*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

*Isaiah 43:2*

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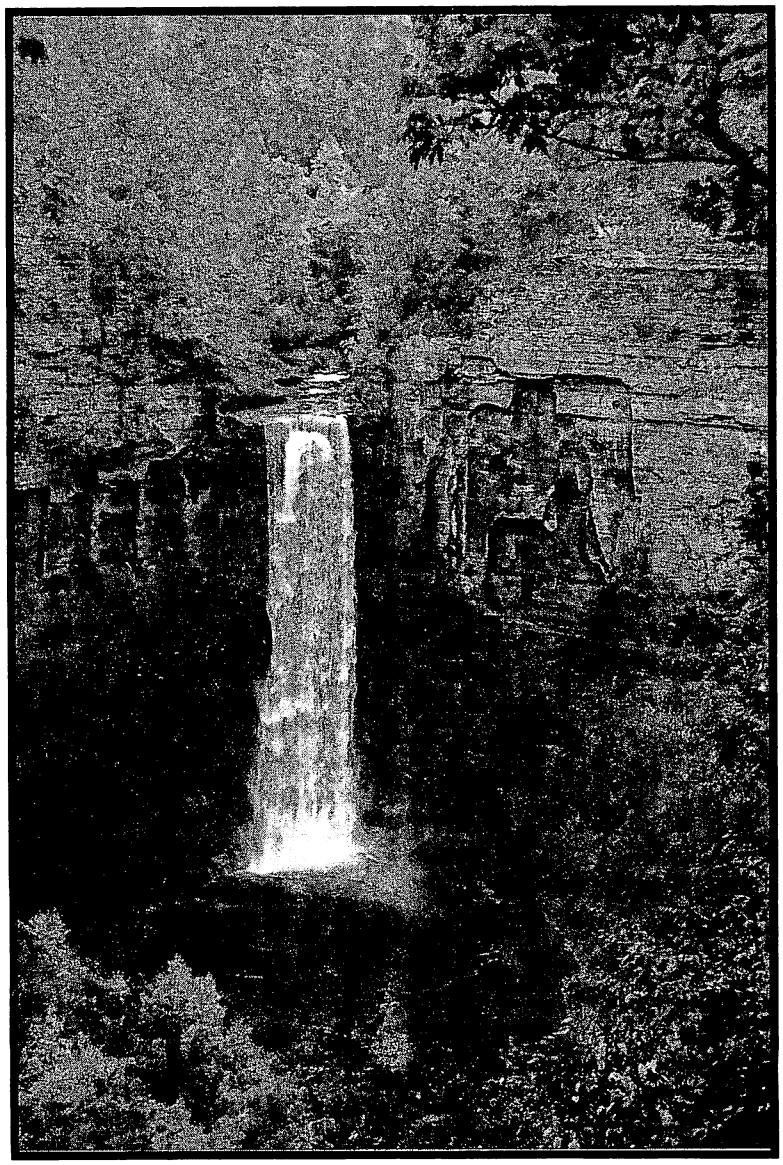

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All information and letters pertaining to the contents of the Beacon Lights mail to:

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Peter D. Faber
1730 Mont-Rue
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Subscription Price: $10.00
For a subscription or an address change, please write:
Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 375
Jenison, MI 49428



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# Learning From What Scientists Ignore

by John Huizenga

This past July, planetary scientists watched excitedly as massive chunks of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 collided with the planet Jupiter. The tremendous explosions provided a fantastic display of power and energy, and the scientists busily gathered data to learn more about the distant planet.

Many of us may not even have been aware of this event. Even fewer of us get very excited about such events. But we must not forget that even these things are directed by God. We must remember too that God directs these things for the sake of Christ and His Church. The scientists get very excited about a comet smashing into a planet, and they can collect piles of data, but they are willingly ignorant of what God is saying and are therefore without excuse before God (Romans 1:20).

What Word of God did they willingly ignore? The collision of this comet with Jupiter is only one of the many ways in which God tells us that He has put us on a very small, delicate, and vulnerable planet. If you were to study comets and asteroids you might be inclined to compare the situation of earth to a sparrow flying through the cross-fire between the Confederate and Union soldiers at the battle of Bull Run. The earth is continually bombarded with dangerous radiation and rocks of various sizes. We are unaware of this, however, because the atmosphere absorbs the radiation, and burns up the pebbles, rocks, and sometimes boulders before they hit the ground. But the atmosphere would do little to stop a piece of comet like that which collided with Jupiter. In fact, only days after the fireworks on Jupiter, the earth was narrowly missed by a speeding boulder the size of a minivan. Russia still bears evidence of a large boulder which blasted through the atmosphere. It did not come straight down, but skimmed the countryside with a loud explosion that flattened acres of forest.

The scientists also inform us that the space in which earth orbits around the sun is extremely cold and harsh. We have all seen pictures of the astronauts with their thick protective suits. As earth orbits the sun, the earth is warmed ever so precisely and the temperature is carefully regulated by the atmosphere and oceans. The environmentalists

are very aware of this delicate balance and warn that a change of a few degrees would melt the polar ice and raise the level of the oceans which would flood many coastal cities.

Earth is indeed very small in comparison to the vast expanse of the heavens. It orbits through a spray of rocks and chunks of comet, and its environment is very delicate. That is the way God made it, and God said after He had made it that it was very good. The child of God is, therefore, not alarmed by the findings of science. He knows that even the sparrow falls not without the will of God.

When the child of God looks out into the heavens, he sees the Creator as one Who is strong in power upholding all things with His fatherly care. It is God Who "stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22b). "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (40:25-26).

When the child of God sees the greatness of God in the hosts of heaven, he is reminded of his own smallness. But instead of inventing theories to explain the universe, puffing himself up in pride, he recognizes the truth that he is indeed very small. A wise man acknowledges the truth and acts accordingly. He cries out to God with the psalmist: "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. ... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man"? But the psalmist does not stop with the infinite greatness of God and the smallness of man. He continues "that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:1-4). God is mindful of us on this little speck of a planet and He comes to visit us. The word translated "visit" also has the idea of "remember." God thinks about us and continually remembers us. He will preserve His people until Christ comes again. Not one piece of comet will touch the earth apart from the will of God. Not one tear will roll down your cheek without God knowing.

God, in love, considers and continually remembers puny man on a planet which is nothing in comparison to the endless expanse of the universe. When we consider how little we think about God and how little we live out of love for Him, we wonder why God even thinks about us. By nature we would rather ignore God. By nature we are enemies of God and hate the way of righteousness. By nature we are like the scientists who look out into the universe, learn how small and frail and insignificant earth is, and shake their tiny little fists in defiance at God. How foolish. How amazing is the great salvation of God for us!

The vastness of the universe is a picture of the greatness of our salvation. God told Abraham to look at that picture to impress upon him the great plan of our redemption in Christ (Genesis 15). When Abraham looked at the stars, he could not comprehend their number, neither could he comprehend the full extent of the promised salvation. When God directs our attention to the stars and we stand in awe and amazement at the number of the stars and the endless expanse of the universe, we must remember that they serve as a picture of the greatness of our salvation. When we watch helplessly as a comet crashes into a neighboring planet, we are made conscious of our smallness and frailty (Psalm 8), and God is showing to us His greatness and boundless grace (Isaiah 40).

