plain that church discipline is entirely based upon Scripture.

Without this authority given to discipline from the very Word of God, the Church could not use, nor would it even have the right to use this Key of the Kingdom. In this connection, it is noteworthy that to the extent that a church acknowledges the infallibility and the authority of the Scriptures, to that same extent discipline will be used in a God-fearing and honoring manner.

Churches of the past as well as churches of today have fallen far short of their calling in this regard. The Roman Catholic Church is one example. From one of its most prominent confessions, the *Council of Trent*, it is obvious how this church selfishly misused discipline. The Council met and made its first canons in 1546 and continued to do so until 1563. Some of these canons illustrate the results of an unloving, hierarchical form of church government of which man, not Christ, is the head. One canon, *On The Sacrament of Extreme Unction*, reads "If anyone saith that Extreme Unction is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ, our Lord, and promulgated by the blessed Apostle James; but is only a rite received from the Fathers, or a human figment; let him be anathema." The meaning of the term "anathema" is to be cursed and excommunicated. It was taken from I Corinthians 16:22.

This type of erroneous discipline had neither the sinner's repentance, nor the purity of the Church, nor even God's glory in view. The result of this ungodly view of discipline is plain. The people became intimidated by the church and because of this, they became ignorant of the Word of God. They were so busy kneeling to the whims of an apostatizing church that they did not study the Word of God.

There is also the antithesis of the above mentioned form of church discipline. It is widely practiced among churches today. What these churches do is put the members who do not attend regu-

larly on an "inactive list." One can remain on this list for years and nothing will happen. What is the result of this type of thinking? The idea that one really does not have to go to church twice on Sunday. There is no law in the Bible that says this. Besides, it is said, there are other things to be done at night. This is the reason why many churches have two full morning services and only one in the evening. Sometimes these churches can get more people if they have a play or a famous choir or singer come in. These churches can be characterized as being only interested in numbers.

The third type of church is the one that does not follow the command of Christ to purify the church. These churches say that we must love all. They say that we must accept homosexuals into the communion of Christ's believers. In their defence, they quote John 8:7 "he who is without sin cast the first stone.' Does the Word of God mean then, that no one may say anything to admonish or discipline a hardened sinner who refuses to repent? No, Jesus spoke those words to the Pharisees who went to Him with a woman, not in order to turn her from her sin, but in their pride, to tempt Christ. Notice also, that the Pharisees, after Jesus spoke these words, turned from Him in pride and guilt. This pictures all those who proudly walk in their own righteousness. It seems that it is always easier for these to turn away from Christ that it is to repent. The woman, however, because of the work of the Holy Spirit, desires repentance. This is evident from the fact that she stays by Jesus. Christ, seeing her heart, forgives her, but also commands her to go her way and *sin no more.* To use a text such as this for proof that discipline is wrong, escapes one's mind.

The result of a lack in exercising church discipline is deadening. Sin will gain a greater foothold into the church and the antithesis will fly out the window. If one sees a loved one walking toward a cliff, one will not just stand by and do nothing, but will call to that loved one to keep him or her from falling off. It's the same when one walks in sin in the Church.

How can church discipline be administered faithfully? The Excommunication Form should be read "to the end that he may hereby be made (if possible) ashamed of his sins and likewise that we may not by this rotten and as yet incurable member, put the whole body of the Church in danger, and that God's name be not blasphemed." The main thrust of the matter is the love which the Church has toward the sinner hardened in sin tempered with the love of Christ and His glory.

This calling of the Church to discipline is no doubt the most grievous and solemn. Many pastors and consistory members, and one might add, congregation members, struggle with this because they see and know the result of excommunication. In Matthew 18:18, it says "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This passage shows the eternal state of an unrepentant sinner. When it comes to the actual exercising of church discipline, the importance of God-fearing pastors and consistory members is unfathomable. It is only because of God's grace and faithfulness that we have them.

