Beacon Lights

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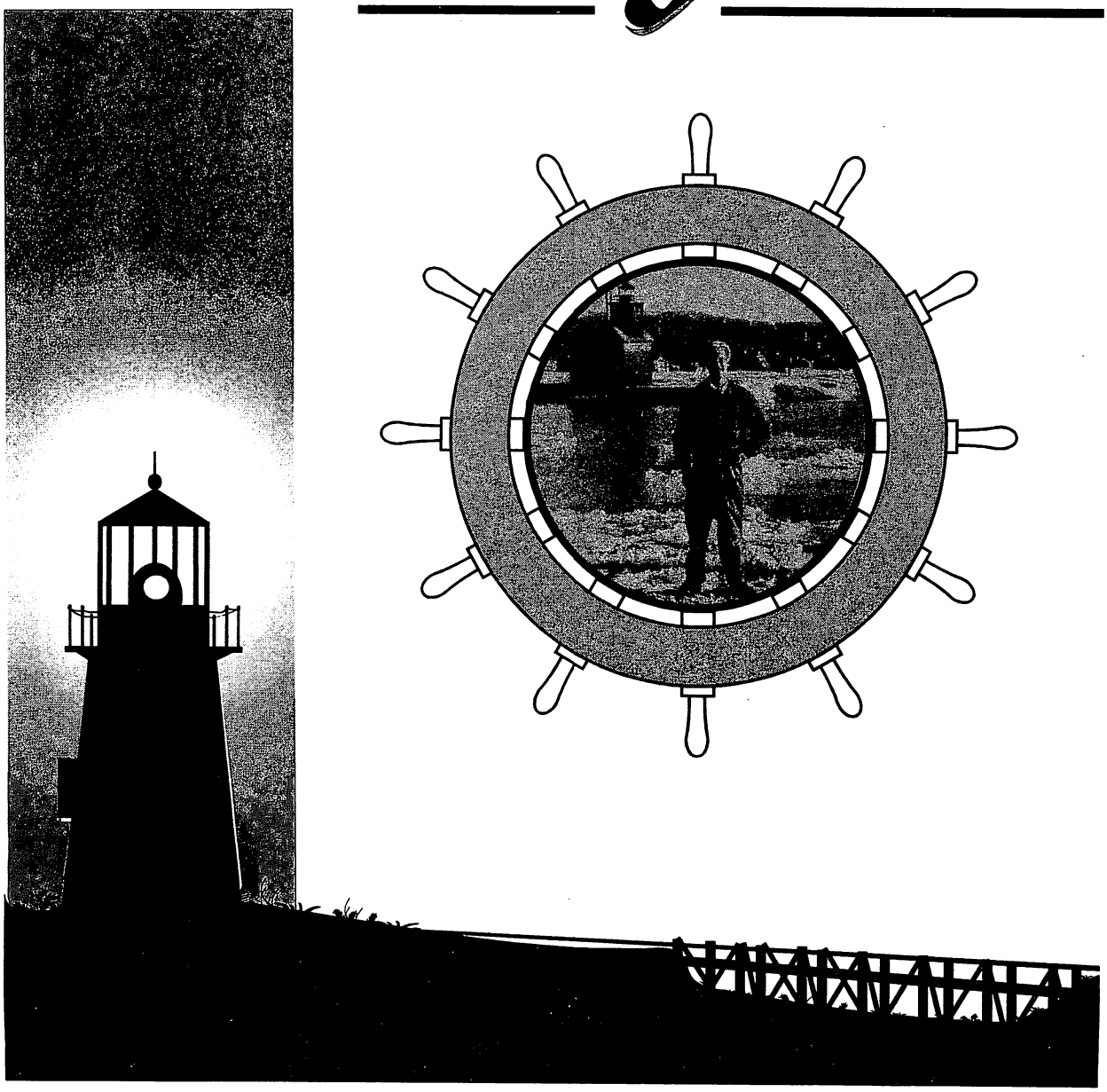

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Friends *We are pleased to begin a new rubric called "Fruitful Branches" which will feature work by our Young People. Miss Heemstra, a teacher at Covenant Christian High has been working with her English class to produce articles for this rubric. I am sure you will enjoy our first selection.*

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Wanted: Young Writers

The days are long gone when lighthouse caretakers gave heart and soul to the task of keeping the light burning at the top of a lighthouse. Before electric lights and automatic fog horns real men lived in the lighthouses which dotted dangerous coasts. The light on top burned oil and required constant care. The wick needed to be trimmed, the reflector polished, the glass cleaned, and the light supplied with oil. The caretaker must ever be on the lookout for changing weather, and he must sleep with one eye open to be sure the light remains burning. If ever he fails in his task, it may be at the expense of shipwreck and loss of life.

Today it would be rare to find a lighthouse caretaker; but, the figure of a lighthouse and its caretaker lives on in our *Beacon Lights* magazine. The figure of a lighthouse and the name of this magazine was explained by Rev. C. Hanko in the first editorial as a light to guide the Young People to their goal. Rev. Hanko then wrote "as a ship at sea is in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck on some hidden shoal or treacherous rock unless the beacon lights guide it through the raging storm and murky blackness of the night, so Protestant Reformed youth must be warned of lurking heresies and threatening temptations which so easily beset them." We as churches can be ever so thankful that the light of the *Beacon Lights* has never gone out.

After some careful instructions, the former "caretaker" of the *Beacon Lights* handed the files over to me and with a pat on the back said "just don't let it go out." What a task! I am just thankful that I am not alone in this lighthouse. The *Beacon Lights* has an excellent staff of dedicated young people. They show up month after month to the meetings with the fruit of their labors of love. They want the light to burn. They want godly young people wherever they are to find comfort and guidance by the light.

As with every figure of speech, the figure has its limitations. The *Beacon Lights* never intended to preach sermons to the Young People or catechize them. Rather, the *Beacon Lights* gives expression to the light which begins to shine forth from the young hearts in which God works with His sovereign power by means of the preaching of the Word. The *Beacon Lights* is a magazine which belongs to the Young People.

At first the entire contents of the *Beacon Lights* were supplied by various ministers, but the second volume in 1942 introduced an Open Forum about which the editor said "This department will give every reader an opportunity to express himself on any subject or question of the day." By the tenth year, Laymen and Young People composed the entire staff, and the *Beacon Lights* had become

what it was intended to be: the voice of the young people, a light shining from the hearts of young people who hear and love the Truth, a guide to unite them in the common goal of the glory of God.

As I said, as editor I am greatly encouraged by the zeal of the staff and the growth which has occurred in the past years. On the basis of God's steadfast covenant faithfulness we can be certain that the light will continue to shine in the heart of our Young People as long as our preachers are faithful to the Word of God in their preaching. Yet it has never been an easy task to keep the light burning in the *Beacon Lights*. Already early in its history, pleas were made for the Young People to respond, to speak up, to write to the *Beacon Lights*, to let their light shine.

The same is true today. It is not easy to stir up the soul of young people to write. It is not easy to penetrate the thick fog of this world so that the Young People are drawn to the light. The wick needs constant trimming, the mirror needs polishing, and the oil must continue to flow. We know you are out there somewhere. We know on the grounds of God's covenant faithfulness that the Holy Spirit is working in your heart, so give us some oil. Young people want to express their uniqueness in dress, habits, personalities, cars etc. Express who you are as a unique person in the church of Christ. Write a story. Write a letter, poem, question. Ask "why?" Make comments, criticisms, compliments.

And you adults, single or married, parents and grandparents, we do not in any way mean to leave you out. We know that you want to see the light of God's Word shine in the heart of the next generation. Be diligent in your instruction at home. Pray for us and encourage the young to read the *Beacon Lights* as well as the *Standard Bearer*. May our ministers also speak the Word of God directly to the Young People. We can expect the blessing of God only by His grace through the pure preaching of the Word. ❖

Fruitful Branches

Friends

by Carrie Brands

Friends are an important part of every teenager's life. All teenagers have a group of friends they hang around with. However, being a true friend is not only having a few good friends you have fun with, it also involves people you don't always hang around with, those who aren't in your particular circle of friends.

Friends are part of a Christian's every day life. Friends are needed for encouragement, for someone to talk to, and for support.

Why are friends so important? Why can't we just talk to a family member? A friend is a person who can be trusted with secrets. Friends will let you pour your heart out to them, and confide everything that is weighing down your mind. Friends understand problems in your life better than anyone else, because often they have gone through the same things you have. Friends are also good for advice, even if you don't take it, and when you have a problem, there's no one better than a friend to lean on for support.