We look forward to the return of Christ to this earth. When He comes, He will come in unspeakable glory. The present heavens and earth will have served their purpose as pictures of heavenly reality, so God will role up the heavens like a scroll (Revelation 6:14), and will fold them up like a garment "and they shall be changed" (Hebrews 1:13). We will no longer be limited to this little planet in the middle of this grand and mysterious universe, but we will reign with Christ over all things (Hebrews 2:8-10; I Corinthians 15:25-28). Best of all, we will sin no more. All things will be in Christ, and God will have perfect praise.

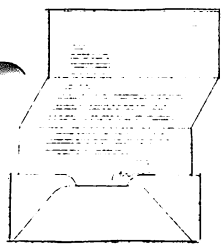
## Editorial Comments

"If we had an office; we would certainly need a revolving door." This comment from a *Beacon Lights* staff member describes the scene of our staff. Many dedicated workers have recently resigned and again great people have come forward to grab the pen and start writing. Becky Kalsbeek has recently resigned. She played a huge roll in our new design and the updated look of the magazine. New members include Jeff Kalsbeek, Steve Faber, and Mike Feenstra. We hope that these new members along with the rest of the staff will again dedicate themselves to put forth effort organizing and writing so that the *Beacon Lights* will continue to be a faithful witness.

In this issue we again introduce another rubric called, "Family Life." Beside this new rubric, several more rubrics should be popping up. We hope these will be informative, educational, and always articulate a true Biblical view.

As a staff, we are thankful for all the families and individuals that have recently subscribed to our magazine. Two years ago we had 850 subscribers but today we are approaching 1,200 subscribers. We are thankful and pray for your continued support.

—the Editor



## Letter to the editor:

Dearest Brothers and Sisters In Christ of *Beacon Lights* Editorial Board, brethren greetings!

I would like to thank each of you in putting your whole heart and effort in serving Christ through the publication of this magazine.

I truly love reading this magazine through which I really learned much and indeed all good things come from our Heavenly Father.

Although I may be a youth living in Singapore and separated from the culture of your country, but yet the problems faced by the American youth are no different from what we are facing in my country.

Thus I would like to encourage all of us to be a light shining for our Lord, Jesus Christ, Whose love has shed across in our hearts.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

Yours in Christ,
Jacqueline Lee
Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church
Singapore

# The Salt of the Earth

by Betsy Newhof

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19b). As a child I always loved this story of Jesus calling Peter and his brother Andrew to serve His ministry as disciples. In those years it was not the message that I found delightful, but the image of two men with fishing-poles casting, hooking, and reeling-in all sorts of humans. I crafted this seemingly obvious metaphor as my Sunday School teacher explained the importance of this commission to spread the gospel. Over the years I have also learned to appreciate the *call*, which the Lord initiates here, but it was not until this year that I have discovered a personal urgency in this text.

This past January I went on the German Interim Abroad, sponsored by Calvin College. The purpose of the interim was to experience the culture of Germany, to admire its architecture, and to make some foreign acquaintances, and thereby to have a better understanding and appreciation for the German language. There was a particular incident that made an impact on me that was stronger than I ever anticipated when embarking on my adventure.

One stop on our five week journey was the small town of Wittenberg, which is located in the former East German Republic. This was the third of our house-stays. "It's just for three days this time," I assured my weakening nerves. Then I remembered the letter I received before I left home. Nicole, the 18-year-old girl in the family with whom I would stay, wrote that her family doesn't even believe in God. The knot tightened in my stomach. "I guess this will be one of those cultural experiences," I said to the student sitting next to me on the train.

I found the Hardings to be a very warm and sincere family. Nicole went out of her way to make my stay with her family an experience that I would treasure. On Sunday morning she took me to worship in the Stadt Kirche—the city church. As we approached this massive brick structure with two towers, she said, "This is the only time I have ever gone to a service here. I have toured the sanctuary before, but I have never come to listen to the preacher before." I was shocked, but thought, "Well I hope he has a good message this morning."

As the minister droned on in a German dialect that I could not understand, I began to imagine Martin Luther walking down these cobblestone streets meditating on the importance of faith and grace as a means of salvation. Soon the sermon was over, and Nicole and I drove home for Sunday dinner with her family.

The following day, Nicole took me for a tour of the Lutherstadt, as the residents there call it. In 1513 Martin Luther became a professor at the University of Wittenberg and also a preacher in the city's Schloss Kirche—castle church. It was this church that was the final destination of our excursion. On the doors of this soaring architectural masterpiece Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses. Luther's grave is also embedded in its concrete floor along side that of Melanchthon, another great reformer in Germany, after whom Nicole's school is named.

As I walked beneath the majestic heights of this church and attempted to absorb its grandeur, Nicole sat in one of the pews as if anticipating a grand revelation. When I approached her place of meditation, she began our discussion by challenging my belief in God. "Yes, I do believe in Him," I assured her. I thought I knew what her answer would be, nevertheless, I decided to ask, "What do you think about God?" Her response both startled and enlightened me. She said, "When God is in the church, He cannot be on the street to help the people." My mind was racing. Here I was standing in the very church where Martin Luther proclaimed the good news of the gospel to the common people, and yet these people have lost His glorious message. For here was a girl who possessed no knowledge of God's omnipotence nor His omnipresence. And alongside this German girl stood her American friend who was struggling with her limited German vocabulary to explain such profound theological truths as the tower of this church affirms, "Ein Feste Berg..." (A Mighty Fortress).

...God often opens opportunities before us in which He summons us to His service.

Since that experience I have a deeper perception of the importance of witnessing. I never considered personal witnessing to be an important aspect of my Christian life; after all, the church employs missionaries, and ministers to proclaim the gospel. I reasoned that I was not capable of turning the hearts of humans to God. I excused myself by asserting that I am not an out-going person, "How could I proclaim sin, salvation, and sanctification to a stranger?" Now I realize that God often opens opportunities before us in which He summons us to His service. Matthew relays Jesus' admonition to all Christians in His Sermon on the Mount:

> Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16).

Here Jesus is telling the early church that its purpose on this earth is to witness of God's greatness and thereby to lead the unregenerated to Him. If they do not actively shine forth the message which Christ has brought, they are as meaningless to God's purpose as salt that has no flavor.

Often members of the Christian Church see this institution as a means to sustain the regenerate while they must wait for the Lord to return. Joined with this notion is an apathy toward mission work. A belief in the general revelation of God, through His creation, leads many to assume that they are not held accountable to heed the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." What these Christians fail to recognize, however, is that without the message of God's special revelation—the actual Word of God—one cannot receive salvation (*Confession of Faith*, Art. II).

There are still some for whom this realization of others' eternal damnation is not motivation enough to cause them to engage in active witnessing. These stubborn Christians, like the children of Israel, should heed the warning of God, as prophesied by Ezekiel:

> When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezekiel 3:18-19).

This admonition calls the Christian to proclaim God's justice, truth, and righteousness to those with whom we are acquainted; those whom we know are walking in sin.

Positively, Psalm 96 teaches us to "Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people" (Psalm 96:2-3). Certainly, God does not call all His people to work as missionaries on a foreign field, but He does require that we each bare witness. Have we too, like many of the residents of Wittenberg, forgotten the message of the gospel? Have we become as salt that has no flavor?

