BEACON LIGHTS

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Revelation 14:6

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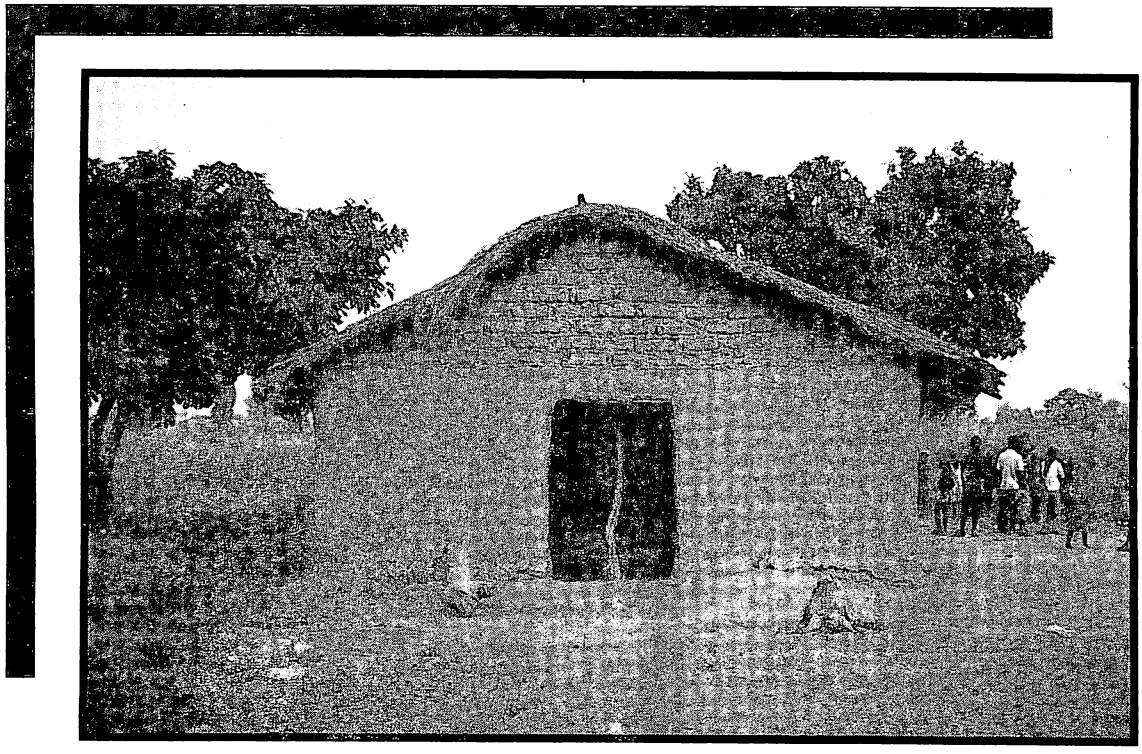

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Cover photo: *School and church in the village of Sibi, which is in the northern part of the Volta region of Ghana, West Africa.*

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The Wealth of Christians

by Michael Kortering

The question of how much wealth a Christian may have, or how much wealth a Christian should have, has plagued the church for centuries. There are those who cite such texts as Proverbs 10:4 (he becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich) and Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) to question the morals of those who are not as well off as they. Perhaps the most famous illustration of this ideology can be seen in the works of Max Weber (1864-1920), a famous German sociologist/economist. Weber looked at two comparable cities, one predominately Roman Catholic and the other Protestant, and noted that the Protestant city was more prosperous. He explained this by saying that, due to a strong work ethic based on religious beliefs, the Protestant people were able to make more money. In addition, since Protestants frowned upon ostentatious consumption, their wealth was generally invested, creating more capital. In this way, wealth tacitly became a means of measuring one's piety. There are also those who cite such texts as Matthew 19:23-24 (a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven...It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God) to condemn riches and wealth, for they are obstacles to the entrance of heaven.

Any person old enough to read this must form an opinion about wealth; it is impossible not to do so. Even if you decide to live in the top of a tree for your entire life, you have still formed an opinion about what your relationship to wealth should be. Thus, I think that this subject is pertinent and relevant to us all. Before the question of the wealth of Christians is addressed, I would like to diverge for just a little to talk about economic systems. There is a point at the end, and I hope that you will bear with me.

Almost all economic systems can be divided into one of two groups—socialism or capitalism—or some combination of these two groups. Socialism advocates that efforts should be made to divide the wealth among the citizens. (Do not confuse socialism with communism or Marxism. Karl Marx (1818-1883) called for socialism, but he thought that this would be possible only through a revolution. Marx also saw religion, primarily Judaism and Christianity, as being tools of the rich and powerful to hold the poor and weak in subjection. This is why many Marxist countries today are atheistic, and missionaries are not welcome.) When I think of socialism, I imagine a world where there are no people so rich that they can not even spend all of their money in a lifetime, walking superciliously past people who have not eaten a good meal for months. I imagine a world where all people are equal and no one looks condescendingly on another. I imagine a world where everyone joins hands to get the work done and no one exploits another in this effort. This imagination is not impossible—it has been done. The early church practiced socialism (Acts 4:32-37) and it seemed to work quite well

for a while. The writer of Acts tells us that not only did no one lack any physical necessities, but also that the hearts and souls of the believers were of one accord. Most of you practice a form of socialism in your family lives. The wife/mother does not punch in before she starts to cook breakfast, or sign a yearly contract for wages. The father does not keep a cash register on the counter so that all the children can pay for their meals. Rather, the family seeks to help each other, and in so doing every one benefits.

The other type of economic system is capitalism, and for the most part that is what most of us practice. Pure capitalism has individual people owning everything, and no attempt is made to distribute the wealth artificially. Capitalism is based on self-interest, or if you want a "fancy" word, utilitarianism. I call it greed. Capitalism has the philosophy of each man for himself. Take yourself as an example. Why do you work? You will probably answer that you work to support yourself and/or your family. If your employer were to take away your check, you would no longer work for him. You work for yourself, and for the benefits you derive from your labor; you do not work for your boss because he is a nice guy. This can be well illustrated in wage negotiations—each side is attempting to get what is best for him—the employer wants low wages while the employee wants high wages. I dislike the concept of capitalism because it is based on the concept of "What is best for me?" I dislike the concept, but it works. Adam Smith (1723-1790), the father of modern economics, stated that individuals seeking their own self-interest ultimately help not only themselves, but also the society in general. For example, a business man who is trying to make money by expanding his plant creates jobs for people in the community. The idea of how well self-interest works can also be seen in your family. Suppose the son is supposed to mow the lawn. The mother may ask the son to mow the lawn, but he will find excuses until winter why he can not do it. If the mother were to say, however, that she would pay him twenty dollars to mow the lawn, he would probably be outside in a few minutes. As well as capitalism works, socialism does not, especially in large groups. Since there is often little personal gain as an incentive in socialism, few people take the initiative to promote common good, and indolence permeates the community.

This brings us back to our original question of the wealth of Christians. I find interesting the question of whether or not Christians could practice socialism. As I noted before, the early church did it, and it seemed to work for a while. In order for socialism to work, however, Christians would need to put the problems, needs, and concerns of other Christians equal to or before their own. Whether or not this is possible is a difficult question, and I shall leave the question for you to answer. Even if this were the case, socialism in Christian circles would require great sacrifices. Our economic world today is complex, and goods are traded all around the world. Isolated patches of socialism would require that capitalistic ventures be made with the outside world or that outside goods be foregone altogether. The first alternative would erode the principle with which we started, i.e., living in a socialistic society, while the second is hardly plausible. So in the end, we end up right where we are right now—doing the best we can in a capitalistic world.

What we must be aware of is that greed can easily overcome us, and that we can so easily focus attention on ourselves and the things which we can obtain. I think Jesus was referring to this when he said that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet we must not assume that all those who have wealth obtained it for their own selfish end. Many wealthy people are doing the best they can with their talents and opportunities God has given them; they are using their talents well. Nor are poor people necessarily slothful; poverty is a veritable obstacle to overcome. The potential for the problem lies not in the wealth, but rather in the motive. Neither God nor I care one bit how rich or how poor you are (Proverbs 11:4). What matters is that you believe that Christ died to save you from your sins, and that you live a life of gratitude which reflects that, hoping, watching, and praying for the time when you shall enter the kingdom where lies the true wealth of Christians.