Finally, friends are good for honest opinions. No one can give it to you straight better than a friend.

The Bible says in Proverbs 27: 6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." This passage teaches that a friend will tell you a painful fact with love, while an enemy will only do so with hate. The hurt felt from the pain will heal much faster if heard from a friend.

As Christians, it is important to have friends, but who should be our friends? We know we are called to be friends of our fellow Christians, but what about worldly, unbelieving sinners? We have to be examples to them, by being kind and considerate. We may be witnesses to them, and tell them about our faith and our Lord. We do not have to avoid talking to strangers because they may be worldly, but we can't go to their houses and be their best friends. Some people think by being friends to worldly people they are helping the people become Christians and having a good effect on them, but it almost never works that way. Almost invariably the opposite will happen, and the worldly people will have an influence on the Christian. Instead, we must be separate from unbelievers. This is taught in Ezra 10:11, Where the Bible says, "Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers and do his pleasure and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives."

We must not only be friends to our fellow Christians, we have to be true, good friends. This can be done by being a good listener, encouraging them in the ways of the Lord, and by not backbiting and gossiping. This is shown in Proverbs 17:9, which says, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Proverbs 18:8 says, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

When our friends go astray, we are called to talk to them and try to bring them back. We have to talk to them and tell them where they are going wrong. If we become sinners and our friends come to us and tell us we have been sinning, we have to listen to what they are saying, and realize our sins. If our friends are in trouble we have to do all we can to get them out. We must be friends forever, through good times as well as bad. In Proverbs 18:24, the Psalmist writes, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother." Proverbs 17:17 says, " A friend loveth at all times." When we find a true Christian friend we have to hold on to them and consider them very special because, as it says it Proverbs 20:6, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?"

Finally, we must remember the example Christ gave for us on being a true friend. He tells us in John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Christ is our friend, one who loved us enough to die a slow and painful death so we would be saved, even though we didn't deserve it. Christ forgives us for all the sins we commit against him, and Christ does not get angry at us. Paul speaks of Christ and his love for us in Romans 5:7&8, " For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In John 15:13, the greatest love a man can have is defined as following, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Think about that next time you are out with your friends. And also think about Christ as your friend, one who died for you. ❖

Carrie is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Unexpected Guest

by J.P. de Klerk

The ageing farmer, Hank Willems, left the barn door open as he walked out. He had just finished the chores for the day clearing the sheep pens and was putting the tools away.

It was only five o'clock but the dark low hanging clouds meant Hank had to turn the light on as he swept the last pieces of straw which scattered the ground.

His granddaughter walked past with a bucket of milk.

"How are the cows?" he asked.

"All is well with them," replied Maaike. "I double checked the doors before I left because you mentioned the weather forecast was for cold weather."

"Well done Maaike. We'll make a farmer out of you yet!"

"Anything is possible," she replied with a chuckle as she walked on. For a moment, Hank could see the resemblance between Maaike and her mother.

He said, "I don't think that we will get a white Christmas this year. The wind is in the South and it is full moon. These clouds will quickly disappear."

"That does not matter," Maaike observed. "Christmas is always beautiful." She went with her bucket to the kitchen.

Maaike was born in the city, but since the death of her parents five years ago she lived at the farm; next month she would be seventeen years old. Maaike felt at home in the country, with the heather, the woods and the pastures. Once a week she went on her bike to the village to do the shopping.

In the farmhouse Maaike had her own room upstairs, with a fine view of the surroundings.

This was her little world. Here she was happy and thankful to God for each new day.

Maaike was sprightly and seemed inexhaustible. Nothing was too much trouble for her.

That evening she decorated the living-room with holly and fir cones from the wood, while there was a big fruitcake in the oven. She did this each year for the occasion.

Hank Willems had killed and cleaned a chicken; it was on the sink. He had also prepared batter for the baking of big waffle, which was a tradition he kept alive.

Jenny, his wife, died already several years ago, when he still had the old farm. He couldn't get over it completely that she passed out of his life so suddenly.

He had sold the old farm and started all over again on a small scale near the village of Vinkenhuis. But the arrival of Maaike changed everything. She had brought back a smile to his face...

Farmer Willems walked in his socks into the living room and there he saw his slippers already in front of his old armchair. He put on the radio because he wanted to hear the news; he poured himself a cup of tea. Just when Maaike entered the room the newsreader began with: "A sharp fire has laid in ashes a farmhouse that stood by

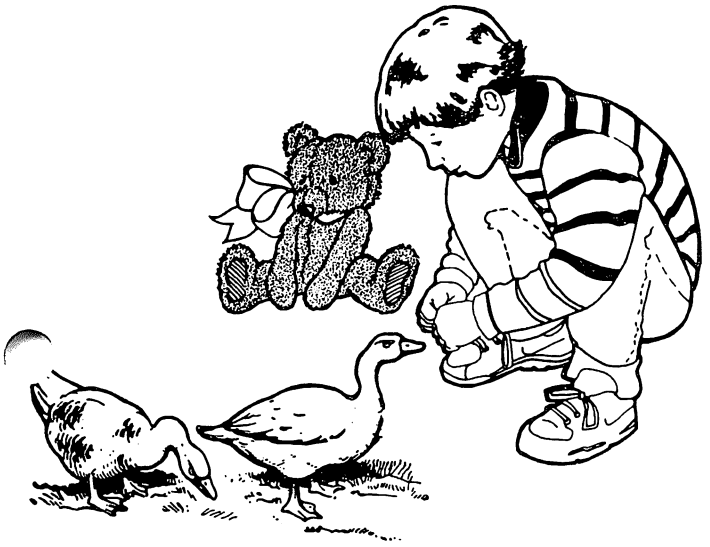
itself in Vinkenhuis. The only occupant was a woman who was ill in bed and the fire brigade could not reach her in time to save her...."

Maaike looked at her granddad dazedly and said, "I think that's about Nelly Bosma, they say nothing about her little son. But I know where he probably is. I'll go and have a look." She ran out of the room.

Billy Bosma was not quite five years old, but he had enjoyed himself very well that afternoon.

First he fed the ducks, who pattered about in a hole in the ice of the ditch at the end of the garden.

Then he made a small path with pebbles he found on a heap; it went from the frozen gooseberries to the



waterside and he strew some breadcrusts which the ducks soon came to pick up.

His teddy bear "looked on" and Billy talked all the time with "him."

Billy regarded the ducks as his "relatives" and told them stories, while they preened their feathers.

He had forgotten the time and had become too tired, so that he went to a small shed next to the willows for a rest. There were gardening tools and a pile of jute sacks, but some sheepskins on top. "Ah! nice and warm," Billy thought. He yawned, clasped his teddy bear in his arms and crawled under them. That was how he fell fast asleep. Nobody had disturbed him...

Till suddenly the door opened and Maaike entered with a lantern in her hand. She let full light in on the little sleeping boy and she saw his quiet breathing. She wondered how to tell Billy that his home had burnt down and that his mother had died. She realized that it is hard for a child suddenly to loose its well-known environment. He would miss the love of his own mother; it was cruel. Maaike looked at a rafter on which a bunch of onions hung to dry. She did not need them to be able to cry.

"God, give me wisdom and strength," she whispered in the dark. Later, she did not know how long she stood there and stared in front of her without moving. Through a small window she saw the frozen over ditch, made visible by a bit of moonlight.

Billy was sitting on the lap of Maaike, with his head leaning against her. She stroked his blond hairs.

The wife of the village policeman had given her a bag full of children's clothes, and she found also a pair of pajamas of his size.

With large moist eyes he looked at the ageing farmer at the table, who read from the old Bible.

There was a tuft of some tops of branches of pine trees on the table, with a candle next to it, which would be lit tomorrow, at Christmas Day.

Billy tried to process all the remarks the adults had made about what had happened. He felt himself quiet and safe, where he was now. He knew Maaike quite well because she often visited his mother, bringing her eggs and vegetables. Then she used to play with him and his wooden train, but that one he did not have anymore now...