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*Betsy is a senior at Calvin College and a member of First Protestant Reformed Church.*

# Christian or Antichristian

By Rev. John A. Heys

*The* Beacon Lights *is sent out to many different places. Some of us live in big cities, some in small towns and villages and some out in the open countryside. We all have a specific address to identify our location in distinction from everyone else. But though we all live in our separate places, our spiritual citizenship is in one of two places: the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of this world. Unlike the name of the city found on your address label, the cities of Jerusalem and Babylon have special symbolic meaning in the Bible. God uses these cities in the Bible as earthly pictures of a heavenly reality. We are earthly and can not see the heavenly realities with our physical eyes. We must, therefore, study carefully the pictures which God has given us so that we come to know and love the heavenly reality. Of what is Jerusalem and Babylon a picture? Rev. Heys gets right to the heart when he points to the absolute difference between them.*

From a physical point of view, Young People, there is a tremendous difference between that which is white or black, hot or cold, large or small, sweet or sour.

Likewise, from a spiritual point of view, there is a tremendous difference between that which is holy or unholy, the truth or the lie, serving God or serving Satan, loving God or loving sin.

What is more, there is a city mentioned in Scripture, that stands higher than all other cities mentioned therein. That is the city called Jerusalem, which was the capital city in the land of Canaan. It had God's temple in it, and therefore was the city to which the believers came, in order to worship God. That name Jerusalem means Possession of Peace.

Yes, there were many other cities presented in Scripture that had names that expressed belief or unbelief, joy or sorrow. There was a city that was far away from Jerusalem whose name was Babel, which means Gate of God, but it referred to an idol, not to Jehovah, the one and only true God. The name Babel was, in the New Testament changed to Babylon which has the same meaning, namely, Gate of Satan.

That city, Babylon, was far east of the land of Canaan, and therefore far from Jerusalem, which was the capital city for the twelve tribes of Israel. Babylon, however, was a city of gross idolatry. But Jerusalem was the place where all the believing children of God went to worship Him in His temple. They came home with the confidence that their sins were forgiven them. And that is why the name of that city means, and was called, Possession of Peace.

What is striking is that the city of Babylon is mentioned six times in the Book of Revelation, while Jerusalem is mentioned therein twenty times. What we read concerning Jerusalem in this Book of Revelation is always the blessedness which God has for those whom He chose in Christ. While Babylon is presented as an Antichristian city. That we read in Revelation 18:2 in these words: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." We can, therefore, call the believing children of God Christians; and the Babylonians then can correctly be called Antichristians, that is; those who are against Christ, and are not the members of His body, the Church. The Babylonians are those who want nothing to do with Christ but to go against Him and those who belong to Him.

That is an awesome truth, which we should today keep in mind. We are Christians or we are Antichristians. There is no third kind of people, from a spiritual point of view. We are citizens of Jerusalem from its spiritual point of view, or of Babylon, which belongs to Satan's Kingdom of Evil. Remember that Christ Jesus, our Savior, was crucified by those who hated Christ; and in that sense they were Antichristian. For "anti" means against. And they were against Christ, and against all the members of His body, the Church for whom He died, and whom He saves.

Here then we have that awesome difference between believers and unbelievers. The believers represent Christ; and the unbelievers present themselves as Antichrists in the Book of Revelation. And we do well to take heed of that truth. The cities themselves are not against each other; and today we can find children of God in the same city as those wherein the unbelievers dwell. In fact, in the cities in this world, more of them are children of Satan rather than children of God. They are not Christians, but in all they want and seek are Antichristians.

What we should bear in mind, and hold on to tightly in our hearts and minds is the fact that Satan is so very, very clever today, using these Babylonians, who are Antichristians, against Christ's covenant seed, dwelling in the same city or community. We live today in a world wherein Satan has so many clever and deceitful and powerful means of making most of the world by far to be Antichristians rather than Christians; and to make the Christians cover their Christianity by Antichristian activities.

You Young People should therefore bear in mind what we read in II Corinthians 6:17. There we find this awesome and important command: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." Therefore also we read in Revelation 18:4: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." We also have that serious calling presented in Isaiah 52:11. There we read: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

That is an awesome and very serious command that comes to us today. For Satan has many more devices to make us live as the Antichristians live. With many awesome inventions that we have today, we are tempted craftily and seriously by things which Satan did not use upon our parents and grandparents. With an automobile, radio and television set we can, even on Sunday, seek many worldly pleasures that could not be sought and used in ages gone by; and were not found as being sought by church members.

We must judge everything that God calls sin to be sin, and must seriously judge all that is round about us, and is being performed by those whom we see, read about, and are recommended by the Antichristian men, women and young people, who are round about us. When we walk as Babylonians, that is, as those who live as Antichristians, we should take heed of what God says of them.

The sad situation today is that Satan is far more clever and crafty in getting men and women of Babylon into Jerusalem. He is getting many more of those that are Antichristian, to get those who are Christians to live as the Antichristians sinfully live. They get false doctrines into churches, both in preaching and in singing. They enter into man's hearts through their ears. They will even get people to clap their hands, because of what their men sang, rather than because of the truth that was sung. They reveal far more delight in music than in the truth which is sung. What man does pleases them rather than what God does and presents in a song.

Our calling, therefore, is to live Christian lives, and to keep away from Antichristian entertainment. By all means we must sing of God's grace, in order to praise Him. We must not ever brush God aside by bringing men in front of Him. Rightly we begin our services singing: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below."

Let your life, Young People, reveal that you are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, the New Jerusalem, rather than citizens who are happy because they are Babylonians. We must not walk as citizens of Babylon, but as citizens of the coming New Jerusalem. Fight against your flesh, not against Christ, your Savior.

Look forward to the day when you will be spiritually perfect Christians, who glorify God, and have Babylon's gate tightly closed, to keep from you all that which tries to brush God aside, and brings man to do what Satan wants man to do. Now already reveal yourselves as Christians, rather than Antichristians. Reveal yourselves as Christians, and you will soon be with Him in the New Jerusalem, when Christ comes to punish the spiritual Babylonians.

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*Rev. Heys is a retired minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.*

# Calvin College

by Jodi Baker

Many of you are asking yourselves, "What do I do after high school graduation? Where will I work, or where should I go to school to prepare myself for a future career?" I challenge those of you who are making such decisions to consider a Christian college such as Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when you are weighing your options.

"Let's begin with a prayer to help put this test, and our lives, in perspective," recommended Professor Post as she bowed her head. Just two classrooms over, Professor Talsma leaned against the desk. "...so how does religion fit in with mathematics? The order God has placed in creation is marvelous, and He gave us these tools of order so we can better understand this world..." These scenes are typical in a Calvin classroom and represent the focus of Calvin as a Christian college.

"How could I ever afford to go to Calvin? Would it be worth the extra thousands of dollars I would spend in comparison to other tuitions?" Some of you graduates will ask these questions and come out with positive answers. Others will not. Calvin is among the cheapest of Christian colleges in the United States, yet it is far more expensive to attend than a state or community college. The decision to spend money on an education from Calvin should be made for similar reasons to those your parents used when they chose to send you to a Christian high school and elementary school. College is a continuation of your Christian education, and it can be for your spiritual benefit to receive continued religious influence. Therefore, each graduate must analyze his or her own needs, and at the same time consider an investment in a Christian college.

What are the rewards for spending so much money on Calvin tuition? I look back at my four years and see many. There are Christian friends to learn from, daily chapel services, invigorating spiritual discussions, nightly dorm devotions, and song services. I encountered a lot of hard work, professors that encouraged me in my spiritual walk, and professors that I vehemently disagreed with. These things are a small sample of what Calvin has to offer, yet each of these experiences took place in a nurturing Christian atmosphere that helped boost me into adulthood. I learned to re-examine many aspects of my life and develop firm reasons for why I live a Christian life and why I believe the things I hold to be true.