From The Editor

By the time you receive this edition of the *Beacon Lights*, the 1995 Young People's Convention will be little more than memories of friends, fun, and fellowship. As I am writing this, though, there is still a week until the convention. The schedule promises a busy and enthusiastic week, and the *Beacon Lights'* staff will report the events of this week to you next month.

The *Beacon Lights'* staff would like cordially to welcome Rodney Kleyn as our newest member. Rodney is a newlywed, originally from Tasmania, who is studying so that he can enter the seminary. Welcome, Rodney!

I am pleasantly surprised at the amount of mail I have been receiving. I have received more letters of encouragement and articles than I had expected, and I would like to thank you for them. I promise to return all correspondence as soon as possible, but please expect a week or two for my response. I thank all of you who have written articles, and I would like to encourage others, especially those who are younger, to write. You need not be a professional writer to write articles for the *Beacon Lights*, and you need only look at my poorly written articles to realize this.

We have about 150 extra copies of each month's publications from the past half year. Anyone who would like them may have them; I wish to get them out of my room so that I can see the wall once again.

This month's edition has a wide variety of articles. Our "cover story" was written by Michele Ver Meer, and in it she explains the positive impact that missionary work in Ghana has had, not only on the lives of those in Ghana, but also on her own life. Her article is unique in that although it may reflect the sentiments of many of us, it could only have been written by someone in her unique situation. Thanks for the article, Michele! Reverend Hanko includes an incisive article, and if you read only one article this month, please read this one, especially the introduction. Jonathan Foster, a member of the C.R.F. in Northern Ireland wrote a poem about the scientific theories of the big bang and evolution. It is interesting to note that although scientists have authored an elaborate theory for the origin of the universe, the entire theory gets hung up on 10^{-43} of a second. No one "knows" what happened during the first 10^{-43} second of the big bang, or from where that came. Perhaps one of our readers can help them solve their dilemma.

Reverend Heys, my pastor for many years in Holland church, writes an article about making our calling and election sure. Reverend Heys now experiences back pain which makes it impossible for him to preach, so his only way of explicating the gospel is through the written word. Let us all remember Reverend Heys in our prayers.

Mark Vanden Berg starts the Dating and Marriage rubric with an important thought about how our marriages reflect the relationship of Christ to His church. Mindy DeMeester reminds us that siblings are more of an asset than a nuisance, and that we should be thankful to God for them. Al Brummel, Sr., a veteran child-rearer, gives some advice to young parents about raising children. I still am unsure, though, about who the cute baby is.... Tom Bergman included a crossword puzzle based on the book of Genesis, so I did not write a Bible Quiz for this month. He also gave me another puzzle on Acts, so keep an eye out for that in future months. Since school starts in September, Thelma Westra gave us a poem to help start the school year right, and all those who are involved in school—parents, students, and teachers—can use this poem as inspiration. Although Connie Meyer writes every month, we never tire of her original stories and ideas in "Little Lights." Finally, four members of the staff, Tom Bergman, Sharon Kleyn, John Huizenga, and Daniel Kleyn, wrote the devotional for this month. We hope that they can be useful and inspirational to you in your daily devotions.

May God be with you in the coming month.

Am I A Christian?

by Rev. C. Hanko

There is a difference between the nominal Christian and the sincere believer. Many profess to be Christians, attend church, catechism and society regularly, are taught in a Christian school where daily prayers are offered and the Scriptures are read and taught, and yet do not know the Lord. Some may be ministers, elders or deacons in the church, and yet may not be Christians.

Jesus warns us that in the last days, "Many will say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

At the end of the ages when every one will be required to wear the mark of the beast the sincere Christians will be recognized by the fact that they refuse to wear it. As this time approaches the question becomes the more serious, Am I a Christian?

Our Heidelberg Catechism asks in Lord's Day 12, question 32, "But why art thou called a Christian?" The answer is given, "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing, that so I may confess his name, and may present myself a living sacrifice of thanksgiving to him, and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life, and afterward reign with him eternally, over all creatures."

Well may we sincerely confront ourselves with the question, Am I a Christian?

1. Do I believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God? Give yourself 5 points for yes.
2. What is my only comfort in life and death, for body and soul? Answer this question correctly without looking it up in the Catechism. Five points, if your answer is correct. None if you had to look it up.
3. What three things are necessary for me to know in order to live and die in this comfort? One point for each correct answer.
4. What are the five points of Calvinism? Give yourself one point for each correct answer.
5. What did Paul tell the Philippian jailer is necessary to be saved? Answer this correctly before looking it up in Acts 16:31. This gives you five points for a correct answer.
6. I attend church twice on Sunday and also catechism and/or Society in the church. One point for church, one for each of the others.
7. What are the marks of the true church? Look up the Confession of Faith, article 29, page 33 in your Psalter. Give yourself one point for each correct answer.
8. I belong to the Protestant Reformed Church because: (a) I grew up in that church. (b) My parents, husband or wife belong to that church. (c) I am convinced that this church is the purest manifestation of the body of Christ. Give yourself five points if you have marked (c).
9. I make it a practice to read Christian literature. I read *The Standard Bearer, Beacon Lights, Perspectives, The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal, The Reformed Perspective, Pillar and Ground of Truth,* and/or others. One point for each.
10. I am preparing to make confession of faith, or I have made confession of faith in the church. Three points.
11. The Protestant Reformed Churches believe: (a) that God shows favor to all men including the reprobate wicked. (b) that God restrains sin

in the hearts of the wicked. (c) that the wicked can do civil good in the sight of God. (d) that God's covenant with His people is based on a conditional promise of salvation. Give yourself one point for each no, deduct one point for each yes.

12. I believe the doctrines mentioned earlier because: (a) my church confesses that. (b) my parents believe that. (c) it is my sincere conviction. Deduct five points for (a) and (b). Add five points for (c).
13. I pray daily because: (a) my family does at home. (b) the school I attend has prayers. (c) I have the need for daily prayer. Deduct five points for (a) and (b). Add five points for (c).
14. I read my Bible for personal devotions ___ times a day. Give yourself one point credit for each time.
15. My school mates or those I work with know that I am a Christian. Add five points for yes, deduct five points for no.
16. I testify of my faith before those I meet from day to day, at school or at work. Add five points for yes, deduct a point for no.
17. I do not hide my convictions even though others laugh about me. Add five points for yes, deduct one point for no.
18. I do not swear nor use slang even when I am angry. True? Add one point for yes, deduct one point for no.
19. I am a good sport when I play games, even when I lose. Add one point for yes, deduct one point for no.
20. People know that I am a Christian from the way I act at sports. Add one point for yes, deduct one point for no.
21. At school, and work, or whenever in public I act and speak as is proper for a Christian. Again add or deduct a point according to your answer.
22. Do I watch TV programs that are not proper for a Christian to watch? Deduct five points for yes, add five points for no.
23. Do I watch the rear view mirror for officers of the law when I drive my car? Deduct one point for yes, add one point for no.
24. I am willing to lose my job rather than deny my Lord. Add or deduct five points.
25. I am willing to go to jail and let my family suffer to maintain my convictions. Add or deduct five points.
26. I would be willing to lie to protect my family. Deduct one point for yes, add one point for no.
27. I would take the law in my own hands if my family were threatened. Deduct one point for yes, add one point for no.
28. If need be, I would be willing to die for my faith. Add or deduct five points.
29. I was completely honest in the test. Add five points for yes, deduct ten points for no.