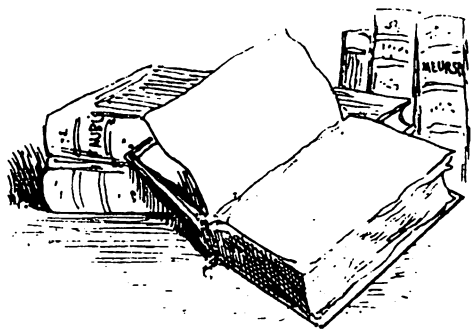
"And the angel said unto them, Fear not for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger..."

That was the voice of farmer Willems.

Billy would remember these words.

Outside it was very quiet and the first snow flakes rustled to the ground... ❖

J.P. de Klerk is a journalist and author from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.



Why Should We Read?

by Mrs. L. Doezema

This article is a reprint from the November, 1941 issue of the Beacon Lights.

The lives of most young people today are so overcrowded with duties and pleasures that, they will say, there is simply *no* time just to sit down peaceably to read. And if occasionally there are just a few unoccupied moments, they are too tired, and "Ho Hum! I guess I'll go to bed early tonight for once!" is usually the end of that. Life today is too crowded, too busy, too fast for quiet, leisurely enjoyment of books. Even we Christians, who do not (or *do* we?) busy ourselves with the things of this world as the children of the world do, are caught in that swift current, and we rush maddeningly along, scarcely able to catch a breath. You know how it is.

Then, too the lightmindedness and frivolity of the world is so very contagious. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," says the world, and soon without realizing it, we are repeating it after them, perhaps in a more pious way, but saying the same thing. Action, fun, a good time! But what is a *good* time? Did you ever have a good time with books?

We *should* take time to read. Why? Because by reading we learn; and we must never stop learning. When we have graduated from school, and have gone through all the catechism classes and Sunday School classes, then our education has just begun, the foundation has been laid for further study. That schooling has aided us in understanding the preaching of the Word, has equipped us for our tasks in life, has made us able to join in discussions in our societies, but it has also prepared us for personal study through reading.

There must, however, be a dominating purpose in our reading and in our choice of reading material and if that purpose is there, much difficulty in choosing the right books and magazines will be eliminated, for then a book will be worth reading in so far as it serves that purpose. The chief reason why a Christian even learns to read is that he must use the medium of the printed page to learn to know God. God has made Himself known to us in the Word, in Holy Writ, and in order to know what God has written, we must read. It follows from this that the most important reading material for us is therefore the Bible, and that it is very important that we read God's Word personally, for by God's grace, we learn to know Him

through His Word. Our church periodicals teach us how to read God's Word and guide us in the reading of it. So you see that this kind of reading material is vital to a Christian's growth in the knowledge of God. Ideally then, we first read books and magazines that have a direct bearing on our chief purpose in reading, and then if there is time left, material that has a more indirect bearing.

It is not difficult to find books and magazines of the first type (those that have a direct bearing on our main purpose in reading) for we have books written by leaders of the church from the early church down to this present time; and semi-monthly and weekly magazines are published by ministers of our own church. But a problem presents itself when we choose reading material which has a more or less indirect bearing on our main purpose.

Indirectly we learn to know more of God by reading history, and we should have this in mind when we do read history. But, you say, practically all history books are written by unbelievers who do not see God behind all the events which have taken place. That is true, and it is not ideal, but we as Christians can read those books and say, "How wonderful is the unfolding of God's plan throughout the ages!" Our eyes have been opened and we *really* can read the history of the world. God has revealed Himself to us in nature, and the more we know about the earth on which we live, the more we see the Creator. But, you object, almost all books about nature are written by evolutionists. Sad to say, they are. But we can read those things subjectively, remembering that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." The same should be true of our reading of current events. Authors of articles and books written about the present world tumult do not know that God is shaking the earth, but when we read their writings, we say to ourselves, "The Lord is hastening His coming!" When we read autobiographies, character studies, novels, we keep before us the inherent sinfulness of man and the perfection of our God.

We naturally become better critics, too, when we read every word of man in the light of God's most holy Word. And in order to do that, we must know the Bible, and so we come back to our starting point—it is above all necessary to read the Word of God, to become truly educated in it. And remember—ignorant Christians are not the best Christians. ❖

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He Who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favoured hour
At once He'd answer my request;
And, by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assult my soul in every part.

Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Balsted my gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this?" I trembling cried,
"Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?"
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayest seek thy all in Me."

by John Newton, 1725-1807

[R]-Respect A Letter Sorely Missed When Absent

by Tom Bergman

This is a most unusual paragraph. How quickly can you find out what is so unusual about it? It looks so ordinary you'd think nothing was wrong with it—and in fact, nothing is wrong with it. It is unusual though. Why? Study it, think about it, and you may find out. Try to do it without coaching. If you work at it for a bit it will dawn on you. So jump to it and try your skill at figuring it out. Good luck—don't blow your cool!

That is a brain-tickling puzzle from Mindtrap (by Mindware). It may take a while to pinpoint the uniqueness of that paragraph, but after a few times through, you may begin to notice that it something is missing. Absent from the entire pi ce is the most common letter in the English alphabet. Not once is the letter "e" used. How strange is that? Well, I have already used it 31 times since.

Even as the letter "e" is common in written language, the idea of respect toward each other should have an equally frequent position in our church family life. We live together, breathe together, move together, worship together. What a great thing it is then, when respect for others causes that life to flourish! What a blessing from our Father in heaven to see our worship flourish as a result.

Such lovely church life is a gift of God through the operation of the Holy Spirit. It does not require altered church services full of entertainment and emotional outbursts. It just takes a strong desire and the hard work put into respecting each other. Respect each other because of similar personalities? Because of a common occupation? Only because you enjoy the same social activities? A thousand times, no! Respect every member of the church family for Jesus' sake, in honor of the commonality tying all members together—the life of Christ within us.

What happens when this common bond is overlooked? What happens when there is not enough "respect-each-other-for-Jesus'-sake" to go around? Look back at the unusual paragraph at the beginning. There is a clue for us. It may help us understand what life in the church is like when respect is limited. Remember? The paragraph looked soooooo normal at first glance. But on the other hand, it soon betrayed itself. Even as a functional paragraph, it has little or no purpose. Any attmpt to continu writing in th sam mannr with no lttr "e" would b uttrly foolish. Like an engine running without oil, it becomes impossible to function properly. With all the engine parts scraping together, tensions rise. Friction causes damaging stress. So it is in the life of the church. We need the Comforter, the Holy Spirit working in our hearts as we live with each other. We simply cannot do without. A church family needs mutual respect, blessed by God, to run smoothly.

> Even as the letter "e" is common in written language, the idea of respect toward each other should have an equally frequent position in our church family life.

Respect is like the engine oil lubricating the moving parts of the engine. Respct is as vital to church family as the letter "e" is to the English language. How important is it? Since the last count, the letter "e" has been used another 219 times. Wouldn't you like to see respect that abundant in your church? ❖

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

by the *Beacon Lights* Staff

April 1

Read I Samuel 2:1-10

We are here called to humility to remember that the Lord makes rich the poor. He alone can raise us up from the dunghills of our sins to make us princes. The Lord controls our joyful moments and our lowly times. He is God alone—our rock. He will keep our feet firmly set there.

April 2

Read Psalm 18:20-33

The Lord will reward us for keeping His ways and remaining steadfast in them. Through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, God has sovereignly promised salvation to His people. God gives us light that we may read and understand the Bible and by understanding we will have the strength we need. God's way is perfect and He will give us the strength to lead holy lives acceptable to Him.

April 3

Read Psalm 94:11-23

The God Who created us knows all our thoughts and chastens us by teaching us His law. The wicked are strong and would overwhelm us except the Lord upholds us. When we begin to slip off the Rock, His mercy holds us up. He will defend us against the enemy and cut them off. Sing Psalter #253, noticing especially the last verse which reads "Our God, the refuge of His saints, Will fight against iniquity; Avenger of the innocent The Lord omnipotent will be." What a great comfort it is that the Lord is our refuge and solid rock in Whom we can put our trust.

April 4

Read Deuteronomy 32:1-4

God is a righteous and perfect God. All of our glory is due to Him for the many blessings He has bestowed on us. We are nourished by His Word as the dew that descends from the heavens. As we grow stronger the dew turns into showers to quench our growing thirst for knowledge of the Scriptures. We thank Him for being a great God and the Rock in Whom we put our trust.