Since my experiences at Calvin have led to spiritual and personal growth, I recommend Calvin as an option for you. I also hope and pray that each of you discover the Lord's will for your life after high school, whether that be in working right away, or in choosing a college to attend.

---

*Jodi is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. She is a recent Calvin graduate and a teacher at Adam's Street Protestant Reformed Christian School.*

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Paula Faber

## March 1

**Read James 1:1-11**

What is wisdom? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." (Proverbs 9:10) Wisdom is to know God in such a way that we stand in awe of Him. Wisdom is to give God all respect and praise, and to know myself as His servant, not His equal. Are you living your life as a wise man or woman? Or do you find a lack of true wisdom in your life? If you find a shortcoming, then turn in prayer and ask God to fill this need. Pray that He will give you more humility, and God will show you how to exalt Him as you should. Read I Chronicles 29:10-15. Do you have a high view of God like His servant David had?

## March 2

**Read James 1:12-16**

Temptations will come. They will be with us through our whole life. We may be tempted to lie to our neighbor, to gossip about another, or to steal from our work place. We may also be tempted to cheat our boss in some way, to be unforgiving, or to hate someone so much that we find it disgusting to even say, "Hi." What will you do with these temptations? Will you endure? Will you come through them? By the power of God's grace, will you say, "No" to these sinful attractions? Is there a hatred for the things God hates? God blesses the man who turns and runs from temptation! Read about David's temptation in II Samuel 11:2-4. Did he turn from the temptation, or did he fall into its trap?

## March 3

**Read James 1:17-21**

Every year at harvest, the people of God were called to bring the first of the harvest to God. A portion of their grain, barley, and oil was to be given to the priest before they themselves could partake of the bounties of the earth. This activity was to acknowledge that God was the bountiful giver of all these gifts. Even so you and I must be firstfruits. We must give our lives for the service of God. We show ourselves to be the firstfruits of creatures when we acknowledge that "we are not our own, but we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ." We also show this by desiring to honor Him with our time, money, and our very life. We must seek Him first in all things. Seek His honor. Seek His will. Are you making Him and His service the goal of your life? Read about Paul's firstfruits in Acts 20:17-24.

## March 4

**Read James 1:20-27**

We don't often let the telephone ring and ring without answering it. But how often do we hear the Word of God as it instructs us in the right path and turn and go the opposite way? The prophets of God constantly told the people of Israel and Judah what God demanded of them. But the people said we will go our own way. They closed their ears to the Word of God. They stiffened their necks and refused to turn back to the paths of God. Read about it in Zechariah 7:8-12. Do you do this same thing?

## March 5

**Read James 1:20-27**

One of the characteristics of someone who is truly a Christian is that he cares for those with special needs. Your church has people to whom you can bring encouragement. There are many young and old people who are sick, the aging people of your church, the divorced, the unwed mother, the older single person without a family of his own. Too often this activity of caring and bringing the hope of God is laid on the shoulders of the pastor and elders of your church. God directly calls you to take up this task. Make time this week! Read Matthew 25:31-46. Will the Great King find you caring for the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry?

## March 6

**Read James 1:20-27**

Employers love to see their workers obey and follow their instructions. God delights in seeing His children obey His Word. We also find joy when we are walking in God's ways. Hezekiah, king of Judah, obeyed God by taking away the idol worship in the land. God blessed Him and prospered Him. Read II Kings 18:1-7. Is your life one of hearing and doing?

## March 7

**Read James 1:20-27**

Be careful not to spot your white garment. It is hard to keep white tennis shoes white! It is hard to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The world and our own evil nature are always trying to make us fall into sin. They want us just to try the sin once, and they want us to believe that sin is not so bad. The minute we follow after sin, spots appear on our white garments. Be careful like Daniel not to spot your garment! Read Daniel 6.

## March 8

**Read James 2:1-10**

This word pricks everyone of us. So often we are a partial people. Our eyes love the fancies of this world. On our right hand are those who love us and who make us feel good. By our footstools are those who are poor and unable to help us. Remember God is the potter and we are the work of His hand. He has formed us and has given us each our place. Pray that He will help us not be partial to one another. Pray for love for one another. Oh! to be cleansed from the sin of putting down the neighbor. Oh, for eyes that overlook things like goodly apparel and gold rings. Lord help us concentrate our attention on the hidden virtues of the heart. Read Leviticus 19:15.

## March 9

**Read James 2:10-26**

Our actions must speak about the faith within us. It is easy to talk about the needs of others in the church, but we must go beyond seeing the need and reach out to those in need. Is there a family with a child that has special needs in your church? Have you secretly thought or even suggested that someone help them—but never offered your services? Or is there a family without money for its needs—but you have refused to put money in the benevolence fund? Are your parents aged and in need? Do they love to have you visit and care for them—but you are too busy with your own activities? Read Nehemiah 2:1-20. What action did Nehemiah take after hearing of the problems of the Jews in Jerusalem?

## March 10

**Read James 3:1-18**

We can do so much evil with our tongue! The sins we can commit with the tongue are numerous: lying, tempting, killing, anger, gossip, and taking the name of God in vain. Yet we don't often take these sins seriously. We tell ourselves these sins aren't as bad or evil as other sins. In the sight of God these sins are just as displeasing as others. Daily you and I must struggle against these sins. Our tongue must be used only for the service of God and the building up of the neighbor. Do you use your tongue to build up the neighbor? Read Proverbs 30:32. Pray that God will help you, as you seek to bridle your tongue.

## March 11

**Read James 4:1-17**

Is God in your plans? I mean do you seek God's will and His way with all your tomorrows? Or do you go about your plans of buying and selling without God? It seems so difficult for us to say we will do this and that if the Lord will. Our talk with one another must include the words, "the Lord willing." This will help us remember that each event in our life is sent by God. He leads us day by day down the path of life. Things don't happen by chance but by the sovereign will of the Almighty. Acknowledge this by saying "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." Read Romans 1:1-17. Can you find the verse where Paul shows this attitude in his letter to the Romans?

## March 12

**Read James 5:1-20**

In this chapter we are called to be patient till the coming of the Lord. There are many things that we see about us that bother us. Men live for pleasure and greed. They heap up treasures for themselves. It is easy for the elect to grow impatient as to when Christ will come and deliver us from all the wickedness around about us. In times like these His brethren must bear fruits of godliness. He tells us to be patient. He, the Husbandman, must wait till the precious fruit (His people) is ripe for harvesting. Each one of His must not only be born, but come to faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Be patient therefore! The time is drawing nigh! Read about Job's hope amidst all the trials he faced. Read Job 19:1-27.

## March 13

**Read Psalms 103-1-10**

"Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Come and bless Him now! Let no time be wasted but let my soul come to proclaim that the Lord is great and worthy of all blessing. My voice must bless Him in all my speech and singing, my eyes must bless Him in beholding the wonders about me, my feet must bless Him by walking in His law, my hands must bless Him by prayer and caring for others, and my mind must bless Him in concentrating my whole life on Him. All that is within me COME BLESS THE LORD! Read Jude verses 24-25 and bless the Lord!!

## March 14

**Read Psalm 103:1-11**

He forgives all our iniquities! This is truly one of the greatest benefits God has placed upon us. He chose us out of the millions of people in the world to be His elect children. He has taken all your sins away through His Son's death on the cross. What praise ought to fill your heart and soul. This is a priceless gift that no money could ever purchase. Neither could any deed be counted as worthy to receive this gift. Rather this gift is given only because of His love to you. Rejoice and live a thankful life full of praise for this overflowing benefit. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. Praise the Lord that you have come to know Him, as your Redeemer.