Total: ____

Rev. Hanko is a retired minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

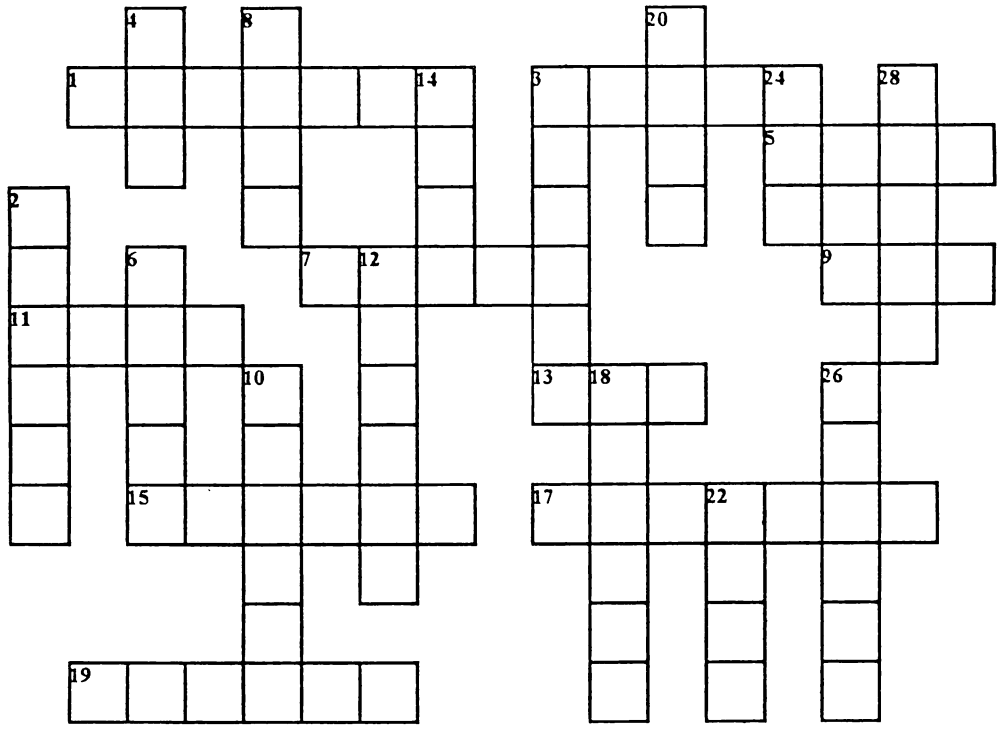
The Chances Are ...

by Jonathan Foster

Tell me my friend what the chances are
Of all things being the way things are,
Of planets thrown into the air,
After thousands of years still staying there.
Fragments of an explosive force
Steering on a perfect course;
Planets that are perfectly round—
One where life forms can be found.
What are the chances of a human race,
From one big bang way out in space?
Each individual, not quite the same:
Like every tree a different grain.
Of animals so great, and some so small,
Yet one big bang did create them all??
The seasons too by chance did come,
Cold winter's snows, warm summer's sun.
If another "big bang" should come again,
I wonder what else that it would frame.
Because the chances are, the odds are, too great—
I believe God's Word did the world rotate.
I look around to see hints of this power,
To see, in fact, and to see so far.
The chances of a big bang having all this done.
The chances are.....infinity to one!!

Jonathan attends the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.

Genesis



Across

1. Origin
3. Deluge spoken of in I Peter 3:20
5. "For as in ____ all die..." (I Cor. 15:22)
7. Eighth son of Jacob
9. Willingly pitched his tent toward Sodom
11. Son of Lot (Gen. 19:37)
13. One of the eight souls; father of Canaan
15. Builder, hunter, ruler (Gen. 10)
17. Grandson of Noah's father
19. Three who visited Abraham and Sarah

Down

2. Father of Noah
3. Psalm 8:3 refers to the ____ day of creation.
4. In Gen. 48, Jacob could hardly ____ because of old age
6. Selfish father of Rebekah
8. Inheritor; Isaac, not Ishmael
10. The reason Joseph's brothers came to Egypt
12. Son of Jacob and Leah
14. Righteous son of 5 Across
18. Mountain in Turkey
20. Lesser light for the rule of the night (Gen. 1)
22. Esau was out on a ____ when Jacob deceived Isaac his father.
24. "And God called the light ____." (Gen. 1)
26. One of Joseph's cellmates
28. Renamed Israel (Gen. 32)

Answers on page 21.

It's A Small World After All

by Michele Ver Meer

"Ghana? Where's that?" My dad has always had this way of being subtle. I have to ask specific questions if I want to know the details. He had just told me that he and my mom were going to Ghana. He answered my question by pointing silently to a place on the globe that we keep in our kitchen. Spinning it almost 180 degrees, he placed his finger on this place in Africa that I had never heard of. I felt my eyes grow big and my first reaction was to fire off questions as fast as they would come. I asked "When?", "How long?", and most importantly, "How?" He answered with a smirk and with as few words as possible, "This fall, the Foreign Mission Committee is sending your mother and me along with Rev. Moore and his wife to help do some mission work." I could tell that it was hard for him to hide his excitement with so little expression. I was certainly excited for him. My dad had never been overseas, much less to Africa!

Mission work has always been something that has seemed far away to me, probably because it usually is. I thought that it was something that I would let other people take care of. It was hard for me to picture Christians in other lands, outside of the formal Christian life-style that I have become so familiar and comfortable with in northwest Iowa. The trip that my parents took to Africa has, however, made a big impression on me.

The first thing that I have learned is that this kind of stuff is real. I mean, mission work is not just for the few, brave, and the adventurous. God calls ordinary people, just like my parents, to do mission work in His Kingdom. (My father is an elder in our congregation.) My parents had a hard time believing that it was real at first, too. It was hard for them to imagine that with just 13 hours of flying, they would be half way around the world, in Ghana, Africa. In one of the few telephone calls that we made to each other, my mom said to me, "It's an entirely different place, Michele. It's like another world." My parents were given the awesome opportunity to experience a culture that is very different from their own.

I have been able to grasp little glimpses of Ghana with the video that my dad took while he was in Africa. I have gotten a better understanding of what other people's lives are like in other places. One thing that really struck me as I watched those videos and heard the stories behind them is that even though the people in Ghana live so far away, they are people just like us. The women like to dress beautifully and the children love to play, but more importantly these people love the Lord. They worship differently with their drums, tambourines, and singing, but they worship and praise the same God that I do. These are *real* children of God who are devoted to loving Him. I have developed a certain love for these people because they are my brothers and sisters in Christ. My heart goes out to them, and I have realized that they need our help and support as fellow Christians.

That is the main reason why I have learned, secondly, to think more globally. I don't just think of God's people as being concentrated so much in one area, like the United States, anymore. I think of them as being scattered around the world, spread thicker in some areas than in others. They are all a part of God's Kingdom. By learning to think more globally, I have come to see how important it is for me to love and serve my neighbor, no matter who they are or where they live.

It has been eight months since my dad came back from Africa. I think that everyone in my family has seen all of the videos, pictures, and slides by now, but I don't know if we'll ever hear the end of all of my dad's stories. He hasn't talked about his trip much lately, but every once in a while, his eyes will light up, and you know that he has something to share. He surely isn't shy about being eloquent then. My dad's tan may have faded, and he might have put on the few pounds that he lost in Ghana, but one thing is for sure. He won't ever forget his experiences in Africa, and I don't think that I'll ever get tired of hearing him talk about them either. It's a small world after all ... isn't it?

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

The Two Glasses

There sat two glasses filled to the brim,
On a rich man's table, rim to rim;
One was ruddy and red as blood,
And one as clear as the crystal flood.

Said the glass of wine to the paler brother:
"Let us tell the tales of the past to each other;
I can tell of banquet and revel and mirth,
And the proudest and grandest souls on earth
Fell under my touch as though struck by blight,
Where I was king, for I ruled in might;
From the heads of kings I have torn the crown,
From the heights of fame I have hurled down:
I have blasted many an honored name;
I have taken virtue and given shame;
I have tempted the youth with a sip, a taste,
That has made his future a barren waste.
Greater, far greater than king am I,
Or than any army beneath the sky.
I have made the arm of the driver fail,
And sent the train from the iron rail;
I have made good ships go down at sea,
And the shrieks of the lost were sweet to me,
For they said, 'Behold how great you be!
Fame, strength, wealth, genius before you fall,
For your might and power are over all.'
Ho! ho! pale brother," laughed the wine,
"Can you boast of deeds as great as mine?"

Said the water glass; "I cannot boast
Of a king dethroned or a murdered host;
But I can tell of a heart once sad,
By my crystal drops made light and glad;
Of thirsts I've quenched, of brows I've laved,
Of hands I have cooled, and souls I have saved;
I have leaped through the valley, dashed down the mountain,
Flowed in the river and played in the fountain,
Slept in the sunshine and dropped from the sky,
And everywhere gladdened the landscape and eye.
I have eased the hot forehead of fever and pain;
I have made the parched meadows grow fertile with grain;
I can tell of the powerful wheel of the mill,
That ground out the flour and turned at my will.
I can tell of manhood debased by you,
That I have lifted and crowned anew.
I cheer, I help, I strengthen and aid;
I gladden the heart of man and maid;
I set the chained wine-captive free;
And all are better for knowing me."

These are the tales they told each other,
The glass of wine and the paler brother,
As they sat together filled to the brim,
On the rich man's table, rim to rim.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Watching Daily At My Gates

by the Staff

September 1

Read Psalm 41.

