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Lights



Thankful In Conduct

Aaron J. Cleveland



It is once again November. The month, at the end of which, we will celebrate the national holiday known as Thanksgiving Day. The first Thanksgiving Day celebrated on this continent was December 4, 1619. This totally religious observance, which involved no feasting, was carried out by 39 English settlers who had written in their charter that their day of arrival be celebrated yearly as a day of thanksgiving to God.

On July 30, 1623, by decree of Gov. Bradford of the Plymouth colonists, a three-day Thanksgiving Day began for the purpose of prayer as well as celebration. For the next 150 years, a Thanksgiving Day of some sort was observed by the different colonies until in 1789, President Washington proclaimed that November 26 would be a national day of thanksgiving. From that time until the present, Thanksgiving Day, for the most part, has been regularly celebrated during the month of November. Since 1941, it has been celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November (World Book Encyclopedia). The Lord willing, we will celebrate Thanksgiving Day on November 27 of this year, 1997.

During this month of thanksgiving we do well to refresh ourselves on the subject of thanksgiving. What is thanksgiving? Who is capable of being thankful? How is thankfulness to be performed? Is there a thankfulness which is nothing more than a yearly external show, and nothing more?

All of these questions we will examine as we take a closer look at the theme of thanksgiving. In order to understand what thanksgiving is, we must first discern between the true and the false thanksgiving. Yes, there are two thanksgivings. The one is the genuine article. The other, a fraud. The one acceptable in the eyes of God. The other detestable. The one properly motivated and a result of God's particular grace. The other with selfish motivations and apart from God's grace.

Just what is this genuine article of thanksgiving? And what distinguishes it from all other fraudulent thanksgiving? No clearer answer to these questions can be found than in the Bible and as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. Here, the how and why of thankfulness is fully explained.

The three parts of the Catechism, clearly put before us our misery, our deliverance, and the resulting thankfulness. And that is where true thankfulness begins, with the realization of how miserable a condition we are in, apart from God. We are totally depraved. Because of the fall of our first parents, we are willful slaves to sin. Because of our sinful natures, we hate God (Rom. 3:11). We are incapable of keeping even the smallest part of His law. We are sinners who are found guilty on every count in God's courtroom. God's justice demands that we be sentenced to eternal death. This is our miserable condition. There is no hope that we have in ourselves. But it is from this miserable condition that we are delivered, and that is where the Catechism leads us to next.

Yes, we are delivered. But the deliverance is not found in ourselves. In fact, we are so woeful, we are not aware that we need deliverance. We are perfectly content in our miserable state. In fact, we continually plunge ourselves deeper into misery and greater enmity with God. Rather, the deliverance is all of God. It can only be of God. And that deliverance is the death of His Son on the cross. By this accursed death, the justice of God is satisfied. No longer are we guilty in God's courtroom. No longer is our sentence eternal death. No longer are we willing slaves to sin. No longer do we hate God. We are

freed from our miserable condition. In fact, not only are we delivered from eternal death, but are rewarded with eternal life. We are snatched from the most horrible of all punishments and rewarded with the greatest of all goods. And all of this done to undeserving sinners. We have done absolutely nothing to aid in this salvation. No where have our works entered into the picture. It is all of God's particular grace, for not all are delivered.

It is with this deliverance from our misery in mind, that we can begin to have a small understanding of what thankfulness is. Through this deliverance, we are renewed by the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 32) and are capable of "gratitude to God for his blessing." By the work of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed from unthankfulness to thankfulness. Again, through nothing that we do of ourselves. I Chron. 29:13, 14 speak clearly that our ability of thankfulness is a gift of God alone: "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Thankfulness is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

If thankfulness is a work of God's grace, then the true thankfulness of which we are speaking is only shown through those whom God bestows His grace upon. This is the only way it can be. There is no thankfulness apart from God's grace. Therefore, those who live apart from God's grace are incapable of thankfulness. All that they do is done selfishly. Their goal is not the glory of God, but their own glory. The thankfulness that they may seem to exhibit is a false thankfulness that is offensive in God's eyes. The external thankfulness they display on Thanksgiving Day is wickedly motivated. Their "prayers" will rise no higher than the ceiling.

But this false thankfulness we will not dwell on, for it is the true thankfulness that we are interested in; the true thankfulness which is testified by "the whole of our conduct" (Lord's Day 32). Lord's Day 32 is the first in the last section of the Catechism which is headed by the title "Of Thankfulness." In LD 32, an explanation of why we must still do good works is given. This is logical, seeing that the Catechism has just explained how we are saved by grace alone, without any merit of our own. The Catechism answers that we must do good works out of "gratitude to God for his blessings." This gratitude is to be expressed "by the whole of our conduct." Our gratitude is expressed by the performing of good works; works "which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory" (Q&A 91).