April 5

Read Psalm 62

Wait on the Lord for from Him alone comes our strength and salvation. He is our only Rock and we shall not be moved. We are called to pour out our hearts to God and He will be our refuge. We are not to be vain or trust in earthly riches for they have their reward. God alone is the rock of our strength, glory, and salvation. Trust in Him at all times.

April 6

Read II Samuel 22:1-7

God is our rock on Whom we can stand in times of trouble. As a shield He will protect us from being overwhelmed by the enemy. There is no greater protector so we must put all our trust in Him to uphold us in whatever trials we face today. Call upon God and He will hear your cry.

April 7

Read Psalm 72:1-20

Sunday. Today is the Lord's Day. As you travelled to church this morning did you take a moment to meditate on the sun standing in the eastern sky. That sun has risen and set every day since the dawn of creation. It is the same sun that shined upon Moses, Elijah, and even Jesus Christ. Now, in our human understanding, that is a long time. This is the truth that the Psalmist writes about in verse 17 concerning the Kingdom of Christ. Although, the Psalm is a prayer for the prosperity of Solomon's kingdom, the Psalmist reminds us here that the true kingdom is one that is heavenly. Yes, Solomon's kingdom was a peaceful and prosperous time for Judah, but it was only for a short period of time. In contrast, what a difference the Kingdom of Heaven will be for us. Think about this while you are in the public gathering of the citizens of the Kingdom on Sunday for it is the pinnacle of the day designed to be a foretaste of the everlasting Kingdom. Read or sing Psalter #198.

April 8

Read Job 39:26-30

Have you ever seen an eagle in flight? I remember last Spring I saw a golden eagle in Rocky Mountain National Park. What a majestic sight it is! Can you command this wonderful creature to just glide and circle in the heavens almost effortlessly? This is the rhetorical question that the Lord asks Job in verses 26-27. The Lord teaches Job that He is the one who guides the eagle in flight even to the small point high atop a rocky mountain. Man is less than nothing compared to God. Read the rest of the chapter and the surrounding chapters to find this out. Upon hearing this instruction of the Lord con-

cerning His terrible majesty we sometimes are tempted to be terrified that God is not on our side, in other words we begin to grow weary of His promises. This should not be, for God has promised that if we wait and trust in Him he will renew our strength and make us to mount up with wings like eagles! Read or sing Psalter #280.

April 9

Read Matthew 7:15-20

The wolf in the Bible is frequently used to portray the wicked as opposed to the elect who are the sheep. This passage is no different. The wolf is again the fierce animal seeking to destroy the elect. But this time, Jesus tells us that the wolf is using a completely different type of method to capture its prey. He is not trying to catch the sheep openly in the field, but inside the flock he is using deception to accomplish his desires. This philosophy was similarly used by Satan to destroy the early church as recorded in Acts 5:1ff. After he could not stop the mouths of Peter and John for reason of the people he used the hypocritical Ananias and Sapphira as wolves in sheep's clothing to tempt the people into the sin of pride. Although Ananias and Sapphira pretended to be liberal givers, inside they only wanted to receive praise of men. Sometimes it is difficult to discern the wolves in the church, but Jesus assures that we shall know them by their fruits. Therefore, let us study so that we may better discern! Read or sing Psalter #99.

April 10

Read Psalm 147

"Praise ye the Lord!" this Psalm proclaims because He is our Creator God who upholds His creation by His Word. This proclamation can certainly be made by us after we see His works in the spring and summer when the earth is warm and full of life. But what about the winter? In a powerful way the Psalmist describes God's majesty in the icy cold of winter. The Psalmist asks, "Who can stand before His cold?" After you stand in a biting wind for only a few minutes, you can easily answer this question. Truly, God is glorious in the wintertime. Winter has a beauty all its own. It reminds us that although are sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). It also reminds us of our dependency upon God. Have you ever noticed that during the winter, the life of the church is more energetic than in the other times of the year? I'm convinced that God confines us to the shelter of our homes for a long time during the year to force us to notice our dependence on Him. Let us remember that during this Spring as we watch the earth revitalize from winter's grip. Read or sing Psalter #402.

April 11

Read Psalm 18

It can not be denied that a deer possesses great speed and quickness. If you have ever observed one, you know that this is the case. This is also true of the believer according to verse 33. He is fitted with hind's feet so that he will be able to outrun his enemies. But who gave him this great speed? The answer is that God gave him hind's feet. The whole of the Psalm talks about God's deliverance of His people. In the verses following the believer is shown overtaking his enemies and consuming them all (vs. 37). The Lord has given him the necks of his enemies (vs. 40), so that even though the sorrows of death had compassed him, God brought the deliverance. What a comfort to us as believers when we are persecuted! The wicked shall not overtake us, but we shall overtake them with strength of our Almighty God! Read or sing Psalter #36.

April 12

Read Habakkuk 1

It is a dreadful thing to look upon the church world today and see the apostasy that abounds. The same thing was happening in the days of Habakkuk. Judah had been apostate so long that God was about to raise up the Chaldeans to wreak His judgement. Habakkuk 1:8 declares that the Chaldeans would work God's judgement in a terrible way. This verse states that their horses are very swift, even swifter than the leopards, and they are ferocious, not showing any mercy. This is God's judgement upon Judah. God is a just God that does not tolerate sin against His law. Although He had been long-suffering to Judah for many years, now Judah's cup was overflowing, therefore God was going to punish them. But, we must remember that God did this to correct Judah as we read in verse 12. Judah would not die! Nevertheless, she had to go through 70 years of bondage to the Babylonians to learn to serve God in truth. Let us in the 20th century hear this instruction well lest we receive the same judgement of God for our apathy and indifference to His Word. Read or Sing Psalter #380.

April 13

Read Psalm 58

The serpent is a creature that we all can easily find in the Bible. After all, Satan entered into a serpent to tempt Eve in the garden of Eden. The serpent in Psalm 58:4 is again used to describe the wicked. Their poison is like the poison of asps. Whenever I read this verse I immediately think of evil words that the wicked so often dart at the righteous. These words are so intent on hurt that they sting and harm us like poison. What shall we think of their persecution? Well, we know from Luke 21:12-13 that in the last times the wicked will persecute us for our confession. But, instead of despairing we are uplifted because in verse 13 Christ tells us that it shall be a testimony to us that we are His people! What a great benefit! As for the wicked who do such things we read in Psalm 58 that David prays that they may be destroyed. So confident is David of the outcome of the judgement of God that he declares that he will rejoice to see God's vengeance because it is for him salvation! As you go to the Lord's house tomorrow think about these things. Think of the Lord's Day as a time that God has given us to come out of the wicked world for a little while to receive some rest in the battle. Then at the beginning of the week enter the world with renewed vigor to confess God's name even though it means persecution. Read or sing Psalter #157.

April 14

Read Ruth 1:1-17

But Ruth clave unto her. Naomi was experiencing great distress. Today the Psychologist would perhaps diagnose her as severely depressed. Her young happy family had been ripped apart, and she was responsible. She knew that God had chastised her for leaving the land of Israel. She with her husband Elimelech had shrugged off the Word of Jehovah and tried to take matters into their own hands. Now she had nothing and no hope in Israel. But Ruth clave unto her, and in fact made a striking confession. This confession was the first bright flash of hope. God was still present doing wondrous things. The wonder of the saving work of God in Ruth silenced Naomi as

she pondered these words on the way home. Ponder the wonder of your salvation today.

April 15

Read Ruth 1:19-22

Call me Mara. Naomi was still deeply depressed. She expressed the hand of God in her life in terms of bitterness. This does not mean she was bitter in her soul toward God, rather, God had made her own sins to be very bitter to her. Notice her use of two names of God: Almighty and Jehovah. She says "the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me ... and the Almighty hath afflicted me." She also says "Jehovah hath brought me home again empty ... Jehovah hath testified against me." The reason for this change is that she acknowledges God as sovereign over her sin and affliction, but also as the faithful covenant God who brought her home and never forgot her. God also begins to heal us from despair in the way of our confession of sin, and acknowledging God's sovereignty and covenant faithfulness.

April 16

Read Ruth 2:1-17

Let me now go to the field. Ruth is willing to begin her new life in Israel in simplicity. All she has is the new heart which God has worked in her. She dares not ask for more. She is content to glean and support the basic necessities of life for herself and her mother. Already her faith is expressed in godliness. She politely asks her mother if she can go, she respects the workers in the field, shows great humility, and trusts in the providence of God. When Boaz speaks kindly to her she is overwhelmed with gratitude knowing herself to be unworthy in herself. Do we live our daily lives in humble thankfulness to God?