This psalm of David completes the first section consisting of Psalms 1-41. David wrote this plea for deliverance and God's mercy at the time of Absalom's rebellion. His anguish for God's care is evident. "Mine own familiar friend . . . hath lifted up . . . against me" (v.9). Compare old and new testament and see who this "friend" is (II Samuel 15:12 and John 13:18). Yet David's obedient desire to praise God even "in time of trouble" shines through in the doxology that brings to an end the first forty-one psalms. Memorize Psalm 41:13 and sing Psalter #113, verse 12.

September 2

Read Psalm 72.

This is one of Solomon's two psalms, completing the second section consisting of Psalms 42-72. Composed when Solomon's kingdom was at its height of glory, the psalm should make us stand in awe of that kingdom to come. Note the glory and grandeur of *Christ's* kingdom! Then pause for verses 18, 19—the doxology of praise to God. Memorize Psalm 72:18-19 and sing Psalter #197.

September 3

Read Psalm 89.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever"! See if you can pick out the references to Christ in this majestic song of praise. It is that kingdom of *Christ* that is referred to here so many times in God's oath for the eternal establishment of *David's* throne. Then notice how the third section of the book of Psalms (73-89) ends with its own doxology of praise. "Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen." Look over Psalter #241-243 and their titles especially, then sing Psalter #243, verse 15.

September 4

Read Psalm 106.

We sang doxologies in church yesterday. What is a doxology? What is it for? Praise! Praise to God and God alone. Psalm 106 is a historical psalm contrasting the wondrous mercies of the Lord and the disobedience of Israel. It is in this context that the doxology at the end of Psalms 90-106 has glorious significance for the church. Our unfaithfulness and God's enduring mercy. "O give thanks unto the LORD . . . " bycommitting to memory and heart Psalm 106:48 and singing Psalter #291, verse 12.

September 5

Read Revelation 19:1-6.

The book of Psalms will end with an outburst of Hallelujahs. Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with "Praise the Lord," or "Hallelujah." This praise to God echoes in the heavenly chorus of the redeemed as found in Revelation. "*. . . As the voice of mighty thunderings . . . Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*"!!! We sing Hallelujah because God reigns. Simple, but thought-provoking. Think about it. We sing Hallelujah because He reigns. Sing Psalter #400, verses 1 and 7.

September 6

Read Revelation 5:11-14.

Like the Hallelujah chorus from Revelation 12, we find another beautiful doxology of praise here in the fifth chapter. Why sing another doxology? Because the Lamb is worthy! Worthy of all *power*, all *riches*, all *wisdom*, all *strength*, all *honor*, all *glory*, all *blessing*. God grant that we never forget the meaning of "doxology" and never fail to sing them with all our heart. Here is one from the back of the Psalter reflecting on Revelation 5.

"Now to the great and sacred Three
Father, Son, and Spirit, be
Eternal power and glory given,
Through all the worlds, where God is known,
By all the angels near the throne,
And all the saints in earth and heaven.

September 7

Read Psalm 148.

Let us praise the Lord. You "people near unto him"—let us praise the Lord. " . . . For His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven." Let the angels sing the doxology. Let the heavens shout it out! Consider

especially verses 13-14 and sing your praise from the heart. Know the *personal* confession of Psalter #404, verse 5.

September 8

Read Psalm 150.

The doxology to end the psalms. Let everything that has breath (see Revelation 5:13) praise God. Read the psalm through twice. Why praise the Lord? Where? How? Give it some extra study. Then sing from Psalter #413. "Hallelujah . . . all that breathe, His praise proclaim."

September 9

Read Jude 24-25.

We end a week of praise, doxology, and hallelujah with the closing verses of Jude. One of the most beautiful doxologies in all of Scripture, verses 24-25 are well worth committing to memory. Know it "by heart"—as the little ones say (wisely). *"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

September 10

Read Hebrews 11:1-4, & Genesis 4:1-15.

God rejected Cain's worship because Cain did what he wanted and he did not do it in faith. Abel's worship was "more excellent" because by faith, he obeyed God and thus showed that he relied on Christ, the Lamb. We must be careful in our worship, not to bring our own works or our own ideas, for God will reject such worship. Today as you go to God's house, think of how God has commanded us to worship Him and then go in faith, as Abel did, and do what God has commanded.

September 11

Read Hebrews 11:5, 6, Genesis 5:21-24, & Jude 14, 15.

Genesis tells us that Enoch walked with God. In Jude we see that this walking with God included Enoch's preaching that the Lord would return and judge the wicked and their ungodly deeds. The text in Hebrews says that this pleased God. Has God worked faith in your heart? Show then, by your speech and walk that you walk with God. Walk closely with Him this week, that you may please Him Who is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

September 12

Read Hebrews 11:7, Genesis 6, & II Peter 2:5.

It is recorded of Noah (and of Noah only, for he stood all alone) that in the wicked times before the flood he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, was just and perfect, and walked with God. He was also a preacher of righteousness and condemned the wicked world of his time. (Notice, this is very similar to the description of Enoch.) Noah was all this because of the faith God had given him. This same faith caused him to believe God's warning that He would destroy the world and to obey God's command to build an ark. It was through the means of this faith that God saved Noah's family and made Noah heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Faith is a great power which God gives to us! Pray for such a faith, that we may stand against the wicked world and keep God's commandments.

September 13

Read Hebrews 11: 8-19, Genesis 12:1-9, & Genesis 22:1-9.

In Abraham we have an example of obedience—obedience no matter what the requirement and obedience without question. How often don't we, when something difficult is required of us, start to complain and question? Even though Abraham was required to leave his home and family to become a wanderer in a strange land, even though he was commanded to kill his own beloved son in whom the promise centered, he did so without question. He trusted that God would fulfill His promise to give him the land of Canaan and to send Christ from Isaac. Pray for such a faith and exercise that faith that you may believe and obey, as Abraham did.

September 14

Read Hebrews 11:22, Genesis 50:22-26, Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32.

Joseph, before he died, showed that his hope was not in Egypt and its riches. But, rather, his hope lay in the promised land of Canaan. He believed that God would deliver Israel from Egypt (a picture of sin and this earthly life) and would bring them to Canaan (a picture of heaven). Young people, do not set your hearts on the riches of this world which soon pass away. Do not live as if this world is your home, but look to your heavenly and eternal home as Joseph did. God fulfilled His promise to Joseph and Israel and He will fulfill his promise to us as well, and bring us to heaven.

September 15

Read Hebrews 11:24-28, Exodus 2:5-15, & Exodus 12:21-30.

Just as Enoch and Noah were similar, so Moses and Joseph give us similar examples. Moses could have had riches and power in Egypt, just as Joseph. But he chose something better, even though it involved suffering with the people of Israel. Young people, do you choose to live as a child of God and to suffer affliction with the people of God? Or do you take the easy route and live with the world in the pleasures of sin which last only for a season? May God grant us the grace to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the riches of this world.

September 16

Read Hebrews 11:29-30, Joshua 2:1-21, & Joshua 6:22-25.

Rahab had heard the stories of how God had cared for and fought for Israel during their journey through the wilderness. Hearing of God's mighty acts of salvation led her to turn from her sin of adultery and to make the confession we read of in Joshua 2:11. God worked faith in her heart, and thus saved her from the destruction of Jericho and gave her a place among His chosen people. Every week we hear from the pulpit the mighty acts of salvation which God has performed for us. May we too, day by day, repent and turn from our sins.

September 17

Read Genesis 1-2 and Psalm 51.

This week we will consider some of the psalms which refer to the creation. Before going to the psalms, we should have at least Genesis 1-2 fresh in our mind. Read the whole book if you are able. God reveals Himself in the first sentence of the Bible as the Creator of all things. One need not read far into the Bible, however, before God reveals Himself as the Saviour of all the seed of the woman. God is Creator and Saviour. God also creates when He saves. When God saves His people, then He creates a new heart within them (Psalm 51:10). He gives them a whole new life in Christ so that they are perfect in the sight of God and they begin to walk in righteousness in this life. When we ponder the awesomeness of the creation, then we are reminded of the greatness of that work of salvation worked in our very heart. Read Psalm 51 and also sing one of the Psalter numbers for this psalm.

September 18

Read Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2.