This is true thanksgiving. It is not a once a year activity. It is not an activity only expressible in prayer. Neither is it an activity limited just to our faculty of talking. Rather, thanksgiving is a lifelong activity. It is an activity which is expressed by the whole of our conduct. Thanksgiving is expressed not only by what we say and pray, but also by where we go, whom we associate with, what we allow ourselves to see, what we listen to, and the thoughts we think. Thanksgiving is a distinctive way of life. Thanksgiving is presenting our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1).

The command to present our "bodies a living sacrifice" has some very practical implications as to the way we ought to conduct ourselves. Are we presenting our bodies a living sacrifice when we listen to ungodly music? When we take God's name in vain? When we disobey our parents, teachers, and others in authority? When we lead a life of rebellion and disregard for God's law?

This is a very humbling calling, for how easily we are unthankful. It does not take us long to recall how unthankful we have been through the past year, day and even hour. By nature, we are unthankful creatures. But, we have been delivered and we are called to thankfulness. We must constantly struggle with our unthankful natures. By God's grace, we have the power to fight against our sinful natures.

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:13, 14) ❖

God's Glorious Grace

Today the sun may never shine.
 Today the clouds may darken the sky;
 But I've learned that this day is not really mine,
 And that I've no reason to ask God why.

For life brings trials and hardships and tears
 But with it comes joy and blessed peace.
 If there's one thing I've learned throughout the years,
 Is that God's love and grace will never cease.

For today may bring doubt and dreadful fear,
 And today I may feel helpless and all alone;
 But God has promised to always be near,
 And through clouds of despair, His love has shown.

For how would I truly know of His grace
 If I had not known of such dark despair?
 And why would I long to leave this place
 If I never had a burden to bear?

For God loves us and wants us to long
 For our home in heaven where we'll belong.
 And that's why on earth all seems to be wrong,
 For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God want us to see how much we need
 The hand of our Father in all that we do
 We know not where that hand will lead
 Nor where His path will guide us to.

But we know that our Father has loved us so much
 That He sent His son to carry our cross.
 And we know of a Shepherd's loving touch
 That saved all His sheep that would have been lost.

So when the burden is too heavy to bear,
 Remember the cross that Jesus bore.
 And then the burden cannot compare
 To our home in heaven forevermore.

For God giveth and He taketh away
 In order to teach us to trust in His will.
 We learn in those times that we must pray
 And then our hearts will learn to be still.

For God worketh a love in our heart
 For heavenly things and for things above.
 And that's where our journey home must start
 And where we learn of His infinite love.

So earthly treasures and earthly cares
 Are replaced with thoughts of heavenly things
 By continuing in constant cries and prayers
 That earthly trials always shall bring.

How wondrous are God's infinite ways;
 How much we need to learn of His love!
 And that is why we have trying days,
 So our eyes are kept on things above.

Someday in heaven we'll finally know
 How God's providence led us to our home above.
 We'll see how each trial has helped us to grow,
 And how deep and how precious is His love.

So all of the cares of this world and it's worry
 And crosses to bear for a time while we're here.
 But heaven awaits us in all it's glory,
 And that's enough to calm our fear.

For what greater gift could there ever be
 And what earthly trial could ever erase
 The love of a Father that has set us free,
 And His promise of heaven and glorious grace.

by Anita J. Moore
 Bethel PRC

How Did Sin Enter the World?

By Rev. R. G. Moore

Question #24

If God is completely good, and all things were created by him, how did sin enter the world? Since God is good it would seem philosophically impossible for him to create something sinful, or even something perfect which is able to sin. I know this is kind of a philosophical question, and possibly a very bad one, but please let me know what you think anyway.

Answer # 24

You have struck upon the main difficulty in trying to set forth a question of this nature, and that when you say “it would seem philosophically impossible.” When we consider the Sovereign God and the way He brings to pass His counsel, the problem is if we try to reason the ways of God, we really end up with philosophy which in the end is limited by man’s finite understanding, and is always limited by man’s imperfection. When we philosophize we are always limited to our finite minds to try to determine the end. Thus we always come short, and because of this we may not even attempt to determine why or how God brings forth His will and governs all things.