## March 15

**Read Psalm 103:1-12**

The heavens above reach far and wide. This is a picture of God's mercy to those who fear Him. His mercy is His compassion. It is endless, full, and boundless. That mercy shows itself in the removal of all our transgressions. Just as there are no bounds on God's mercy—so—there is no trace of our sin any more! If we were to investigate and search out the wide extent of the universe, we could not find any of our sin. He promises this to us! So next time you gaze up at the starry

sky think about His boundless mercy to you! Read the prayer the Levites as they recall the everlasting mercy of God in Nehemiah 9:1-38.

## March 16

**Read Psalm 103:13-22**

"For He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust." God the high and mighty one Who is so great that His glory and being fill the whole world, bends down to care for you—made of the dust of the ground. He takes pity and shows compassion to us, not because we are better than others but, only of His grace and mercy. Think of it—He made you a creature of the dust to bring glory to the King of Kings!!! Remember your place before Him, and fear Him as you ought! Read Genesis 2:7 and Job 34:15.

## March 17

**Read Psalm 103:13-22**

Our life is like a flower. We grow, bloom, and pass away. Life really is short, and our days are few. We may live 80-90 years, then we are called home. The grave marker tells we have lived and passed on.. But, after a generation we are forgotten. In contrast to the brevity of man is the mercy of the lord. He has had compassion and love for His people from the beginning and will forevermore. From generation to generation that love continues to those that fear Him. Our life is so short when compared to the endless mercy of God. Live it fully for the Lord. Don't waste the time He gives you to pursue your treasures. Make your life an endless song of praise and blessing your God. Read Psalm 106.

## March 18

**Read Jonah 1:1-3**

Ninevah and Tarshish are cities in opposite directions. God calls Jonah to go to Ninevah, but Jonah arises and goes the opposite way—to Tarshish. Obedience and sin lead us in opposite directions. Obedience leads us toward God. Sin and disobedience lead us away from God. It is easy for us to be hard on Jonah and say that he should have known better. But whenever we sin we are being just like Jonah. We are not following the commands God gives us. We are going to Tarshish, and not to Ninevah. We ought to take a closer look at ourselves and root out all disobedience. Read Genesis 6. Do you strive to live in obedience as Noah did in this chapter?

## March 19

**Read Jonah 1:1-12**

"But Jonah arose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." There is no place unseen at any moment by the Lord. Jonah could not escape God's all seeing eye. God not only knows and sees the way of His people, but of all who live on the earth. God is omnipresent. He is present everywhere at every moment. Are there times when you desire to escape the all knowing and seeing eye of God? Read Psalm 139 where David acknowledges that God not only knows when we leave our homes, but He knows every time we sit down and rise up!

## March 20

**Read Jonah 1:1-17**

God prepares a great fish to swallow Jonah. God places a particular fish in the sea to swallow Jonah. He times the presence of this fish by His sovereign will. Each event of your life is specially planned to ultimately bring about His will. Many of the events that seem so small: stopping at a red light, or who sits next to me in the airplane, are sent to me for a purpose. Many things happen for reasons unknown to us. Read Genesis 24:1-28. Does Abraham's servant meet Rebekah by chance? or did God lead him to her? Remember God is also using the events of your life to better prepare you for His purpose. Follow His leading. Wherever He leads, He will go with you.

## March 21

**Read Jonah 2:1-10**

"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord His God out of the fish's belly...and thou heardest my voice." The Lord hears your prayer too. No matter where your prayer is offered, He will hear you. If God heard Jonah's prayer from a fish's belly then will He not hear your prayers? If He heard Jonah's cry of desperation will He not hear your cry for help too? Don't wait for afflictions to pray to God. Pray now while you are in happiness and health. Then when times of great need arise, you will know who to turn to. It will be the same One who helped you through those times of prosperity. Read about how God answered the prayer of Hannah in I Samuel 1.

## March 22

**Read Jonah 3:1-10**

Jonah received the word of the Lord to preach to the Ninevites two times. Then Jonah arose and heeded the call of the Lord. Is the Lord calling you to a specific work for the furtherance of His kingdom? Have you neglected the Spirit's working in your heart? Have you run away from the idea of getting involved? Have you come up with nice sounding excuses? Then read Jonah 1 all over again. God demands obedience. Heed His leading! Be ready to go where He leads, and be ready to do what He asks. It may be He has called you to the ministry, leading Bible study, visiting, teaching, organ playing. The list goes on and on. Remember the work is plentiful. Are you willing to do the work of the Lord? Read John 4:31-35.

## March 23

**Read Jonah 4:1-11**

Do you seek the salvation of those who do not now know the saving work of Jesus Christ? Is that a passion of yours? Do you witness at every opportunity? Does your life lead others to ask you, what makes your life so different? Or is witnessing the last thing you would be found doing? Are there too many other activities in your life so that there isn't time to witness? Then you too would find it easy to sorrow over a withering gourd but not over the many who need to hear the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Read Acts 16:25-36. Be ready to tell others about the saving work of Jesus Christ!

## March 24

**Read Proverbs 8:1-16**
When the Lord came to Solomon in the dark of the night and said, "ask what I shall give thee," he replied with a desire for wisdom. Today and tomorrow will be full of decisions to be made, answers to give, and reasons for our actions. You and I need the wisdom of God to act in a proper way in every circumstance. Often we find ourselves doing things foolishly, and answering our neighbor unwisely. If only we would think about the way that God finds delight in before we act. Yes, this wisdom of God must be valued above any earthly knowledge. Heed the Word of God. Show by God's wisdom in all your doings. The God of all knowledge will be exalted! Read II Chronicles 1:7-12.

## March 25

**Read Proverbs 8:14-21**
Have you laid aside the precepts of God today? Have you relied on your own wisdom to get you through a difficult situation? So often I go about the day without letting the wisdom of God govern my speech, actions, and thoughts. I often just do as I please. But at the end of the day what unhappiness I feel. How well I know that I have again disappointed my God by denying Him over and over. Oh! that the Lord would give us the zeal of Daniel to stand for the right and follow Him with conviction. Pray that God will give you an eye singled out to see the joy of following His commands. May your life count every other way as foolishness. God's way is the best. Trust Him. May His Word be your only delight! Read Daniel 2:1-23.

## March 26

**Read Proverbs 8:22-30**
As you read these verses today you must have come to the conclusion that the wisdom presented here, is the Lord Christ. How comforting and helpful to read about His ways from eternity. Truly He will guide us in the right way for He is the All Wise One. Have you set the ways of God above your own ways today? Have you bowed in humble reverence before this God of all wisdom? Wisdom is necessary. But whose wisdom will you follow? The world strikes hard blows at us, it presents the way of sin as the right way to follow. Are you leaning toward the way that shows companionship with worldly wisdom? The warning is: go not after such men. May God make us willing to follow His way, the everlasting way!! Read I Timothy 6:11-16.

## March 27

**Read Proverbs 8:31-36**
I would like to take one of the verses you just read and turn it into a question for you. Have you been heeding God's commands for your life? If someone were to watch you closely today would it be evident that you have been meeting daily at the gates of the Lord? Would your life show to others that you have been waiting at the posts of His doors? Does this verse talk about your life? Such a one will never be brought to shame, for God is his strength. The devil will try every means possible to discourage you in your efforts of meeting with God. He will send you sleepiness, a lack of desire, busyness, or the like. Do not let Satan have his way with you. Devote yourself to prayer and study. God will surely bless! Read II Chronicles 15:1-15.