Some of the psalms are called "nature psalms" because they speak specifically of the creation. God, in Psalm 8 directs our attention to the wonders of His creation of the heavens. When we consider the vastness of the heavens, then we are made to feel very small and insignificant. Go outside on a clear evening and look at the moon and the stars. Think about what the psalmist is saying. Do you feel small and insignificant? Now consider this: the God who created the whole universe is "mindful" of His people. As you lay there in the grass or in the snow on a clear, crisp, winter night looking at the stars, God is mindful of you and is directing all the events in the world so that all things work for the salvation of His people. Hebrews 2 includes a quotation of Psalm 8 to reveal that that salvation is in Christ.

September 19

Read Psalm 19 and Philippians 2.

Psalm 19 is divided poetically into two parts. The first part is verses 1-6 and renders praise and adoration to God as the almighty Creator God. The second part which begins at verse 7 and goes to the end of the chapter, renders praise and adoration to the covenant God as Lawgiver and Redeemer of His people. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork because the creation obeys the laws by which God governs and rules the creation. God also has ordained His law for man. That law is the beautiful law of love. When man lives in accordance with the law of God, then he is filled with joy and happiness. It is so foolish to transgress that law and as regenerated children of God we struggle against the old man of sin which we have by nature in Adam. Our constant fall into sin can be very frustrating and even cause us to despair. Pray with the psalmist in verses 12-14. Look to Christ in whom God reveals His love and salvation.

September 20

Read Psalm 29, Job 37:1-5, Revelation 10.

Psalm 29 is sometimes called "the psalm of the seven thunders." Note that the words "the voice of the LORD" is repeated seven times. Note also the seven thunders in Revelation 10. The occasion for this psalm is a thunderstorm. In Palestine thunderstorms build up in the North and sweep southward into the Arabian desert. First the thunder is heard in the distance. Each time it comes closer until the cedars of Lebanon break in the wind, the mountains shake with the thunder, and lightning cracks through the air along with torrents of rain. Each time the psalmist hears not merely thunder, but the mighty voice of Jehovah telling His covenant people that He reigns as King forever and that His people will be victorious in the end in Christ. Listen to God when it thunders. Let the storms be an occasion for reading and meditating on God's Word for awhile.

September 21

Read Psalm 93, Jonah.

This psalm also speaks of victory. The picture here is Jehovah sitting high on a throne unmoved as a tumultuous and storm tossed sea rages round about Him. The throne is a picture of God's power and authority. He rules and governs all things. The storm tossed sea is the world in which we live. Many of us have never experienced what it is like to be on an actual storm tossed sea. Perhaps you have read a good book describing the terrors of such an experience; the book of Jonah also gives a good description. Sometimes our soul feels like a ship tossed about at sea. This psalm comforts us by assuring us that Jehovah is King. He stands firm and rules all things. Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. He knows all our experiences because He walked on this earth and is now risen in glorified flesh. When all things are fulfilled, we will join him in the new heavens and new earth.

September 22

Read Psalm 98; Romans 8; Isaiah 11.

In this psalm we read of the creation praising God. Verse 8 reads "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together." The Bible often uses figurative language. This style is lively and we can use our imagination to see joyful hills etc. In Romans 8 we read that the creation is groaning now because of the sin of man, and that the creation is waiting for the salvation of all the people of God. The creation is both glad and sad, just like regenerated believer who groans because of his sin, and yet is glad because of the hope of final glory with Christ. Let the death, decay, and pollution in the world remind you of sin, and let the singing birds, chirping crickets, colorful flowers, and rolling hills remind you of your cleansing and joy in Christ. When you go for a walk or sit by an open window, listen for the sounds of creation and remember this psalm.

September 23

Read Psalm 104, Heidelberg Catechism LD 9-10.

This psalm praises God for the goodness of His creation. Sometimes we forget that the creation is good when we see all the death, corruption, disease, fighting, and killing that goes on in the wild. But the psalmist looks at the present creation around him and he is reminded of what God says in Genesis 1 about creation—that all things were

created good. This psalm is divided intoseven sections to reflect the days of creation. Verses 1, 5, 10, 19, 24, 27, and 31 begin each section. There is not an exact correspondence to what was created on each day but the psalm does begin with light (v. 2) and it ends with an allusion to the rest and worship of God onSunday. Notice also the care and providence of God in this psalm. The creation would cry out in despair and die if God hid His face for but a moment (v. 29). The people of God also need to know that God's face shines upon them. Listen for those words in the benediction at church tomorrow.

September 24

Read Proverbs 16:18, & I John 2:16-17.

PRIDE! Pride certainly is not a virtue. It is a terrible sin. In fact, pride is the root cause of all sin. Scripture informs us that it was not only pride which led to the fall of Satan from heaven, but also pride which caused our first parents, Adam and Eve, to fall into sin. The two texts you have just read also point out the sinfulness of pride. We are all inclined to be filled with pride and to be governed by pride. Seek forgiveness for this sin in your life, and strength to fight against it, from your loving heavenly Father. For Jesus Christ, our Savior, shed His precious blood to cover also the sin of pride in us, His people.

September 25

Read Matthew 23:1-12.

Jesus points out in this passage the evidences of pride in the scribes and Pharisees. They were concerned only for themselves. They wanted to be seen of men. They wanted to be recognized and acknowledged by all as being great. But what does God think of such pride? What did Jesus say concerning this proud behavior? Read verse 12 again. II Samuel 22:28 says the same thing. God's eyes are upon the proud person, and God looks upon them in order to bring them down. The proud will certainly fall. God hates the sin of pride and He sees to it that those who are filled with pride are humbled and abased. Remember, pride comes before a fall. Let this be a warning to us. Being aware of God's attitude toward pride, let us also hate it and flee from it.

September 26

Read Luke 18:9-14.

Pride is present in our lives in many ways. One way in which we show our pride is in our attitude toward God and what He requires of us. The Pharisee in this parable did this. He thought that he was pretty good at keeping God's law. In fact, he thought he had kept it perfectly. But what was God's judgment on this pride-filled man? He did not go to his house justified! The publican, however, who was deeply aware of his sin and his inability to do any good, went home justified. Ask yourself this question: Am I the Pharisee in this parable, or am I the publican? May our attitude to God and our prayers to God always be like those of the publican.

September 27

Read Proverbs 3:7, 25:27, & 27:2.

God's Word tells us in these verses that we must never praise ourselves. We must never boast. We must never let our own lips and mouth praise us. However, we all do this. We want others to know of our achievements and accomplishments. We want others to be aware of things we have done. Sometimes we even do this through what we call false humility. But in all of this we are thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:3). This praise of self is another evidence of pride in our lives. It reminds me of a Dutch saying my parents often quoted, which in English is: "Self-praise stinks!" Let us strive, by God's grace, not to speak highly of ourselves.

September 28

Read Romans 12.

In this chapter is mentioned the sinful pride that we often show in our relationships to others. We are inclined, by nature, to think we are better than others. We even think to ourselves that we are more godly than our fellow believers. This is often seen when another child of God sins. When we hear of that sin, instead of speaking to that brother or sister in love (Galatians 6:1-2), we spread the news of the sin as quickly as we can. And what usually motivates us to do so is the thought that we ourselves would never commit such a sin. Verse 10 tells us, however that we should "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Instead of thinking of ourselves we must think highly of others. May we be willing, in the strength of our God, to "condescend to men of low estate."

September 29

Read I Peter 5:1-7, & Proverbs 18:12.

The opposite of pride is humility. Pride is sin, but humility is a virtue. We must strive, therefore, to be humble. For God hates the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. He who is humble will be exalted by God. The humble will have a place in God's kingdom. For Jesus Himself told us that the truly great in the kingdom of Heaven is the humble servant (Matthew 18:3-4, John 13). Seek to be humble, therefore. Do so by getting rid of all pride in your life. Pray that God will make you humble, for then you will be exalted by Him in His kingdom.

September 30

Read Psalm 131.

In this Psalm we discover what should be our proper attitude in relation to the sin of pride. The psalmist David confesses that his heart is not haughty. He does not exalt himself. He does not value himself too highly. His eyes are not lofty. He does not view himself as superior. He is humble and quiet. Is this your confession? Are you able to say this of yourself? It is not easy for us to be humble. It is impossible, in fact, for us to be humble in our own strength. Let us seek our help from above. Pray that God will spare us from being proud. May we, by God's grace, be humble. Only with His help will we be able to confess, with David, that our hearts are not haughty and our eyes are not lofty.

The Glorious Bride

by Mark Vanden Berg

Today, in the world in which we live, there are some things concerning marriage that should alarm us. Consider with me the rising percentage of divorce. Some magazines have cited that 66% of all marriages end in divorce. Unwed mothers are having children more and more frequently. Homosexuals are demanding equal rights.