This does not mean that we may not say something about the way God created, and the way that sin entered the world, etc. But in order to understand any thing of the workings of the living God, we must hear what God says about such. Only God Who is eternal and infinite, and Who alone is God can reveal Himself and His will and workings to us.

The Scripture is full of the testimony of His Holiness, and the Word of this Holy God teaches us that when He created, that “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” This included the angels also including Satan, and man, including Adam and Eve. All things in creation as created served perfectly the glory of God. But also we understand from the Word that all things were created perfectly to serve His

purpose, and His purpose with all things is the glory of His name. Ephesians 1 repeatedly makes this point, that all things including the salvation of the church in Christ were eternally determined to serve the praise of the glory of His grace. This means as is obvious from Colossians 1 that Christ was determined to be the Head of the Church before the creation of this world, and all things were created by Him and for Him. Now it would take a treatise to develop the wonder of the truth of this teaching from Colossians 1:14ff, but one thing is clear that all of creation serves the coming of Christ and the redemption of His body from sin unto the glory of God’s name. So that we must conclude while God is not the author of sin, He has determined the fall from eternity to serve the purpose of His being glorified in the saving of the church in Christ.

Thus with respect to sin, we understand from the Scripture that God created Satan and Adam and Eve good, but able to fall. Now this we believe by faith for God has revealed it unto us. That we cannot reason it all out makes no difference, by faith we believe the Word of God. And there is no doubt that God holds Satan and man accountable for the sin in which they walked, cf. Genesis 3:14ff. ❖

Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc1.mtcnet.net Also feel free to write follow up questions.

Rev. R. G. Moore

Diligence

by Kris Moelker

What is diligence? Diligence is to consistently put forth all your effort into every thing you do. Anyone who puts forth as much effort as he can into everything he does (catechism, society, school, work, etc.) is diligent.

Young person, do you do your school work as well as you can? Do you put a lot of effort into your catechism lesson? Do you go to society eager and ready to discuss? Are you diligent on the job?

Consider the following examples.

1) You are an intelligent young person. You do exceptionally well in school. You take the hardest courses and passed them all with A's even though you don't study very much. Several extracurricular activities demand much of your time and energy. Besides all this, you manage to spend a great deal of time with your friends.

2) You have to work very hard to get decent grades, but most of the time you just don't feel like studying. School work is a burden to you. The easier courses attract you, and then you know you can do well, but most of the time you pull poor grades anyway. You would rather socialize than work hard at you studies.

3) You consider yourself to be a studious young person. Many nights of the week you open your books and sometimes do not get to bed until well after midnight. You are an average student who takes the challenging courses and pull B's and C's. When you are not studying, you are either working or spending some time with your family and friends.

The last scenario is a good example of a diligent young person. This young person is well aware of his calling before God. He uses all his abilities to prepare himself for a life of service in the Kingdom of God.

Graciously, God gives you, covenant young person many gifts. All that you are and have are gifts from His hand. These gifts must never be squandered, but they must be used to His honor and glory. Ephesians 10:31 "...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." All who squander these gifts fall into great sin.

Christ emphasizes your calling to be diligent in the parable of the talents recorded in Matthew 25:18-31. In this parable, a master gave his servants his talents (money) before leaving for a far country. He gave five talents to one servant, two talents to another servant, and one talent to the third servant. The servants who had received five and two talents doubled the money they were given in their business dealings. The servant who received one talent buried the money in the ground.

When the master returned, he was pleased with the servants who doubled his money in their business dealings, and he promised to make them rulers over many things. He was sorely displeased with the servant who buried his money, and he commanded him to give his money to the servant with the ten talents. He then commanded this servant to be thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Christ is the master in this parable. After He ascended into Heaven, He poured out His Spirit upon us and now is able and willing to give us many spiritual, mental and physical gifts. Yes, He does give some of His people more gifts than others. Has Christ given you many abilities? Thank Him and ask Him for the grace to use all you have to glorify and honor His name. Has Christ blessed you with only a few gifts? You must not be ashamed and hide these gifts, but you must use them to His honor and glory.

Consider Proverbs 13:4 where King Solomon writes "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Think about this. God rewards those who put effort into their work but He withholds His blessing from those who are sluggards or lazy.

Even wicked man sees his need to be diligent. He gets a good education so that he may be able to get a good job. Then he works very hard at one or even two jobs. He labors hard for that big paycheck. His diligence gets him riches and more riches. He has all that his heart desires, but he uses all his wealth in the service of sin.

There is coming a day when he will lose all of his possessions including his body and soul which will be cast into Hell forever.