Next, will be a consideration of why Christ teaches us to use this hard way. In the Heidelberg Catechism, (Q&A 54, Lord's Day 21) the question is asked us what we believe concerning the Church. In the answer, we read that from the creation to the end of the world, Christ "gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself a church chosen to everlasting life." Since then, one does not defend something which one does not hold dear and want to keep, so Christ, having gathered us out of every tongue, tribe, and nation, even from all our sin and misery, intrusts the Church's care to no one else but His own divine government. As the Head, He does not stop at gathering His Church, but also continues to defend her from her spiritual enemies. The way in which He does this is by the preaching and sacraments and also by discipline. This is where the faithfulness of Christ shines so clearly. Not only does He give us, His Church, the sound way of discipline, but He also gives us this wisdom and love to carry it out rightly. Without Christ's preserving power in this area the Church would soon become as unloving as the Roman Hierarchy or as "loving" as churches which do not discipline. We should ever be thankful to God that He is so faithful to us in the exercise of excommunication.

Closer to home, there are ties in the two texts which were quoted at the beginning of the article. In the first, we read of the great wickedness of the human race. It is the human race as it stood corrupted by Adam's sin. It was a human race which could no longer serve God with its whole heart, mind, and strength. A human race given over to pride, hardness of heart, and abhorrence of God's ways. A human race guilty of eternal punishment for sin. Then, out of that race, God comes to certain people, His Church, who are no better or more deserving and says "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee." God

has seen fit from eternity, through the way of sin and grace, to save all those of His Church from the beginning of time to the end, in Christ.

This form of excommunication ought to make one think. First, about what the great depths of sin are. One can see that in one's own life, when he or she walks in those secret "little" sins. But now try to imagine what it would be like if we became hardened in these sins, so hardened in fact, that we continued in them and made them open and public, never considering God's glory and never thinking twice about blaspheming God's name.

Secondly, how great God's love to us is. We don't deserve to be faithful. We do not deserve to be *humbled to repentance.* Is there one who is a member of the Church? Then there is a testimony of God's faithfulness. Without God's preserving Hand, there would be none. All would be hardened, all would be "loosed from heaven." How much more holy and dependent upon God and His Word would we walk if we kept this in mind as we ought. In every area of our lives, thankfulness and praise would shine more brightly. "It is because of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not," Lamentations 3:22. Maybe one will fall into sin, as did David, but God will *always* bring him or her out, through repentance and humility of heart. He will grant faith in His promises and grace to persevere so that we can say "I am and forever shall remain a living member therein," Lord's Day 21, Q&A 53.

Brett is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Gem of the Month

Fill Us With Thanks

Thy hand, O Lord, has showered down
Rich blessings on our head:
The earth good harvests yield,
Thou blessest flock and field,
Thy cov'nant Thou hast sealed
And all the way hast led.

The gifts Thou sendest to Thine own
Are but a token small
Of all Thou hast in store,
Increasing more and more
And as in days of yore
Thou hast bestowed them all.

On strength of man we'll not depend
For human help will fail.
We cannot fill our need,
But Thou *our souls must feed,*
And teach us to give heed,
For we ourselves are frail.

Lord, with thanksgiving true
Our beings Thou must fill
That we may give Thee praise
Throughout our earthly days;
Teach us Thy holy ways
To seek and do Thy will.

Thelma Westra

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

Longsuffering (Part 5)

by Connie Meyer

Hm. Now where is my new pen? Not here ... or here. Ah, there it is —on Jason's desk.

Let's see, where did I put that notebook? I thought it was right here. Oh, there it is—on Jason's desk. That little brother!

Oh no, I'm late. I've got to find my assignment. I know it was in my folder. Hm, there's the folder—on Jason's desk. Oh no! It's empty! Julie looked around in panic.

"JASON!"

"I'm right here, you don't have to yell so loud," he complained. "Where's my assignment for school? I put it in this folder and now it's gone. What were you doing with *my* folder?"

Jason shrugged, "I needed a folder and that one was handy. It looked like just some old papers in it, so I—"

"Old papers! Jason, you make me so—"

Suddenly Mother walked into the room. "What's going on here?"