But no matter how wicked the world continues to grow, you and I are called to be perfect in all areas of our lives. We are called to glorify our Lord and reflect His glorious beauty.

What is marriage? Marriage is a very beautiful thing. Scripture defines marriage as being the most intimate union that two can enter. But even more beautiful is the fact that God instituted marriage as a picture of the close knit union between Christ and His Church. This union is one that is spiritual, and one wherein the church is called to reflect the glory of her Lord.

Remember this as you continue to read. Genesis 2:24 states: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Not only does this mean that when young people reach the appropriate age and with much prayerful consideration, they leave their home and dwell with a spouse that God has chosen for them, it also means that a new union has been created, and it must reflect God's glory. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word 'cleave' as this: "to adhere to or cling to." Those are very strong words to define the way two people are to live together. A male and female are to devote their lives to one another. They are to bond together in fellowship.

Because of this bonding, we must discuss the roles of the husband and the wife.

The husband must learn that he has no greater calling than to love his wife. He must love her because when he loves her then he loves his own body. He must care for her, support her, and dedicate his life in service to her. Nothing in his life may stand in his way: not his job, not his recreation, not his money, not his friends, absolutely nothing!

The wife must understand her calling as well. Chiefly this is done through submission, as we find in Ephesians 5. Submission is often misconceived. It is not something that is done exclusively by women. It is a calling of every believer. We submit unto our Lord, even as Christ did unto his Father by going the way of the cross. The wife must care for the needs of her husband. By this she serves him in a way that is pleasing to her Lord.

She is a help meet for her husband and she is to honor him, love him, and stand by his side until the day of his death.

The callings of the husband and the wife seem to be very straight forward. But herein lies the problem. The devil goes about as a roaring lion. He seeks to destroy young marriages in many different ways. He tempts a man or woman with others. Silently he works on Christian marriages. Cheating on your spouse?—it's not so bad—in fact it's good! It would be fun, adventurous. You might feel better with someone else. Maybe he tempts you with money or material goods. You have your whole life ahead of you, work long hours and make lots of money! Have you forgotten about your marriage?

And we must not forget about our own sinful nature. We are inclined to all evil. The sin of pride is very easy to fall into. The sin of thinking that you are so much better than your spouse. Caring not for the things of your spouse, but pleasing yourself.

When our lives are not built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, then we begin trying to stand on our own strength and surely we fail. We see this all around us. Two thirds of all marriages end in divorce. The world has made a mockery of the sacred bond.

To many it is no picture of anything. It is entered into for the sake of convenience or personal gain. If this is true of us, and if Christ is not the

center of our marriage then it too will end in divorce. If Christ is not served in our marriage then it cannot last. After all remember that marriage is a picture of the glorious bond between Christ and His Church.

There is also great significance in the institution of marriage. Christ loves His church. He cares for her and provides for her every need. He makes sure that his sheep are fed from sabbath to sabbath. He comforts his church with the presence of the Spirit. He loved her so much that He gave to her the most precious gift possible. He laid down His life and shed His own blood that He could make atonement for her. Even now His work is not over but He sits at the right hand of His Father continually making intercession on our behalf. Does your marriage reflect that awesome love? Do you love your husband or wife with a love that cannot be destroyed by fire? Can you honestly say that your love is as great as Christ's?

Praise God that you and I have a great hope. Praise Him that He has made the way for a beautiful marriage possible. Even though, while we remain on this side of the grave, it will not be perfect, God will grant us grace to press on. So pursue your marriage without wavering. Work hard at it.

Strengthen each other through Scripture, and live pleasing in God's sight.

Mark has recently moved to the West Michigan area from Lynden, Washington where he was a member of our Lynden Protestant Reformed Church.

Guest Article

Making Our Calling and Election Sure

by Rev. John A. Heys

As you know, Young People, when we are reading a book in a room that has no windows, has its door closed, and the electricity is suddenly and unexpectedly shut off, we will not be able to read and learn the new things that are in that book. Similarly, although we are born again children of God, and have learned some beautiful truths that are taught in Scripture, there are times when Satan turns off the spiritual light of Scripture, tempting us with worldly things, and leading us into sin.

The Apostle Peter had such an experience when Christ Jesus our Savior was captured by unbelieving Jews who hated Him. Peter even cursed and swore when these wicked Jews called him a disciple of Christ. Unto them he said, "I know not the man." Just look up Matthew 26:69-75. Yet, in His grace our God turned Peter back to his faith, and caused him to weep bitterly because of his sin. In fact, after Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven, God, in His grace, made Peter become a very faithful apostle, who wrote two beautiful epistles, which we find in the Bible.

Bear in mind, Young People, that we are by God, and through Peter, called to do what is written in II Peter 1:10 and 11. There we read this: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Let us take note of the fact that our God, through Peter, here commands us to make our calling and election sure, so that we would never fall, but would enter into the everlasting kingdom of God, realized by our Savior, Jesus Christ. However, we must, in the light of what our God says in other passages of Holy Writ, understand the truth onto which we must hold tightly, and not let men take away from us, namely, that our calling and election are very, very sure. Our salvation is absolutely sure, because of all the promises of our almighty God.

Why then does Peter here command us to make our calling and election sure? Have we here the basis for the Arminian doctrine, that we will not be

saved, unless we fulfill that condition which Peter here presents? Do we have God's promise here, that if we make our calling and election sure, we will be saved; but if we do not do what Peter commands us to do, we will not be saved?

By no means! Peter does not here teach us that salvation depends upon our fulfilling any conditions. Our God, through Peter, does not here present to us what we must do to get the salvation which God has prepared and made possible through His Son. God does not wait and depend upon what we do, and save only those who make their calling and election sure.

Look up what we find in Matthew 18:3. There we read: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Notice: "*be* converted" not convert yourselves.

Very plainly then the call for us to make our calling and election sure means that we must do that which makes our calling and election sure in our hearts and minds. The word Peter uses here, and is translated as "sure," means to be made firm, or steadfast. This reveals that Peter is here speaking of that which those to whom he writes already have, namely, that calling, and are eternally elected. Note also that Peter calls them "brethren." What Peter is here doing then is addressing those who already have a God-given calling and God-realized election.

As pointed out in the beginning of this article, Peter himself acted as though God had not called him, and therefore he did not "know the man." Yet he did in that day already have the calling and election of God's elect children. For immediately after his desperate sin, he went out, weeping bitterly, because of that sin. His calling and election were clearly revealed, after he had also displayed his old man of sin.

Just look up what Peter wrote in the verses preceding this command to make our calling and election sure. He there calls those to whom he wrote this epistle, and called them brethren. Them he called to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, to knowledge patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to kindness charity. He also adds in verse 9 that he that lacketh these things is blind, that is, spiritually blind, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Now those to whom Peter writes, and admonishes were not blind, or Peter would not have called them. One needs to see, in order to perform the work of making one's calling and election sure. What is more, Peter could not call "brethren" those who were spiritually blind.

This call then is very plainly presented to those who have been called, and were eternally elected by God. They can, and they only can, be called "brethren." They were Peter's spiritual brethren, being born again by God's Spirit, and in His grace.

Therefore, Young People, this call, here presented, comes also to us. Although we are spiritually born again children of God, we still have our old man of sin. And we live in a world wherein Satan brings to us very many appealing and crafty temptations. This makes it very difficult for us to make our calling and election sure. Although we do not with our lips say to men, "I know not the man," we often perform acts, and by them say that we do not know Christ Jesus our Savior. Therefore this call of God through Peter also comes to us. And so very often we should weep, as Peter did after his sin.

The awesome question, Young People, is whether we do weep in our souls. because of the sins which we commit. By all means, we should not defend ourselves in the sins which we committed. This call, which God presents through Peter, comes also to every one of us. *We* may not defend ourselves in any sin which we committed. *We* also have the command to let our light shine before men, and glorify our Father Who is in heaven. Look up Matthew 5:16. As we make our calling and election sure in our hearts and minds, as Peter did by his weeping, we will reveal ourselves to be called by God as His elect, born again by Him.

Take that truth with you the rest of your life, Young People. Do *not* try to defend yourself in your sins. Get down on your knees every night, and, looking back at what you did, heed your calling to confess those sins, and reveal to yourselves that you are God's elect For He elected us to holiness, not merely deliverance from punishment.