Young person, continue to labor diligently on the job and make sure you are well prepared for catechism, school and society. Remember the words of Christ to the multitude who wanted to follow Him after He fed them with five loaves and two fishes. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John 6:27)

Then on that day when Christ comes to take His Church to Himself, you will hear Him say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy [L]ord." (Matthew 25:21) ❖

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Story Time

Till Hugh Departed This Life

by J.P. de Klerk

Lynn Gibson was a lovely girl. Whenever I had holidays with my grandparents, I walked to the other side of the moor to pay her a visit. Lynn was an invalid (she had a problem with her legs), but cheerfully she looked after the farmhouse since her mother deceased. She did the cooking, the laundry and the bookkeeping for her father. There were six children. When she saw me, she gave me a shy smile and offered me a cup of tea. I knew something had happened since I saw her last summer, but I waited till she was ready to tell me herself. "You know, we lived here now five year and we are all happy with this place, sheltered by the wood, close to the river, and the soil is easy to handle without much manure. My youngest brother, Hugh, always helped father. He was such a darling of a boy, always busy and happy."

She swept a lock of hair aside.

"We were such a good team. I miss him all the time. If I could not do something, he helped me immediately. We understood each other. Sometimes we had a lot of fun. I helped him with his homework of the school. He preferred to be outside when the weather was good. But he knew the Bible very well and he could tell stories in every detail so that Dad and I looked in amazement at each other. He was yet so young, you know. My elder brothers looked sometimes amused at Hugh and shrugged their shoulders. We saw that he could also tell stories with a lot younger children around him. But just as well

he went fishing, went on his bicycle to the village for shopping, plucked the weeds from between the beans, or whatever. But he avoided fighting; then he retired in his room upstairs."

She swallowed a couple of times and looked at a photograph on the wall opposite her little desk, on which Hugh came home with a big fish he obviously had caught in the river at sunset.



“He became a budding preacher of the Gospel. Each time when we had a stranger as a visitor, he would suddenly ask whether he or she was a Christian, which church, what minister, and so on. Not bold or obtrusive, but very kind and sympathetic. You should have heard him! He told me once that he had given sweets to younger children and then invited them to go with him to a Bible class on Sunday. Sometimes, while he was doing some-



thing in the garden, I heard him singing hymns or psalms. But, one day he came suddenly inside, stumbled into the kitchen, and said that he had pain in his stomach. He looked as white as a sheet. He went to bed and refused to eat anything. We thought he had some kind of a flu, but the doctor came and told us that it was definitely something else. He had to go to the hospital straight away, in an ambulance.

“There they made some X-ray photographs and they discovered that he had a small tumor on his intestines. The doctor said, it would be easy to remove it. She sighed and rubbed her forehead.

“Well, at the day of the operation all of us were in the hospital. Dad brought me to Hugh’s room and I still can see him lying there, so weak and helpless. He looked at me with his big eyes without saying a word. I don’t know what he thought. A bit later he was brought to the operating room. We had to wait a long time before the surgeon turned up with some news about his patient. He said, that the operation went well, but he had discovered that the matter was more serious than he had expected,

because the tumor was malignant. In fact, Hugh had only twenty-five percent chance that he would recover. Also, if somewhere else in his body a new tumor would appear, he could humanly speaking not be kept alive.

“In the following weeks and months however all went well. He was home again and he looked just as healthy as before. His flow of spirits was something wonderful, and we did thank God for every day He gave us. Hugh said that he wanted to become a minister of the church, and he talked about everything he would like to do when he would. Oh, he lived in a world of dreams. It was a pleasure to listen to him, but we all had the fear.

“As a flash of lightning it struck him. He was reading a book here in the room, at the table, and he let himself fall on the floor writhing with pain. I rang the doctor and called Dad. Back to the hospital. The same day the doctors told us that he had got an abscess in his liver. They could not give us any hope. He would have to die. It could take weeks or months. He understood and accepted the situation. He told us, he was safe in the arms of the Lord. It took only twenty days. Each time when I saw him again, I saw him go further away from us. I don’t know how to say this. I found it difficult to believe it. Hugh said farewell to every doctor and every nurse; he thanked them for all that they had done for him. Some started crying and he prayed with them. Dad spent whole days with him. Sometimes one of my brothers took his place.