## March 28

**Read Proverbs 9:1-21**
Is your life marked by an eagerness for the heavenly feast God has prepared for you? Do you hunger and thirst after this one true God? Do you long to dwell with Him in righteousness at last? If this is true of you, then your desire to be in your eternal home is marked by a tiredness of seeing sin exalted. Your longing for home clearly shows that the works of evil are not your joy. Your firm resolve is to hate the old man within you. This hope is all a work of God's grace in you. Cling to His promises. Set them daily before your eyes. Forget them not!! Read Isaiah 49:7-12.

## March 29

**Read Proverbs 9:13-18**
The opposite of wisdom is foolishness. A foolish one calls evil, good. It places earthly wisdom above godly wisdom. There is no regard for the ways of God in this camp. Anything morally right is looked at as old fashioned. Lust and self are promoted. So often we find ourselves looking enviously at this foolishness. How can you and I be so easily turned from the right path? How can we forsake the guide of our youth? By the grace of God we will look straight ahead. We will not turn to the right or to the left. May you take this life seriously. May there be an urgency upon your path today, as you follow the God of all wisdom. Read Proverbs 1:7-23.

## March 30

**Read Proverbs 10:1-21**
Do you really realize what delights your father and mother? Oh, that we as young people would often consider this thought. Our parents find joy and delight in seeing us follow hard after God. When they see zealous young people ready to do good works this brings delight to them. They love to see you walking in the way of God. What could bring more joy to a godly couple? Do your parents seem saddened by something they have heard or seen in you? Then take a good look at your actions. Are you denying God by your words and deeds? Seek to follow the way of wisdom in your life. It will bring happiness not only to you, but also to your parents, and all those who labor to teach you His fear. Read Proverbs 15:20, 23:24, 27:11, and 29:3.

## March 31

**Read Proverbs 24:30-34**
A vineyard needs to be tended. The keeper must keep the weeds out and the wall strong. You also have a vineyard to keep! Your life must be kept pure and clean, just as you would keep a vineyard. You must work at pulling the weeds of sin out. You must take great care to watch what comes in your vineyard. The wall around your vineyard must be repaired quickly before the foxes come and ruin it. We too must watch and protect ourselves from every temptation to sin. Set a watch for your eyes, and boundaries for your hands and feet. Read Proverb 4: 23-27.

*The* Beacon Lights *will be printing a new rubric in the coming months on the life of the Covenant family. We will be having articles on the roles of the father, mother, and children in the home. Some other aspects that will be covered are those of family time, private devotions, and school and society life. We, as the staff hope that you will enjoy the articles.*

*The following poem introduces the rubric:*

# The Covenant Family

by Cheri Kaptein

Our families are a gift, given to us on earth,
By our Heavenly Father, the God of matchless worth.
The parents must reflect God's glory and His love,
Until someday at last, we are a family up above.

God intended families, His covenant to reflect,
Each member has responsibilities, which he may not neglect.
The Bible is the basis by which they must abide,
Trusting always in the Lord that He will be their guide.

When a home is built, the father is the head,
Making sure each day that the Bible is read,
Discipline the children, when they disobey,
Teach them how important it is for them to pray.

The mother must stay at home to raise the covenant seed,
Always supporting her husband, in thought, in word, and deed.
There must be unity between a man and his wife,
In order to raise the children in a godly walk of life.

Responsibilities are given to the young people as well,
To serve the Lord daily, in His courts to dwell.
Faithfully attending catechism, week after week,
And in private devotions, "Thy face Lord I will seek."

Only by God's grace the family works as one,
We must thank Him daily for the gift of His Son.
In a covenant home, there is faith, trust, and love,
That God will reunite us in His perfect home above.

*Next month we will be looking at the importance of family time. We all know that family time is time spent with our families. The author of the article tells us more specifically what our family time should be. Look for the article next month under the rubric "Family Time."*

# John Wesley

by Melinda DeMeester

***Conversion is a* spontaneous *experience which is followed by a long struggle.***

**You *can accept Christ as your Savior by your own will.***

Who believed these things? It was John Wesley.

John Wesley was born in the early 1700's being one of 19 children. Being the excellent student that he was, John was chosen to go to the Fellow of Lincoln Colleges. However, to be in this school one had to be in the holy orders. Therefore, Wesley was ordained a deacon; three years later a priest in the Episcopal Church of England.

Some time later, after returning to Oxford from helping his father in his parish, John became the leader of the "Holy Club." The members of this club lived strictly to a certain methodical life-style. Soon the name "Methodists," that was given to them by other students, stuck.

In 1735 John and his brother Charles set sail for America to help with the missionaries in Georgia. John was greatly influenced on this voyage by some Moravians who were also sailing the ocean to America. John saw their great trust in God especially in troubled seas. Seeing their trust was troubling to John because he did not have that trust in God. Once at his destination in Georgia, John met the leader of these Moravians. He was confronted by the question, "Do you know that Jesus has saved *you*?" Wesley was plagued with this question even though he did believe in God.

Three years later, after returning back to England, John experienced his conversion. He explains it as: a warming in his heart and belief that he trusted in Christ alone for salvation. From his conversion John felt that conversion was a matter of specific experience. He believed that one should be able to tell the circumstances, exact time, and place of his conversion.

At this time, the spiritual state of England was one of turmoil. The Anglican and Presbyterian churches became infested with Arminianism. Sermons lacked enthusiasm and many churches were apostatizing. Many ministers did not have their hearts in the matters. They were preaching only because it was required of them. Sadly enough, some financially stable ministers paid vicars to do their work. Many clergymen were also involved in drinking and card playing. Drunkenness was among the high and lowly in England. During this time, however, there were some pious people. New hymn books were being written.

It was into this state of the churches of England that John Wesley came. Amidst all of the corruption, small prayer groups called "societies" were formed. Small Bible study groups were formed and a new spirit for religion was cultivated. It was in these societies that John and his brother Charles started preaching.

John Wesley believed in the basic truth of orthodox Protestantism. He believed and practiced infant baptism. He believed in the deity of Christ, in the miracles, and also practiced the two sacraments: Lord's Supper and Baptism. However, Wesley declared openly that he was Arminian. He opposed Calvinism. Through preaching against the terrible sins of the day he desperately tried to bring sinners to conversion. Being caught up in saving the unchurched he rejected Calvinism. He felt Calvin's doctrine of predestination and election would turn away those who may have believed. He said that the Calvinistic belief would stifle the call to repentance and conversion. For this he rejected Calvinism and embraced Arminianism with its doc-

trine of free will by which the people could accept or reject Christ on their own. This is what Wesley preached to his listeners whether they were in the fields or in the churches.

Influenced by George Whitefield, Wesley began preaching in the missionary societies and the open fields. It was here that many unchurched people gathered and where John found his love for preaching to the unchurched.

In 1740, Wesley established a Methodist United Society. Anyone who wanted to join could, but he had to be a convert. These new converts were told to go out and bring in more new converts. When the societies began to grow too large, Wesley acquired lay preachers. He taught these preachers by books that he wrote since he had no seminary.

Realizing the need to have his lay preachers ordained Wesley sought out the Anglican Church. The Bishops of the Anglican Church wouldn't ordain Wesley's lay preachers, however; so Wesley, being a presbyter himself, took things into his own hands. Believing that bishops and presbyters were of the same order, Wesley ordained the men himself. This was the breaking of the tie that held him to the Anglican Church.