April 17

Read Ruth 2:18-23

Blessed be he of the LORD who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. When Ruth came home with so much barley, and told her mother that it came from the field of Boaz, then her soul was lifted to praise Jehovah. Although Jehovah had emptied her of earthly things, He had filled her heart with a new thankful obedience and now she began to see the wonder of her salvation. She had a new hope of enjoying the beginnings of salvation in this life because now there was hope of a child for her. She would have an heir to the land in Israel which belonged to her husband and was a picture of the heavenly inheritance. Pray that God will bless you today with a taste of your heavenly glory.

April 18

Read Ruth 3

Shall I not seek rest for thee? Rest is a wonderful thing after a long hard day. Sunday is the day of rest which pictures the day of eternal rest in heaven where we will no longer be battered by sin and will live life to the fullest in glory to God. The rest which Naomi sought for Ruth was first of all marriage with Boaz. Marriage with Boaz meant a settled home and a permanent place in Israel. More importantly, marriage with Boaz was a beautiful picture of citizenship in heaven. We must be careful that this world does not become a place of permanent rest for us. We must seek that eternal rest which is in heaven.

April 19

Read Ruth 4:1-12

So he drew off his shoe. By drawing off his shoe, this unnamed kinsman testified that he was ungodly and had not the love of Christ in his heart. The law of the kinsman redeemer was given by God to His people to picture God's love and grace for a people who were at one time poor and in bondage in Israel. The redeemer gained nothing and in fact often lost much. The law was not enforced with a system of penalties, but rather obedience was a matter of love and mercy on the part of the redeemer. God also commands us to reflect God's love and mercy in our lives. Always show kindness and love when God places a poor saint in your path.

April 20

Read Ruth 4:13-22

And she bare a son. The book of Ruth demonstrates how God works in wondrous ways to accomplish His purposes. Ruth the Moabitess was brought by God into Israel so that she would give birth to one of the ancestors of Christ. He brought Ruth into a family in Israel in which there was no hope. By grace He saved the family of Elimelech from becoming a dead branch. God saves us all by a wonder of grace in Christ. May we never forget that God works all things for good to them that love God.

April 21

Read Psalm 42

What is your opinion of going to church and worshipping God? The subject of this Psalm is the Psalmists overwhelming desire to go up to the house of the Lord. He compares himself to a hart that pants after a stream of water. The Psalmists' soul cries out for God. This is because he thirsts for fellowship with God in His house. The Psalmist has such a great desire to worship God because he knows that in God's presence he will receive comfort and salvation. O that we might imitate the desire of this Holy Poet! If we properly understood our sad condition and our terrible need for God and His salvation, then we too would greatly desire to worship Him. We must see that we are dependent upon God and because of this we must pray to Him for deliverance from evil and evil men. Then when he has delivered us let us enter into His house of prayer with cries of praise. Do you thirst for God?

April 22

Read Jonah 1

What is your view about people who are different from you? What do you think of people from other Christian denominations? Are you suspect of the virtues of people whom you view as strange? God told Jonah to go to Ninevah and preach. This was a city that was an opponent of Israel. Therefore not only were these Ninevites different from Jonah but they were the enemies of his people. Jonah did not want to preach to these people because he was suspicious of God. God might do something so crazy as to save these fellow fallen humans. We too can be Jonah's when we by our thoughts and actions indicate that we do not want to speak of the gospel to certain people. We might be mad at them and think that they deserve the punishment of God, why should we talk to them about God's grace? So before we so easily accuse Jonah, we must look at our own hearts and how we act towards unconverted people we know. Are you a Jonah?

April 23

Read Jonah 2

God saves undeserving men. Jonah thought that it was wrong of God to save the Ninevites, those pagans! But now that rebellious prophet himself receives mercy by the hand of God. A large fish swallowed him. In the belly of the fish Jonah prays to God. He confesses that God hears his prayer and renews his vow to walk in obedience before God. He ends with the powerful claim "Salvation is of the LORD". If salvation is of the Lord why was he unhappy with the Ninevites' possible salvation? If the Almighty God wants to save men, who has the folly to attempt to stand in His way? Unfortunately Job's later actions show that he does not yet understand the nature of grace. It is okay that his salvation is of God, but non-Israelites should not be saved.

April 24

Read Jonah 3

Jehovah renews his command to the formerly disobedient prophet. Jonah is commanded to go and preach the words that God gives to him. No doubt Jonah was delighted when he found out what the message was: "Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown." The fickle prophet is already envisioning the city being overthrown by fire and brimstone. But the Ninevites from the King on down all cried out to God and turned from their evil ways. God saw this universal penitence and did not carry out His threat. This repentance is astonishing when we consider that the countries of Israel and Judah often had prophets whom they ignored! In contrast these idol-serving pagans have repented! We can be surprised by whom God gives the grace to repent.

April 25

Read John 4

Jonah is furious. He becomes suicidal. Jonah prays to God and tells Him in essence that his worries about what God would do have been fulfilled. Jonah pronounced the blasphemous words: "Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Do you see what Jonah is doing with these words?! He is taking the most attractive and perfect virtues of God and turning them into vices! God's mercy and kindness should be viewed by the one who is saved by grace, with the highest esteem. We should rejoice in God's mercy for His people. Yet Jonah sees God's mercy towards those outsiders as reprehensible. The prophet does not realize that he, while a child of Abraham, had by nature just as evil of an heart as the Ninevites. God has had mercy on whom ever He has desired. Let God be magnified whenever He demonstrates His mercy. And let us abuse every human opinion, like that of Jonah's, concerning who from an human viewpoint should be saved. Do you want the same people saved that God does?

April 26

Read Revelation 2:1-7

The Ephesian church is commended for its' many virtues. It upheld true doctrine as is shown by their condemnation of the heresies of the false apostles. They exercised Christian discipline which is shown by their trial and conviction of the heretics and the casting of them out of the church. They even are commended for doing all of their difficult labors on account of the name of Christ! But things were not perfect in Ephesus. They had lost the first intensity of their love. It had cooled down. Christ threatens the church with destruction if they do not repent: He will remove their candlestick. This shows that the Ephesians' problem is no small matter. But we must look especially at ourselves. Do we think we are acceptable in God's sight because we have true doctrine? The fundamental question is: Do we have an intense love for God and His Christ?

April 27

Read Genesis 6:1-8

The contrast in the Bible between good and evil and blessing and judgment is often amazing. This text speaks of terribly evil men who had their imaginations continually filled with evil thoughts. They are identified as the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. Some commentators have identified these "sons of God" as fallen angels that came to earth and married the daughters of men. But this interpretation is mythical. The "sons of God" are most likely the sons of the godly line of Seth while the "daughters of men" are from the line of Cain. The problem was that the covenant young men wrongly married unbelievers and the result was an apostate younger generation with whom God was furious. This passage implies why it is that godly young people may not marry unbelievers. But it also shows God's judgment on the families of those who do: God is going to destroy the world with a flood.

April 28

Read Genesis 6:8-22

Verse 8 stands in beautiful contrast to the preceding discussion of evil men. It beautifully states "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." God has mercy upon his holy servant Noah. And because of this there is hope for life after the flood. The great drama of salvation can continue and the Christ can come. So while God judges the evil world with the flood, He saves believing Noah by water. So the same water that signifies that we are saved by the water of baptism was used to drown an evil world.

April 29

Read Genesis 7

The flood is a picture of the salvation of the world and the judgment of the wicked in the last day. The radical change which God worked in the world with the flood is a picture of the change that will take place when we are resurrected to live with God in the new heavens and new earth.

April 30

Read Psalm 28

God will hear our prayers even when we feel overwhelmed by the wicked world. He is a just God and will punish them for their evil works. Blessed be the Lord Who continues the work of His hands to build us up. Let us remember the words of Psalter 75. "His help makes glad my heart, and songs of praise I sing, Jehovah is His people's strength, the stronghold of their king."

Fleas In a Crystal Palace

by John Huizenga

Sometimes when the thermometer drops below zero and stiff winds blow, the frost on the window forms fascinating designs which look like mountain landscapes. As a boy I liked to imagine exploring the steep slopes and hiking through the bizarre trees and forests.

This adventure became a bit more real one sunny January afternoon, as I poked around in a small creek observing the many beautiful ice formations and snow. The running water had frozen over part way while at the same time the water level had gradually gone down. The result was a shelf of ice which sloped down from the shore and at some points touched the water.