Make your calling and election sure in your mind, and it will assure you that as Peter declares, your entrance into the everlasting blessedness of the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is abundantly sure. We, indeed, are rushing toward the days of physical suffering, as Satan brings forth the Antichrist, and his devilish kingdom. But those making their calling and election sure can by God's grace be sure of entering into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And making your calling and election sure, your blessed life in that coming kingdom of our Lord and Savior, is absolutely sure.

Rev. Heys is a retired minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Let Brotherly Love Continue

by Melinda DeMeester

Behold, how pleasant and how good That we, one Lord confessing,
Together dwell in brotherhood, Our unity expressing:
'Tis like the oil on Aaron's head, The seal of ordination,
That o'er his robes the sweetness shed Of perfect consecration.

Who is a brother? Who is a sister? A brother and/or sister is someone who is in the same family as you and has the same parents. More importantly, however, our brothers and sisters are those who have been ingrafted into Christ Jesus as we have been. Therefore we must love them and treat them with love and kindness as Christ Himself has taught us.

Our relationships to our brothers and sisters vary greatly from the time that we are very young to the time that we are married and grown up. When we are young, we think of them as playmates. We see them as those who put some conflict and pain in our lives when we are in grade school and high school. And when we get older, we see them as a help and a friend.

Our brotherly and sisterly relationships must not be taken for granted. Often I think that we do not appreciate our brothers and sisters enough. Many of us can count numerous times that we have gotten mad at each other. How often do we not stomp off in anger because brother "Bob" got to have his way? On the other hand, think of the many enjoyable times that you have had together. Maybe it was on vacation, maybe it was playing basketball, or volleyball, or maybe it was relaxing time spent in the house that brought brother and sister closer together. Just think of the companionship that that sibling was to you! If a brother or sister would be suddenly taken from us or put into the hospital, would we not think about them continually? Then we would definitely understand how much they mean to us. And this we know, that God placed us in covenant families where brother and sister must live in harmony. We must love one another even as Christ, Who is our older Brother, has also loved us.

This love must not be a selfish love. The Bible commands us in Matthew 19:19: " . . . Love thy neighbor as thyself." Our brothers and sisters are also included in our neighbors. We must love them as ourselves and treat them as we wish to be treated. Matthew 7:12 says: "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." That means that we must not be mean to them if they are angry at us. Put more positively, we must help them and love them so that we may be helped and loved in return.

When I asked a group of young children the question, "Why are your brothers and sisters important to you?" I received quite a few good answers. One that stuck out in my mind was the reply, "My brother is teaching me to play the piano!" This is a great opportunity for brother and sister to work and learn together. Each must learn patience in such a task. We all must have patience with one another. We are called in Scripture to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). This is no small task but is something that we all must learn to do. We must help each other overcome our infirmities and encourage and build each other up.

Another important aspect of the relationship between brother and sister is that of forgiveness. Bearing with one another's infirmities and faults is also asking forgiveness for those things that we do that offend one another. We must be ready and able to forgive our brother. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 18:22, "I say not unto thee until seven times: but, until seventy times seven." Let us always remember that we must forgive our brother, for if we do not forgive our brother how can Christ forgive us? Ephesians 4:32 states, "Be ye kind, one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Let us remember that we must show respect unto our brothers and sisters. They are special people given unto us by the Lord, Who is our Father. We are the brothers and sisters of Christ. Through the relationships of siblings in our family we learn how we must act toward and love our brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. May we look to God for guidance in this and may we walk in love with those whom God has granted us to live with on this earth. Therefore, "Let brotherly love contine" (Hebrews 13:1).

Behold, how pleasant and how good
That we, one Lord confessing,
Together dwell in brotherhood,
Our unity expressing:
'Tis like the dew from Hermon fair
On Zion's hill descending:
The Lord commands His blessing there
In life that is unending.

Psalter #371

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

Gem of the Month

School

Now again the time has come
When school doors open wide,
And kindergart'ners look with awe –
Wondering what's inside?
Of course, they want to feel grown-up,
Accepted by their peers –
But deep inside they often quake
With certain nameless fears.

Those who've been to school before
Return with feelings mixed;
The freedom of the summer's gone,
Their schedules now are fixed.
Yet eagerly they come to learn;
They thirst for knowledge true.
They feel the need for Christian friends,
And competition, too.

The older students wander in
Pretending "school's a drag!"
Pseudo-sophistication reigns
And purposes are vague.
Yet, yearning for learning awakens here;
They're channelled to find their niche,
And their minds expand, they grow in grace
As they ponder their heritage rich.

And then the college crowd again
Take up their studies, too;
Preparing for their lifetime work
They try to keep in view
The goals they're striving to attain
That they may take their place
With the employment of their skills
And all that they must face.

Where'er you are as new terms start
We pray you'll have this goal:
That you will diligently seek
The welfare of your soul.
Your parents, friends, and teachers know
While through your work you plod,
Their hope for you is based on this:
To be approved of God.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
II Timothy 2:15.

Thelma Westra

Discipline

by Al Brummel, Sr.

The cute baby is brought home from the hospital with great joy. This joyful bundle can turn into the cause of much grief in later years, when all that can be seen in that child is sin and rebellion. Parents spend countless sleepless nights and ministers and elders spend hours in meetings, admonitions, and prayers. Sometimes this effort results in repentance and forgiveness, but, even so, the scars never totally leave. Teachers continually battle with the problem of disrespect, cheating, meanness, etc. Who's to blame for this? Parents!

Today there is a terrible lack in many families of even the most basic of biblical directives—that of demanding that the children be obedient to parents and all those in authority. Parents are afraid to say no to their children and stick with it. They will not support the teachers when they try to enforce rules in the school, causing much turmoil in the classrooms.

I've been appalled at the spectacle of children bossing parents around and even hitting them—with complete impunity. The saddest thing about this whole problem is that it isn't limited to worldly families, but has even crept into church families.

In our business, my wife and I often observe first hand how the authority of the parents has eroded. No longer do parents make decisions on what to buy for their little children, but even preschoolers are expected to know what is best for them. Instead of choosing something which is best for the child, and insisting that they wear it, we hear "do you like it?" and, "if we buy it are you going to wear it?" These are not decisions which two-, three-, and four-year-olds should be making.

My wife suggests that even as toddlers, we must teach our children to be self-disciplined. Little things such as not letting them have snacks whenever and wherever they want; teaching them proper behavior, not only in stores and public places, but also how to sit in church. They should be taught to respect their elders by addressing them with Mr. and Mrs.; shown how to respect other people's property, and take care of their own things. They should have stressed to them the importance of honesty and truth in what they do and say. If these things are taught young, there will not be as many troubles as they grow older.

The happiest children, and yes, even teenagers, are those who know what their boundaries are. You wouldn't think so to hear them once in a while, as they push against and test those limits set by parents.

The point that I want to make to you young people and young parents, is that if discipline is carried out consistently when the children are small, most discipline problems will remain small as the children get older. As you know, there will always be exceptions, because every so often, even children of good parents will be a cause of grief to the home and church.

Young people, you may think this article doesn't apply to you, because you are not even thinking of starting a family at this time. You may not even have a girl or boy friend yet. But believe me, the time will be here before you know it. When you (Lord willing) come home with your little baby, you *must* already know what is right and proper as far as bringing that child up in the Christian home.

We know as parents we will not do everything right—our human nature is such that many mistakes will be made. The most important thing to remember is to be consistent in our rules and limitations. If something is wrong today and okay tomorrow, it sends a mixed message, and the child will be confused, and will not take "no" to mean anything important.

Fathers and mothers—stand united! If you have a disagreement over an issue of discipline—*neve never* do it in front of the child. They love to play

one parent against another if they have the chance. Discuss your disagreement over discipline in private, but stand firm in front of the children.

Parents—love each other, and don't be afraid to demonstrate it in front of your children—also make sure your children know you love them. Work at it! We all fall so far short of the ideal—it takes daily effort.