Wesley's lay preachers soon became "traveling preachers" by running the "circuit" of societies that were established across England. These men were called traveling preachers because they were only allowed to stay and work in one place for six to eight weeks.

Wesley had different methods of preaching. One way was to reach new unchurched people by preaching to them in the open fields when the church doors were closed to him. In trying to reach the unchurched Wesley opened up yet another method. Instead of preaching and performing pastoral work in one church, he went to as many as he was able. He invaded other ministers' parishes. When criticized for this he said, "The world is my parish." If this wasn't enough, Wesley added another option, which was to have unordained men preaching under him. Again his purpose was to reach unchurched souls. He did however adopt this method reluctantly. But due to a shortage of rightly ordained men he let them preach anyway.

As you can see, Wesley introduced methods into the church that are strictly unbiblical. Focusing on his view of Predestination and Election we can see that he did not find his answers in the Bible. The biblical view of predestination is that God chose unto himself a certain number that He would save through Christ. The remaining souls He would condemn to hell. Some feel that this view is unfair, but it is the will of God. For God gave, through His grace, salvation unto some and not to others. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." By His grace God brings His people to salvation and leaves the "nonelect in His just judgement to their own wickedness." (Canons I, Article 6)

All of this is in God's eternal counsel. What Wesley preached was that men can have God's salvation if they so desire it. He didn't want to admit that God was righteous and just in electing some and rejecting others. Romans 9:18 says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." In verse 21 of the same chapter it says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour." God is the Potter Who brings some of the human race (the clay) to heaven (honour) and some He will punish in hell (dishonour). Let us take this to heart.

Regarding Wesley's belief of conversion, we believe that one need not have a conversion experience. Wesley believed that one must have this experience. We do know that to some an experience really is their conversion. Such an example is that of the thief on the cross to whom Jesus said "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." To prove that one need not have such an experience we look to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was regenerated in his mother's womb before he was born. When the expectant Virgin Mary walked into Zacharias and Elizabeth's home, the baby John leaped in his mother's womb for he knew that the Lamb of God was present. Another example of this is that of Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:11-13 where we read,

> (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

So may we as covenant seed believe the Bible in all its truth of predestination and election as well as all the glorious truth therein. May we not fall away from these truths and believe the heresies of mere man. May we also continue to confess our faith, base our beliefs on the Word of God, and so experience God's blessings in our lives.

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*Melinda is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church.*

# For Our Edification

by Brian Dykstra

Tradition can be a powerful force. Not only can traditions be very hard to change, they can be hard to appreciate, too. Through all of her history, the Protestant Reformed Churches have stressed the importance of Heidelberg Catechism preaching. If that seems to be a long time, about seventy years, consider the fact that catechism preaching has been a Reformed tradition since just after the Heidelberg Catechism was published in 1563!

Catechism preaching is so important to our churches that is required by our Church Order in Article 68, which reads:

> The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose.

The reasons for rules may not always be self-evident, and we might even wonder why some rules are made. Perhaps you feel that some rules are there just to make life difficult. When your parents make rules, they are not trying to make your life difficult. Just as their rules have your personal safety and your spiritual well being at heart, Article 68 was made by our church fathers with our doctrinal and spiritual well being at heart.

Yet there are complaints about catechism preaching sometimes. Some say that it is full of doctrine and doctrine is dull. It really does not have anything to do with my life and my challenges today. Some might even say that if we would quit catechism preaching, our denomination might be more attractive and grow in membership.

In spite of these criticisms, Heidelberg Catechism preaching is beneficial for us. Although the catechism is full of Reformed doctrine, it is not impractical. What you believe, what you *really* believe in your heart, will become evident in your life.

Do we realize the greatness of our sin and misery so that we have a desperate need for Christ as our Mediator, or do we think that we are pretty good so that if we cannot save ourselves in some way, we can at least help God a little bit in the work of salvation by accepting a gracious offer?

Do we really believe in God the Father, Almighty, so that when troubles come to our lives we know that these troubles are from God's merciful hand, or are we shaken in our faith because we believe that we have been temporarily turned over to the whims of Satan?

Do we really fight against the sin of idolatry and hold to the one, true and living God, or do we harbor in our hearts a false god who winks at our sins and is not so holy as to be terribly offended by our transgressions?

When we pray to God, do we really desire His beautiful name to be hallowed, or do we show that we really don't mind if His name is dragged through the mud because of our poor witness?

These are just a few examples of how doctrine practical for everyday life. Your minister, by faithfully preaching God's gospel as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism will show to you week by week just how vitally important these doctrines are to your godly life as you face the challenges of today's world.

Catechism preaching is not repetitive either. I am very grateful for the different perspectives my ministers have brought to their catechism preaching. It has been very evident that they did not prepare fifty-two sermons so that when they reached the end of the catechism, they merely "turned over the pile" and preached the same sermons over again. Surely such dedicated preaching and application of the catechism to the particular needs of congregations takes many hours of labor.

Concerning the repetitive nature of catechism preaching, I am reminded of an old school joke. A kindergartner has completed his first day of school. When his mother tells him the next morning, "Wake up! It's time to get ready for school!" The youngster replies, "What, again?" He has no idea how much there is for him to learn. The same applies to us. There is never a time when we can really say that we have learned all that we need, wish or want to know about the truths contained in the Heidelberg Catechism.

How often in the history of the church has it not been the case that a departure from solid, Reformed preaching on the catechism has led to a departure from the green pastures of God's truth? Any departure from the truth will manifest itself in our lives. Such departure will lead only to greater compromises of God's Word.

It is through faithful catechism preaching that the truth is maintained. It might be the case that our numbers could increase were we to forego catechism preaching, especially the preaching on those uncomfortable Lord's Days which instruct us of our miserable sinful condition. Would it really be worth it?

God has graciously given His truth to us. As a denomination we are eagerly anticipating bringing God's truth to other people on mission fields. We would not be honoring God by spreading anything other than His truth, and Heidelberg Catechism preaching can help us spread the Word.

We must be thankful for good preaching based on the catechism. Such preaching is certainly for our spiritual edification.

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*ian is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church and teaches at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School.*



# "GOOD MORNING ALICE"

by Melinda DeMeester

*Good Morning Alice* is a book written by Rev. Gise Van Baren about his dying sister Alice. The book is about the death of a saint by Lou Gehrigs Disease.

During the last three months of Alice's illness an anonymous writer sent cards and notes to her almost every day. The writer of the cards included scriptural texts and elaborated a bit on each passage. In this way this book is a devotional. Each day Alice would look forward to receiving her card in the mail. During the last few months of her illness this little diversion of a piece of mail gave Alice a positive outlook on life. Yes, she was physically failing but she was being spiritually uplifted.

This small book also shows how one family learned of Lou Gehrigs Disease and how they managed to cope with it. We are able to see what it is like to lose loved ones to death. But we are also able to see the desire that the saints of the Lord have to be with Him after their death.

The story is touching and the verses encouraging. I recommend this book to anyone who is or who has a loved one who is struggling with a sickness, disease or is on the brink of death. The scriptural passages will bring comfort in time of trouble as well as in times of happiness.

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# A Christian Perspective on Play and Sports

by Rev. Bruce Davis

*This is the first of a four-article series. The full title which the author gave to his articles was: "On Developing and Implementing a Christian Perspective on Play and Sports." We hope you will follow this series in subsequent issues of the* Beacon Lights.