"Mom, Jason keeps on taking my things, and now my assignment that I have to hand in today is lost!" moaned Julie.

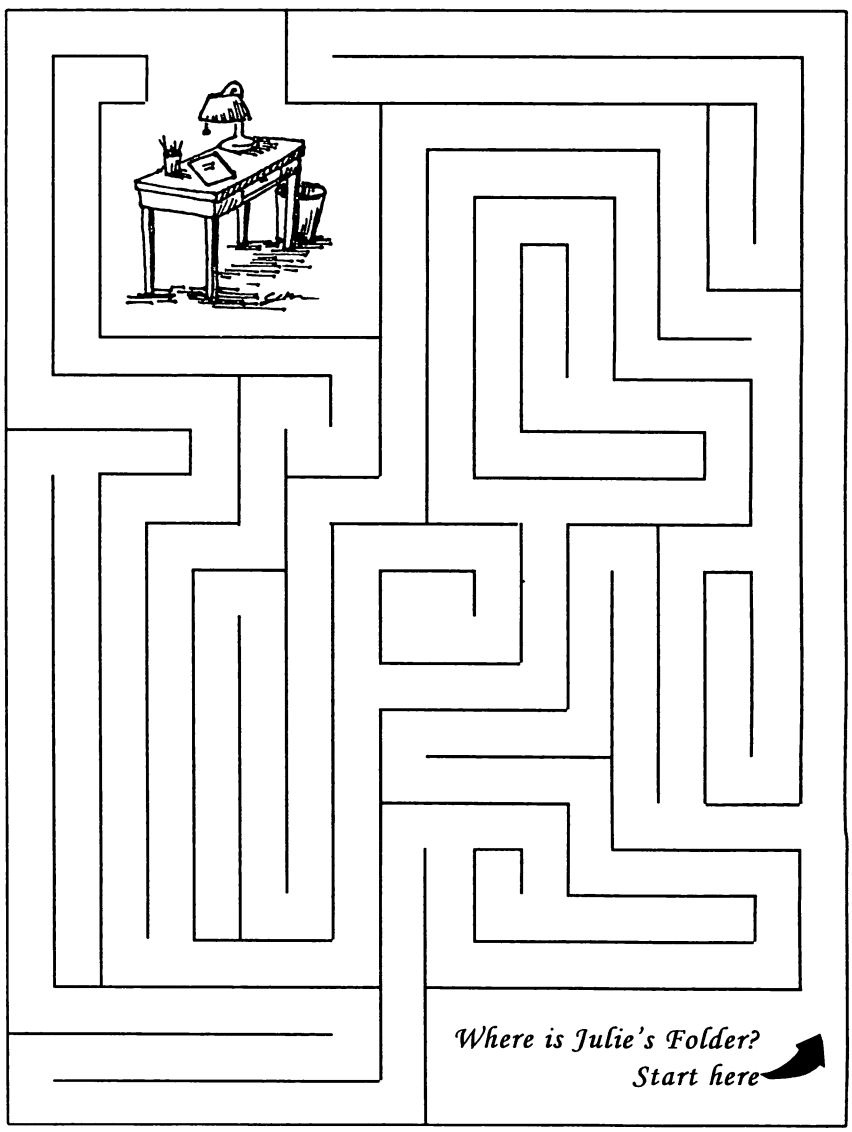
"It's not lost," Jason explained, "it's right here." And with that he took some papers out of the trash.

Mother looked the situation over and pointed to Jason, "You had better learn to *ask* before you take." Then she pointed to Julie and said, "You had better learn some *patience*."

Later that day Julie was looking up Bible verses for another assignment, (after she had spent several minutes looking for her Bible, which she found on Jason's desk). She ran across Colossians 1:11, where Paul is telling the saints that he is praying for them so that they might be trengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Yes, that's what it will take, thought Julie—God's power to have patience. Oh Lord, Help me to be patient and longsuffering....

Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.



"The just shall live by faith."
Romans 1:17