On the surface, the ice appeared to be quite ordinary, but upon closer inspection one could see an intriguing mosaic of fine geometric shapes. I hated to disturb the beauty but could not resist breaking a piece to see what lay beneath. After a few sharp knocks, the ice cracked and I lifted it up and turned it over.

To my astonishment I found there a veritable palace of crystal in miniature. Thin walls of clear ice had been built up in beautiful symmetry from the plane of ice to form chambers of every shape imaginable. Delicate chandeliers sparkled in the sunlight. Tiny pinnacles and diamond studded spires rose here and there one inch high with little flags and shining crystals. It was like the frost on a window, only now in three dimensions.

The shimmering masterpiece far surpassed every man made model I have ever seen. It was far more intricate than any ice sculpture carved with deft hands. Thoughts of heavenly mansions came to mind as I looked more closely trying to keep from breathing on the palace lest the finer details melt away. How glorious it would be to live in a house like this!

Then I noticed a black speck in a chamber. It moved, and then disappeared. Then I saw another climbing a glassy staircase and soon a half a dozen more. This palace *was* inhabited with tiny creatures, creatures no bigger than the period at the end of this sentence! Snow fleas! They hopped about from chamber to tower and climbed here and there as if the place was home.

I could hardly believe what I saw! It was bitter cold and here were tiny insects at home in a palace of ice. After watching this activity for who knows how long I looked up and saw that this ice had formed along the creek as far as I could see before it went around the bend. This palace with its inhabitants could go on for miles, I thought. Why would such a lowly insect be so privileged as to inhabit such a glorious place?

Pondering these things I thought of the Proverb which spoke of the spiders living in "kings' palaces" (Proverbs 30:28). The passage speaks of creatures which are small but "exceedingly wise." We too are small and insignificant in ourselves, but when wisdom—Jesus Christ Himself—is placed in our heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, we too will one day inhabit a glorious home in which we will experience joys unspeakable as we fellowship with our God. Let us be diligent and grow in the knowledge and wisdom which we have in Christ Jesus. ❖

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On Calvary

Come with me to Calvary
To see the Suffering One.
He willingly submits Himself—
Jesus Christ, God's Son.

His pain and anguish, so intense;
Alone He bears God's wrath;
Forsaken, though He's done no wrong,
He walks God's chosen path.

It is for you and me He hangs
In utmost agony'
Atoning with each drop of blood,
From sin to set us free.

The seal of God's approval
On the sacrifice thus made
Is the glorious resurrection.
Signaling the debt is paid.

Jesus conquered over death,
The vict'ry is complete;
Eternal life for us He won.
Come, worship at His feet.

by Thelma Westra

A Bride Prepared through Discipline

by Marty VanderWal

> The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. *Belgic Confession, Article 29.*

Church Discipline, as seen above, is part of the essence of being a church. According to this article, if your church does not execute discipline, it does not deserve the name church. Why is Christian discipline necessary? There are many reasons why one might not want to have discipline. It is tough. Elders and ministers must spend sometimes many hours a week in the activity of discipline. The disciplined member often requests his papers, ending all contact with the church and rendering all past work fruitless. Excommunication often results in lifelong alienation of the part of the one excommunicated; not only from church, but also from family and friends. Discipline often results in heartache for most of the parties involved. It separates people who might otherwise belong together. These things together tempt us to ask, "Wouldn't we be better off without discipline?" The answer must be a resounding "NO!" In this essay I shall examine the reasons for Christian discipline from its effect on the Church as a organization, the world as the foe of Christianity, and the true believer.

Concerning the church, discipline is necessary for her purity. Scripture often portrays the church as the bride of Christ. Let us examine the nature of this analogy. Before she is married, while she is yet engaged, she is careful to maintain her chastity for her future husband. She wants to be able to present herself to her husband, on their wedding night, as one who is pure from any defilement. She wears a ring on her finger, which signifies that she is pledged to one man, a "hands off!" sign, if you please. She dedicates herself to her fiance, thinks about him, strives to please him, even before they marry. She refuses to entertain any thoughts about other men. This must also be true of the church. The church must do all she can to be sure that she can present herself to her husband, Jesus Christ, as one free from the defilement of sin. She takes upon herself the mark of baptism, to show that she belongs to Jesus. She rejects overtures from other suitors, the world and the apostate church. She puts away from herself everything that can possibly defile her. Christian discipline is one of the means by which she does this.

Christian discipline also contributes to the church's ability to preach the gospel. It is a terrible contradiction when a church preaches the holiness of God and how it must apply to her members and the members themselves walk in evil ways. If the preaching of the gospel is the voice of Christ Himself, church members must assent to that preaching not only with their voice and presence in the church, but also with their daily walk. When a mem-

ber walks in sin, he is really thumbing his nose at Christ Himself, an action certainly worthy of discipline.

Discipline assures church members of their salvation. It returns wayward members to their place and confirms them in their salvation by their holy walk. When the church excommunicates the impenitent, she is free once again to pursue the calling of holiness "without which no man can see the Lord." Members see that they really are living the life of the antithesis, that they are indeed separate from the world of unbelief and sin. They become more conscious of the power of God operating in their lives, the power which restrains them from committing the evils for which others are disciplined.

Second, Christian discipline is necessary for the effect that it has on the world. Members who show in their actions and words that they do not belong in the church are thrown back into the world, just as the worthless salt is cast out to be trodden under foot (Matt. 5:13). These members go back to the world to find their fellowship and life, knowing that they have none in the church. The world also takes them back into its arms and encourages them in the folly of their evil ways. In this way, the world heaps more and more sin upon itself and becomes more ripe for judgment. Of course, even though this happens, the church may not stop praying for that excommunicated member (see the form for the readmittance of excommunicated persons). If it pleases God to answer these prayers in grace, and bring the one excommunicated back to his godly senses and back into the arms of the church, the world is further condemned as it tries to hold that person back from repentance and faith.

In Christian discipline, the church manifests her purity to the unbelieving world. We may never give any grounds to the world for them rightly to call us hypocrites, as so many do now. When church members break the commandments, Paul's words in Romans 2:24 ring true: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." This is also for the sake of those elect in the world who have not yet come to repentance and faith. When God does finally convince them of their sin and of the mercies of Christ, they will not come to a church whose members walk in every evil way. May we ever keep this in mind as we conduct ourselves in the midst of the world, so that God's Name is upheld and glorified, and that the world may be without excuse!

As the preaching of the gospel, church discipline has the savor of death unto death and life unto life (II Cor. 2:16). Whenever an impenitent member is censured or excommunicated, not only is that person's impenitence condemned, but also the impenitence in which the whole world walks. This, of course, incurs the wrath of the world, for it is declared once again that they have no part in the kingdom of heaven. Through discipline, the antithesis is promoted and honored, something the world cannot stand and continually tries to rub out of existence.

Third, Christian discipline is necessary for the effect it has on every child of God within the church. We see this clearly from the form for excommunication itself:

> In the meantime let everyone take warning by this and such like examples; to fear the Lord, and diligently take heed unto himself, if he thinketh he standeth, lest he fall; but having true fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, together with all faithful Christians, remain steadfast therein to the end, and so obtain eternal salvation. You have seen, beloved brethren and sisters, in what manner this our excommunicated brother has begun to fall, and by degrees is come to ruin; observe therefore, how subtle Satan is, to bring man to destruction, and to withdraw him from all salutary means of salvation...

...the life of the individual believer represents, on a smaller scale, the activity of the church.

It is important to see here, that the life of the individual believer represents, on a smaller scale, the activity of the church. As the sinful member is reproved and perhaps even excommunicated, so the Christian puts to death his sinful nature. As the church purifies herself by putting out the impenitent sinner, so the individual believer refuses to make any room for the operations of sin within him. As the church excommunicates, her members who are witness to the action examine their own hearts, and make sure that they keep out the very sins for which the excommunication occurs.

As we noted above, faithful members are encouraged in their walk of holiness when another is disciplined. Excommunication teaches believers that the way of holiness is the way of salvation, that there is great reward in the keeping of God's commandments. When they consider the sin of the impenitent, they see the ugliness of sin in general, and make every effort to avoid it. Although we may never say that our works, our walk of holiness will bring us salvation, we cannot be con-

scious of our salvation if we walk in an evil way. When the church excommunicates an impenitent member, each member of that church gives assent to that excommunication. In this way, each member also passes sentence upon their sins, repents of it, and flees to God for forgiveness through Christ. At the throne of God, the believer also seeks the grace to continue in the walk of holiness, knowing it is only by grace alone that they are kept out of that same evil way.