## Introduction

Picture with me the following highlights from a basketball game played between two Christian teams: the two teams arrive at the gym and spend some time in fellowship with one another before they go to their respective locker rooms. Once on the floor warming up they continue to take time to talk with one another. Before the game starts the players on both teams shake hands with one another and with the coaches and officials. A father of one of the boys leads in prayer as players, coaches, and officials join hands and hearts in a circle around center court. From the opening whistle each team encourages the other on good plays. Christian friendship is evident between the two teams in numerous ways. At one point an official is blocked from having a good view of a play and gives the ball out of bounds to the wrong team; a player whose team is about to get the ball wrongly and who knows what really happened on the play tells the official and requests that he reverse his call. At another point in the game a player has a breakaway and an easy lay up but stops because a player from the other team is lying on the floor and seems to be injured. Not once during the game is disrespect shown to the other team or the officials. One team, which only had seven players to begin with, has three players foul out, so they have to finish the last few minutes of the game with only four players on the court. The other team's coach pulls his fifth player so that the two teams remain evenly matched for the rest of the game. The game ends with one team ahead by five points, and members of both teams again shake hands with one another and spend time together on the court and along the benches. One observing this scene cannot tell by facial expressions or conduct which team won and which team lost. Another father leads in closing prayer as the participants again gather at center court. After the game a number of boys and families from both teams meet at a restaurant for a postgame snack.

Is this a scenario that I witnessed one day? Regrettably, I have never seen such a game. Is this how Christians should participate in sports? Yes, by the grace of God. Then why is the scenario just described not the rule in the Christian community?

## The Problem Stated

The world in its sinfulness has perverted and distorted the divine intention for play and sports, and the church has embraced the world's philosophy; what a tragedy this is because the morally and spiritually bankrupt world only offers that which is morally and spiritually bankrupt. In this area, as well as in other areas of Christian living, the church has laid hold of broken cisterns which hold no water.

The world does not participate in play and sports to express the chief end of man which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Games and contests to the world are opportunities for self-promotion and winning at the expense of others; coveting first place while viewing the other team as the enemy; taking an ego trip; looking out for #1; viewing those who are better with envy; trying to demonstrate one's superiority over another; trying to win at all costs while keeping in mind that the main thing is win; and showing a killer instinct as one tries to put another away in the game so that the loser has a negative experience.

But is not all this the world's problem? Yes, but it is also the church's problem because the church has let the world teach her how to participate in sports. Much of what goes on in Christian homes and on Christian teams in the name of Christian play, sports, and recreation is worldly and wicked to the core. This sad reality is so because the church has learned how to play, not from the Word of God, but from the world. As in other areas, the standards of the world have become the standards in the church. By and large professing Christians imitate the world as they play. They do not look to the Lord to govern them by His Word in their sports; rather, the values of the world dominate their thoughts, words, and deeds while participating in sports.

Christians are taught to love their neighbors, but when the game begins they often abandon the biblical law of love in order to play according to the law(lessness) of the world. All too often professing Christians leave their Christianity in the locker room or in the gym bag during their play so that the values and standards of the world prevail. This allows a blatant disregard for the Word of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ during play; but the challenge for the church is to develop and to live out a distinctively Christian perspective of play and sports based squarely on the Word of God and implemented in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we take up the challenge of developing and implementing a God-centered and biblically-based philosophy of play, we need to ask and to answer a number of questions such as:

What is play?

What is God's purpose for sporting and playful activities?

How should a Christian approach and participate in sports and play so that God is glorified?

How does the Word of God bear upon our play?

Why should Christians play?

What qualities should characterize us as we play?

Is there such a thing as Christian competition?

How should winning and losing be viewed?

Is there a biblical view of play and sports, and if so, what is it?

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*Rev. Bruce Davis is the minister of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Standale, Michigan.*

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Fill in the answers to the clues by using all the syllables in the Syllabox. The number of syllables to be used in each answer is shown in parentheses. The number of letters in each answer word is indicated by the blank spaces. Each syllable will be used once. When the words are correctly filled in, their first and last letters, reading down, will reveal a Bible text.

**SYLLABOX**

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| 2. | INHERITANCE | (3) | — — — — — — — — |
| 3. | CHOSEN ONES | (2) | — — — — — |
| 4. | GOETH BEYOND | (2) | — — — — — — — |
| 5. | OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET | (3) | — — — — — — |
| 6. | MESSENGER OF GOD | (2) | — — — — — |
| 7. | CAUTIOUS | (2) | — — — — — — — |
| 8. | ONE OF JOB'S FRIENDS | (3) | — — — — — |
| 9. | OFFERING | (3) | — — — — — — — — |
| 10. | GREW | (2) | — — — — — — — — — — |
| 11. | NOT A JEW | (2) | — — — — — — — |
| 12. | SMELL | (2) | — — — — |
| 13. | WANTS | (2) | — — — — — — — |
| 14. | LACKING | (2) | — — — — — — — |
| 15. | PRAISE! | (3) | — — — — — — — |
| 16. | PRAYER FOR ANOTHER | (4) | — — — — — — — — — — — — |
| 17. | TALKED | (5) | — — — — — — — — — — — — |
| 18. | MINOR PROPHET | (3) | — — — — — — |
| 19. | INHABITANT OF PHILLIPI | (4) | — — — — — — — — — — |
| 20. | BY | (3) | — — — — — — — — — |
| 21. | PRAYER | (4) | — — — — — — — — — — — — |

**Find where this verse is in the Bible.** _____

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## . . . LET IT SHINE!

by Connie Meyer

### Little Things

The ant was not deterred by any obstacle in his path. Quickly he marched, his tiny legs moving as fast as they could, as if the little creature knew he had only a short time to get where he was going. Indeed, he had. *Smoosh.*

"Hey, whadja do that for Joey? I wanted to see where he was going," Bill chided.

"Aw, you woulda stepped on him when he got there anyway," Joey said.

Bill shrugged his shoulders, he probably would have. The two boys continued their walk down the sidewalk, stopping now and then at other ant hills, stepping on a few more tiny-legged scouts and workers.

But off to the side of the street where Bill and Joey were walking, there were two other eyes following the boys' path. Here a clump of trees grew tall and straight, and perched on the highest branch was an owl. Awakened from his nap, he searched for what had disturbed him. Two little caps bobbed up and down as the small strangers walked and skipped on their way. The owl heard their playful chatter and watched them closely. When the two figures were safely out of sight, he stretched his legs, flapped his wings, and settled comfortably on the branch. Soon he was peacefully dozing again.

But not for long. High above, much higher than the trees, flew a flock of crows. As the owl had flapped his wings, the crows had spied the tiny movement below them. Could that be an owl? They flew a little lower for a closer look. Yes! What better way to spend an afternoon than to pester an owl, their arch enemy? Soon their squawking awoke him and before the owl had time to retaliate, the crows began using him as diving target practice. The owl pumped his mighty wings and took off for another roost, but the crows kept chasing him, enjoying their game.

Then did someone see the crows? Yes—and the owl, and the boys, and the ants. These seemingly little things, along with things that seem big, are all seen by God. The earth is but an ant hill to Him. No wonder David said in a psalm, "What is man, that Thou (God) art mindful of him?"

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psalm 8:3,4.

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

Each underlined word in the text at the end of the story, you will find in the puzzle below:

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| F | S | C | A | T | O | K | R | M |
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