“Then it happened, we were there all together and suddenly Hugh said that he heard music, and choirs singing. Dad looked at me and I saw it: Hugh had departed this life. Dad prayed and thanked God for His mercy, but he could not go further. A doctor took over, then my eldest brother, then I... We left his body with his little Bible in his emaciated hands. We found that symbolic for Hugh... I know, if we had not been Christians, we would have been crushed, all to pieces. Friends in our church helped us with the things that had to be done. I had a talk with the minister and with one of the elders. I have planted some flowering plants on his grave. I know it is all part of God’s plans. One day I will see Hugh back and I’ll be as happy as he is now.”

She laid her hands on mine and we looked together at some finches outside at the birdbath. Perhaps we did not even see them really. ❖

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

Psalter 203—Life With God

by Beth DeVries

One of our favorite Psalter numbers which many of us know by heart is Psalter number 203 based on Psalm 73. This Psalter number starts out reminding us of the fact that we are constantly in God's presence. God knows all our thoughts and the secrets within our minds. He holds us close to Him and will not let us fall away. There is great safety in being near the side of God. God's perfect counsel guides our lives in this world and keeps us from the errors we would easily slip into on our own. God, before time began, chose us as His own and will be with us till our life on this earth ends and we are led to glory.

We are reminded that even if our thoughts are secret from men, God knows them. May this inspire us to keep our thoughts holy! Christ is our mediator in heaven to make intercession for our sins and evil thoughts. There are times when we wish we could see Him with our physical eyes, yet without Him in heaven we would have no right to communicate with God. May we be ever thankful that Christ is in heaven and not on this earth.

Many times our bodies fail us and we become weak in the flesh. Yet these times are often used by God to make us stronger in our faith. The Lord is ever present with us and gives us strength sufficient for the day. God

chose His elect people before time began and when we attempt to separate ourselves from Him, we begin to feel what death from God would feel like. As elect children God never allows us to die spiritually but calls us back to seek His face. He provides a place of refuge for us and we can always turn to Him in our need. Knowing this we ought to constantly praise God with our lips and thoughts. We have so much to be thankful for as God has provided for us in this

life, and more importantly, given us a life everlasting. When next you sing Psalter number 203 remember the comfort in it. May your heart always sing God's praises. ❖

203 **Life With God**
 PSALM 73 C. M. PRAYER William U. Butcher

1. In sweet com-mun-ion, Lord, with Thee I con-stant-ly a-bide;
 2. Thy coun-sel through my earth-ly way Shall guide me and con-trol,
 3. Whom have I, Lord, in heav'n but Thee, To Whom my tho'ts as-pire?
 4. Tho' flesh and heart should faint and fail, The Lord will ev-er be
 5. To live a-part from God is death, 'Tis good His face to seek;

My hand Thou hold-est in Thy own To keep me near Thy side.
 And then to glo-ry aft-er-ward Thou wilt re-ceive my soul.
 And, hav-ing Thee, on earth is nought That I can yet de-sire.
 The strength and por-tion of my heart, My God e-ter-nal-ly.
 My ref-uge is the liv-ing God, His praise I long to speak.

Used by arrangement with Oliver Ditson Co. 171 [Selected Stanzas]

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The Song of Zion

by Chester Hunter

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God

November 1 Read Psalm 37:1-11

Psalm 37:1-2 In this Psalm David gives instruction to the child of God in the area of relation with the wicked. David's experience as told in this Psalm was that the wicked seem to prosper. David tells us in these first two verses to not be concerned about the wicked's apparent success in this life. Their end is sure; they will be cut down by the sickle of God's wrath and fade away. This should have a twofold effect on us. First of all we should not wish the wicked's riches or position in this world. It profiteth him nothing. Secondly we can have comfort that a far better life awaits us in heaven at the throne of our eternal king. For this be thankful and pray that the kingdom come quickly. Sing Psalter 95:1.

November 2 Read Job 27:1-10

Psalm 37:3-4 If we are not to concern ourselves with the wicked what are we to do? The text is explicit. We are to trust in God and do good. By doing this we will receive blessings in this life and the life to come. Young people, are you seeking to do good? Are you seeking to delight yourself in Jehovah? These are activities which take work on our part. We would much rather do evil. We would much rather delight in self and the things which please us. There is no reward for that, however. The only reward will be in doing the good of the Lord and delighting in Him and His ways. We must do this in our work and we must do this in our play. To do anything else will starve us spiritually. Let us seek daily the grace to love God and walk in His ways. Sing Psalter 95:2 and 100:1-2.