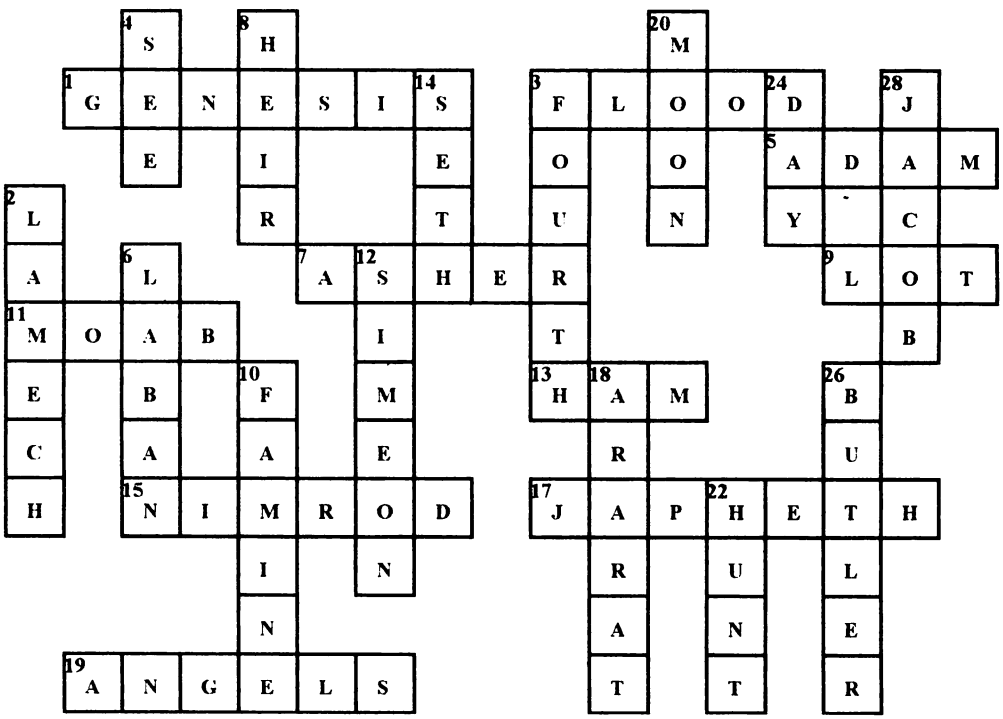
Pray! Pray that God will grant you the wisdom you need to bring up children in this wicked world. Pray for your children every day that they may have the strength to stand before the many temptations that they will face, especially as they begin to go out on their own. Young people, pray for yourselves, that God will grant you the strength to withstand the pressures from your "friends" to do things which you know to be wrong. Also, don't be afraid to admonish your parents if they are not fulfilling their God-given mandates concerning their responsibility towards you as their child.

God grant us the grace to be obedient to His Word in the parent-child relationship.

Mr. Brummel is a member of Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota.

Answers to the Bible Quiz Crossword Puzzle on page 8:

Genesis



Bible NonTrivia

by Tom Bergman

"*Trivial*" (inconsequential, insignificant, little, nimportant) is not a suitable (ap propriate, fitting, right) description (depiction, portrayal, representation) for any passage of God's Word. There is nothing trivial about it. If it was meaningless, the Bible would be unfit for study. Since it is far from that, we do well to study it. Pastors preach on selected texts. Various societies within a congregation often work their way through a whole book of the Bible. Personal devotions are profitable as well. While you are at it, thank God for His work in tenacious William Tyndale and other Reformers for the privilege to have your own copy to read and study.

See how well we know our personal copy of the Word of God. Below are ten passages of the Bible. Try to pinpoint which book, chapter, or even the verse it is from. They start out easy and get more difficult toward the end. Each time you guess the correct book . . . 10 points. Cite the correct book and chapter 15 . . . (10 + 15 = 25) points. Book, chapter, and exact verse 25 . . . (10 + 15 + 25 = 50) points. If anyone can score a perfect 500 . . . the knowledge is its own reward. (I have no prizes to dish out!) The true benefit of knowing God's Word and committing portions to memory is priceless and honorable. To have the Holy Spirit beside us, performing the work of Christ in us through the Word-what a blessing!

Chihuahua Catagory

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." ( )

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." ( )

Cocker Spaniel Catagory

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." ( )

"And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." ( )

Labrador Retriever Catagory

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." ( )

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." ( )

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." ( )

Great Dane Catagory

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." ( )

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." ( )

The Rottweiler Catagory

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve." ( )

Total Score: ( )

Tom is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

Joy (Part 3)

Jason thought it hadn't been a very good day. First of all, he and his sister, Julie, had been mocked by other children at the park that morning. Next, they returned home to find there was nothing to eat for lunch except tuna sandwiches—Yuk. Then when he had planned on going to the library in the afternoon—yep, Mom and Julie wanted to go shopping, and that's what they did. What a rotten day!

"Here Cupcake, here kitty, kitty," said Julie affectionately as she picked her kitten up and stroked its neck.

Jason sighed in disgust. "You wouldn't talk so sweet if you felt like me. What a rotten day."

"Well I didn't have fun at the park, either," Julie replied.

"No, but we went shopping this afternoon, like *you* wanted."

"But we *had* to go shopping."

"Yea, right," Jason said sarcastically.

Then with that, they both went onto the porch and perched themselves on the railing to watch the traffic. It was nearly suppertime, so there were more cars to watch now.

Suddenly Julie looked around and said, "Hey, where did Cupcake go? She was just here on the porch—"

Jason and Julie looked up just in time to see a passing car hit Cupcake. The responsible driver continued down the street, never realizing what had happened.

"Oh, Julie, I-I'm sorry," Jason said meekly. *His* rotten day suddenly didn't seem so rotten after all.

✦✧✦✧✦✧✦✧✦

That night as they were getting ready for bed, Jason came to Julie's bedroom. "Julie?"

"Yes?" Julie was sitting by her desk and looked up.

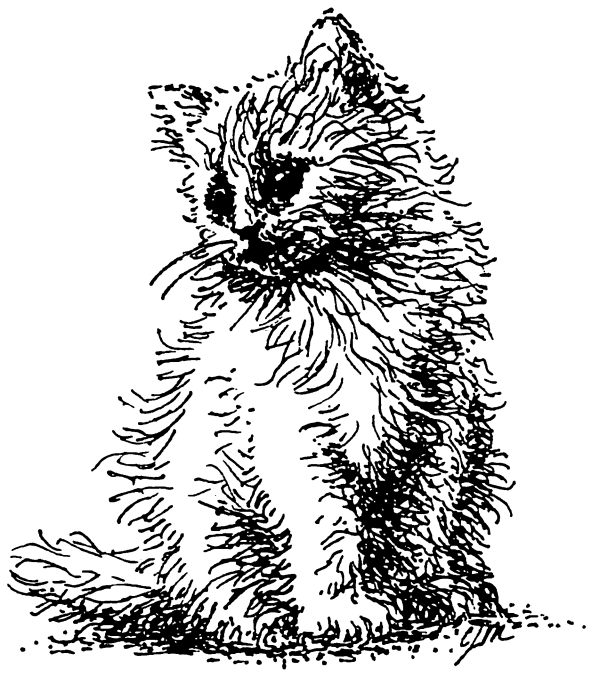
"Um, I just want you to know that I really am sorry, about Cupcake I mean," Jason stammered.

Julie smiled. "Thank you. Mom said I can get another kitten, but I'll miss Cupcake a lot." She paused and then added, "Mom said that bad things can happen, but no matter what, God always loves us. I guess when you think about that, it's hard to stay sad for long."

Then Jason smiled, too.

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

by Connie Meyer



Unscramble the words of the following text. If you need help, look it up in your Bible!

Gatlohuh het ifg rete lahsl ton
"
-------- --- --- ---- ----- ---

solobms reenith lhals trifu eb
-------, ------- ----- ----- --

ni eht neivs tey liwl ceroeji
-- --- -----...--- ---- I -------

ni teh llwi oyj ni eth
-- --- LORD, I ---- --- -- --- God

fo ym toavilans
-- -- ---------"

Habakkuk 3:17, 18

Conference on Reformed Church Government

September 21 & 22, 1995

----------*Thursday, September 21*----------

8:00 PM ***The Biblical Basis of Reformed Church Government***

address by Prof. Robert D. Decker

Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

----------*Friday, September 22*----------

10:00 AM ***The Autonomy of the Local Church***

address by Prof. Herman C. Hanko

Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

1:30 PM ***The Hodge-Thornwell Debate Over Church Polity in the 1800s***

address by Dr. Morton H. Smith

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

8:00 PM ***The Authority of the Major Assemblies***

address by Prof. David J. Engelsma

Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

The Conference also includes time for questions, discussion and fellowship. Meals and lodging are available. For further information and registration contact:

Theological School
of the Protestant Reformed Churches
4949 Ivanrest SW
Grandville, MI 49418
616-531-1490 8 AM - 4 PM EDST