In conclusion, since we have seen the need for Christian discipline as it effects three areas, the church, the world, and the individual believer, let us be sure to maintain this third mark of the church and so ensure our claim to the title "Church of Jesus Christ." ❖

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Guest Article

"Slain in the Spirit"

What Do the Scriptures Teach?

by Rev. R. Cameron-Smith

In recent years the belief and practice of being slain in the Spirit has gained considerable acceptance among some Churches and Groups. While there is debate whether the term should be "slain by the Spirit" or "slain in the Spirit," these terms really mean one and the same thing. It is usually considered that "slain in the Spirit" is the more correct expression to use.

When the teaching of being slain in the Spirit was first introduced it was opposed by many preachers and viewed with suspicion by others, but gradually it has gained wider acceptance. It should be pointed out that not all preachers accept the teaching as Biblical, even among those who believe that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit belong to believers today.

The usual experience is that a person, saved or unsaved, responds to the appeal of the preacher and comes forward in a meeting. The preacher then places his hands upon them, (although some preachers do not lay hands on the person) and they fall backwards. They then usually become unconscious for a time, which may extend to several hours in extreme cases. This experience is claimed to be the Spirit of God coming upon a person in a powerful way, slaying them, and thus giving them a wonderful experience whereby they are filled with the Spirit.

Those who have this experience are usually viewed as having a greater blessing than others, and to have been visited by God in a powerful and special way.

Scripture commands us to "prove all things," (I Thessalonians 5:21). The word "prove" means to test, try, examine, scrutinize, to put to the test. We must test this teaching in the light of the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God so if any experience is from the Spirit, it will be in full agreement with the Scriptures. Sometimes "proving all things" is claimed to be a sign of unbelief and doubting, however God commands us to 'search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so," (Acts 17:11). Not to test and prove all things is to disobey the Word of God.

Firstly. Is the expression "slain in the Spirit" Scriptural? It is not found anywhere in the Word of God. How-

ever this fact alone does not prove it to be unscriptural, for neither are the words, "sacrament" or "trinity" in the Bible.

The word "slain" means to kill, to injure. Has the Holy Spirit come to kill or to give life? Has he come to cast down or to raise us up? The Holy Spirit is never said to be a slayer, but a giver of life. "It is the Spirit that gives life," (John 6:63). "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live," (Ezekiel 37:14).

Has the Holy Spirit come to kill or to give life?

Secondly. What Scriptural proofs are there for being slain in the Spirit? There are a number of Scriptures which some people claim demonstrate that this teaching is true, and that we are to expect to be slain in the Spirit today. There are three in the New Testament and one in the Old. We shall consider these texts in the order they appear in the Bible.

1. I Samuel 19:20-24. This portion of Scripture records how King Saul was seeking to arrest David. Samuel and David were at Ramah at the time and Samuel was superintending a company of prophets who were prophesying. King Saul sent two groups of messengers to arrest David. However, on both occasions the Spirit came upon the messengers and they also prophesied, and were thus prevented from arresting David.

Finally, Saul went himself to Ramah and the Spirit of God was upon him also and he prophesied before Samuel. Then we read "And he stripped off his clothes also, ...and lay down naked all that day and all that night," (Verse 24). Probably this means that Saul divested himself of his armour and military clothes.

Does this account of Saul have any connection to present day slaying in the Spirit? Samuel did not lay hands on Saul. There is no evidence that he was unconscious. He was not filled with the Spirit. Saul was not a saved man, nor did this event change his life or actions in the least. There is no indication in the Scripture that Saul's experience was to be repeated in the lives of New Testament believers. To seek to use the case of Saul is to misapply and misuse the Word of God, which is called the "accommodation of Scripture."

2. John 18:3-6. These verses record how the soldiers and officers of the chief priests and Pharisees came to arrest Christ. The Lord went to meet them and asked, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." The Lord replied, "I am he." When Jesus had said this, "they went backward, and fell to the ground," (Verse 6).

Do these verses teach the doctrine of being slain in the Spirit? Most definitely they do not. These verses do not even mention the Spirit, nor do they say that the soldiers fell backward, but that they withdrew, and then fell to the ground. Jesus did not lay hands on these men, nor were they deterred from their intentions to arrest Christ. Their actions cannot be construed to be an example of a Christian experience of receiving God's Spirit in any way.

Commentators usually believe that they fell down because of some sense of the Lord's majesty and greatness, or because He used the Divine Name when he said "I AM."

3. Acts 9:3-9, which records how the Lord appeared to Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus. Saul had been filled with rage against the Church and went to Damascus to arrest the believers there. On the way suddenly there shined a great light from heaven and Saul "fell to the earth," and heard the Lord speaking to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Verse 4). When Saul arose he was unable to see and was led into Damascus, where Ananias was sent to him and his eyes were opened and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Does Saul's experience provide an example of being slain in the Spirit? Certainly not. There are no similarities between what happened to Saul and the experience of those who claim to be slain in the Spirit. Saul did not fall backward, he fell to the ground and so did the men accompanying him (Acts 26:14). The great light and the revelation of Christ to him, overwhelmed him, and in amazement and awe, he fell to the ground. Saul was by no means unconscious. He heard the Lord speaking to him, as did the men with him, and Saul responded and spoke to the Lord.

There is no reference to the Holy Spirit until Saul was in the city of Damascus, and three days later Ananias came to him and put his hands upon him (Acts 9:17-18).

The experience of Saul is that of the Lord appearing in a glorious way to him, whereby he was completely overcome and humbled, and was fully transformed to be the Lord's servant for the rest of his life.

4. The final example is taken from Revelation 1:17-18 where we are told that when the apostle John saw the revelation of the risen, glorified Christ, whose face was as the sun shining in his strength, John fell at the Lord's feet as dead. The Lord then laid His right hand

upon John and spoke very comfortingly to him with the words "Fear not, I am the first and the last," (Verse 18).

Again we must ask, Does this portion of Scripture teach the doctrine of being slain in the Spirit or does it give us an example of a man of God who saw the Lord in His glory and was completely overcome with awe and reverence? The answer is clearly that this portion does not even speak of the Holy Spirit. It records the effect of the overwhelming sense of the glory and majesty of the Lord upon a man of God. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel and others felt the same way when they saw the glory of the Lord.

When we consider all the above examples, none of them provide any indication that anyone in the Bible experienced being slain in the Spirit. None of these examples even occurred during a meeting conducted by a preacher. This teaching has been imposed on the Scriptures, and not found in them.

Some preachers have sought to justify the practice of being slain in the Spirit by claiming that it is a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit. These preachers point out that we cannot limit God, that He is free to manifest His power how and when He pleases and that this experience is one of those sovereign manifestations of the Holy Spirit today.

It is agreed that God is sovereign, and that at times He works in unusual ways. At times the Holy Spirit has often worked in wondrous and unexpected ways.

However to adopt and systematize a certain practice not even mentioned in the Bible, claiming it to be a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit is totally wrong. Being slain in the Spirit is totally wrong. Being slain in the Spirit is very much through human influence and effort, with the preacher creating the right atmosphere and having his helpers ready to catch those who fall backward. It is not something that the Spirit does sovereignly outside the control and direction of man.

Probably the most serious and dangerous aspect of being slain in the Spirit is not only that it is unscriptural, but it is anti-scriptural. The practice of falling backwards and of becoming unconscious is totally contrary to the plain teachings of the Word of God.

It was the devil who cast men down, not the Lord Jesus (Mark 9:20). He raised them up again. No one in Scripture ever became unconscious as a result of the operations of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit works in our hearts He does not bypass our minds and intellects, but He enlightens and teaches, thus making the Lord Jesus known to us through His Word.

The experience of being slain in the Spirit is one that in its nature and content is contrary to the way that God has revealed He works in our hearts. He does not cast us into some unconscious state, and then without any knowledge on our part fill us with His Spirit.

God works in us according to our nature which He has given us. He makes us alive to Him and causes us to see His ways, to know His truth, to understand His Word, to love, obey and to trust in Him.

Thirdly. How does any person then have an experience which they believe is being slain in the Spirit? Such an experience to them is often very real and dramatic. There are several factors involved which make an experience which is thought to be of the Spirit possible to men.

a) There is the atmosphere created in the service. Preachers create an emotionally charged atmosphere through excitement, music and other means. This experience would not take place without the right atmosphere. The experiences appealed to in the Bible all took place in situations which were without emotion and mass hysteria.

b) There is the expectation of the person coming for that experience. Their emotions must be sufficiently stirred and aroused so that they are cooperating with the spirit of the meeting.

c) There is the influence of the speaker. Preachers who practice being slain in the Spirit, have learned how to create the right atmosphere, to break down any resistance in the minds of the hearers, and lead them into a state of passivity, that they might receive this so-called slaying.

The practice of falling backwards and of becoming unconscious is totally contrary to the plain teachings of the Word of God.

We must note that no one in the Bible ever created such emotionally charged meetings before their hearers were blessed with the Holy Spirit. We must also note that such swoonings, collapsings, faintings, screamings and emotions are not limited to these preachers only, but are to be found in meetings conducted by gifted but ungodly people, and are even to be found in some of the rituals of heathen worship. ❖

Rev. Cameron-Smith is minister of the Southern Presbyterian Church in Launceston.

Remember Thy Creator

Unto us as Covenant children,
So unworthy though we be,
Comes this God inspired message,
In thy youth remember Me.

This thy youth, these days of gladness,
But thy days are like the grass,
Time flows on in ceaseless measure,
And so swiftly they pass.

Soon the evil days come near thee.
Hands grow feeble, eyes grow dim,
Time shall cast its mark upon you,
In thy youth remember Him.

Beautiful God's revelation,
See while bright thy eyes to see,
Sing while strong your voice to praise Him,
Hear while ears are given thee.

Work, for soon the shadows gather
Labor now while yet 'tis day,
Serve Him in thy youthful vigor,
Time shall take thy strength away.

Shall we then seek earthly treasures,
We the children of the day,
And in careless sinful living,
Cast the precious hours away?

God forbid we shall forget Him,
Vain the joy earth doth afford,
Oh remember thy Creator.
Let thy joy be in the Lord.

Tho o'er heights of joy you wander,
Or through valleys of the shade,
He is with you, thy Creator,
He who heaven and earth has made.

Let us cast our crowns before Him,
Hear this blessed word of truth,
And remember our Creator,
In these golden days of youth.

By Miss Janet Wassink
Pella, Iowa
(Reprinted from *Beacon Lights*, 1945.)

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

by Connie Meyer

Temperance (Part 10)

"Jason! Time to come inside!" called Mother from the doorway.

With plastic sword in hand, Jason ran breathlessly from behind the house and met his mother at the door.

"Wow, that was fast!" she exclaimed. "What were you doing?"

"I've conquered the city of Gaza and am on my way to fight some more Philistines. They're no match for the mighty Samson!"

Mother smiled at the young conqueror. They had recently read about Samson for their family devotions, and she was glad Jason had apparently listened.

"Yes, Samson—the strong one," she confirmed. But then something occured to her. "Wait a minute, Samson, before you defeat your next city there's something you should know."

Jason put his hands on his hips and turned to listen.

"Are you strong?" she asked.

"Ver-r-ry strong!" he replied.

"If your sword was made out of real tempered steel, would you say that you were as strong as that sword?"

"Yep. Except I don't know what 'tempered' means."

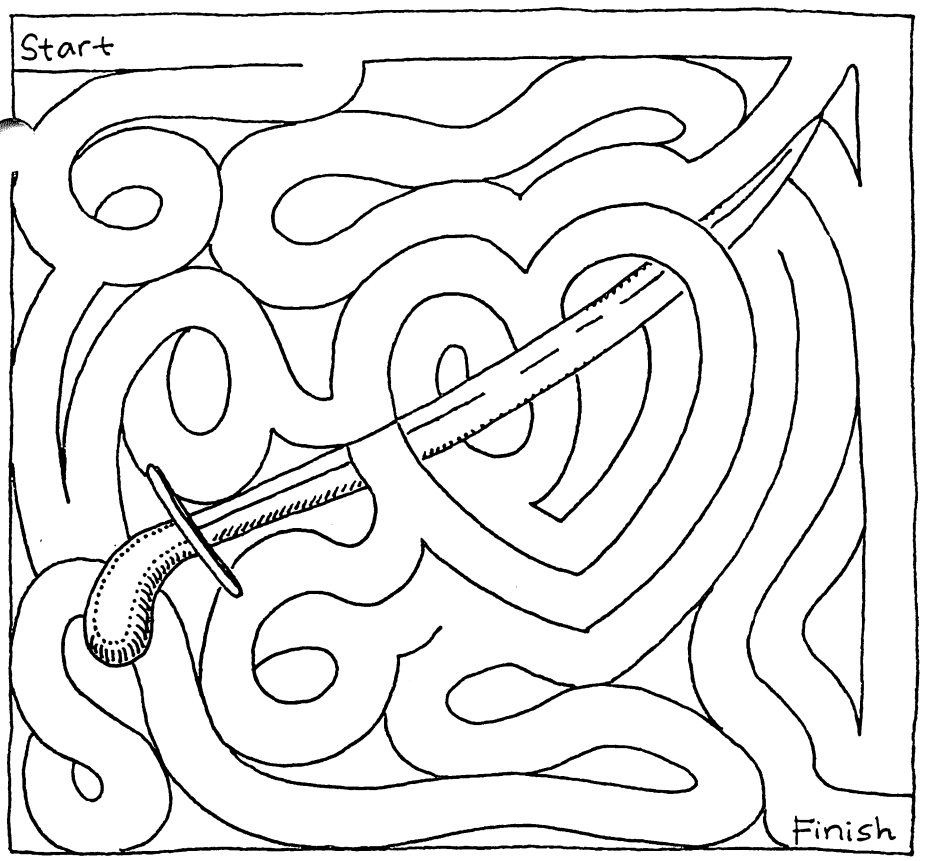
"It means that through a special heating and cooling process, the steel was made to be extra strong and tough."

"Oh yes, that's me!"

"Well, this is what you need to know. Samson was indeed 'tempered' and extra strong—on the outside. But he lacked 'temperance,' which means to be strong—on the inside. Samson could kill a hundred Philistines as easy as we swat a fly, but he didn't have the inner-strength to stay away from pretty Philistine girls—girls he knew to be wicked. I wonder if Solomon was thinking of Samson when he wrote, 'he that ruleth his spirit (is better) than he that taketh a city.' It's easier to conquer a city than it is to control your own sinful desires!"

Jason hadn't expected such a long speech from his mother, but since it concerned Samson, he found it interesting. Then a thought occured to him, "Mom, why did you call me in?"

"For a snack," she smiled, "to keep your strength up." Then she added, "—inner-strength, that is." ❖



"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."
Proverbs 16:32.

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

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Church News

BIRTHS:

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Tom Miedema were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Allison Joy.

PEACE, IL

Mr. & Mrs. Dan Wiersma were blessed with the birth of a son, Dirk Conrad.

EDGERTON, MN

Mr. & Mrs. Craig Fey were blessed with the birth of a son, Ashton Lee.

LYNDEN, WA

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Hystek were blessed with the birth of a son, Jamison Lee.

Mr. & Mrs. John Hystek were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Lisa Renae.

BYRON CENTER, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Brent Dommisse were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Taylor Ann.

BAPTISMS:

PEACE, IL

Brittany Sue, daughter of Dan & Dawn Zandstra and Dirk Conrad, son of Dan and Jessica Wiersma were presented for baptism.

LOVELAND, CO

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Karl Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Swartz.

PROFESSIONS OF FAITH:

HUDSONVILLE, MI:

Terri Boven made public her confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

HOPE, MI

Joel Langerak and Jori Derusha confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

LOVELAND, CO

Rachel Van Baren has made public confession of her faith in the Lord .

TRANSFERS OF MEMBERSHIP:

To Hudsonville, MI from Southwest, MI: Mr. & Mrs. Tom Beute and family.

To Hudsonville, MI from Byron Center, MI: Mrs. Sue Rutgers.

To Pella IA: Mr. & Mrs. Andy VanZee.

To Lynden, WA: Mr. & Mrs. Rick Span and family.

Thank-you to all of you who sent in bulletins this month. Please continue to send them in. We welcome more news from the other churches who have not yet sent in their bulletins.