November 3 Read Genesis 12:1-9

Psalm 37:5-6 Young people, have you committed your way unto God? In your choices of vocation, life's mate, and church affiliation, have you determined to trust in Him, to serve Him, and to obey Him? In today's reading we see the consequences for Abraham and Sarah when they committed their way unto God. They left family, friends, and home in obedience to the call of God. Are you willing to obey him at the expense of a certain job, a certain boy, or a certain girl? Are you willing to seek the truth which is the way you must walk in your choices? Think on this matter! It is serious and like Abraham it will cause serious consequences. Seek for the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Sing Psalter 95:3 and 100:3

November 4 Read Ephesians 4:24-32

Psalm 37:7-8 People of God, do you become angry with circumstances in your lives? Do you do evil because of that anger? That anger is sin against our Holy God for it is He that brings us into the situations of this life. David had experienced evil done to him by wicked men. Think of his experiences with Saul, with the men of Keilah, with his sons. He knew what it was like to be persecuted. When he had a chance to kill Saul, he would not because it was not the will of God. We, too, may be in similar circumstances. While we may not be tempted to literally kill our neighbor, might we kill him by some other action or words. Do we seek our neighbor's good when it is in our power to do him harm. Christ loved us when we did not deserve it. We must reflect that love in our daily walk. Sing Psalter 96:1 and 100:4.

November 5 Read Acts 5:1-13

Psalm 37:9-10 The account of Ananias and Saphira is not placed in Scripture so that the church may gloat on the downfall of the wicked. This account is placed in the Bible for our instruction in how to walk in the ways of Jehovah. How many times have we wished the praise of men and profit for ourselves? Are we any better than Ananias and Saphira? Our continuing to walk in the sins of greed and pride will cause us to be chastised by our holy God. When we wait on Jehovah for His time in earthly things, we will be rewarded with temporal and spiritual blessings. We may not understand these at the time, but He will show us the way and give to us grace to endure all things. Sing Psalter 96:2.

November 6 Read Matthew 5:1-12

Psalm 37:11 Meek inherit the earth? I can hear the world laughing at this phrase. If you want to have a place in this world, you have to be aggressive. You have to put down your opponent by whatever means is at hand. David, the man after God's own heart, who was known for his military prowess pens these words. He realizes that his might would not give him anything. He understands that he must wait upon God and await what God will give him. Jesus says those very words as well during His sermon on the kingdom of heaven. Meekness is one of the characteristics of the citizens of that kingdom. Young people, do you have this quality? Do you cultivate this characteristic of a citizen of God's kingdom? This is God's will for us. We must be meek, and with meekness await His will. Sing Psalter 96:3.

November 7 Read Psalm 37:12-22

Psalm 37:12-15 David continues to give guidance to the child of God over the apparent success of the wicked. In the first part of this Psalm he shows us that we must wait upon the Lord to do His will. Now he draws from his experience about the end of the wicked. Verse 13 is the important one for us. If we are going to bring about the wicked's demise, we will be sorely disappointed. It is God who is in control. David uses God's covenant name Jehovah. What a comfort for us to know that because of the covenant love that God has for us, He will protect us and sustain us through all the onslaughts of the wicked. Their day is coming and it is a day of judgment and calamity. Our day is coming and it is a day of rejoicing around the Lamb's throne in heaven. Sing Psalter 96:4.

November 8 Read Proverbs 15:11-17

Psalm 37:16-17 One of the horses running toward the end of time is the black horse. This horse signifies the economic troubles of the ages. It is the age old struggle of the haves and the have-nots. To the child of God it quite often appears that they are relegated to the lot of the have-nots and have nothing but economic troubles in this world. Solomon in Proverbs gives us good counsel about this situation. He tells us that it is better to be in want and have the fear of the Lord than to perish in Hell while having riches on this earth. His father had taught him well as we can see by this Psalm. David understood that to have little but to be righteous was a blessed thing. Are you content, people of God, with what God chooses to give you? Are you willing to be upheld by God waiting for your reward in heaven. Pray for the grace needed in this difficulty. Sing Psalter 97:1.

November 9 Read Isaiah 60:15-22

Psalm 37:18-19 The passage which we read for today as well as these two verses from Psalm 37 have the same thought. It is the continuation of the previous verses. God cares for His people. In whatever circumstances of life that we are lead, He cares for us. We may lie at death's door in the hospital our body wracked by disease and pain, but we have a comfort that the wicked never have. God cares for us. The child of God may suffer extreme hunger, and it has happened in history and will happen again to those who refuse the mark of the beast, but he has this comforting word to him. God cares for him. Our business may be failing because we refuse to give in to those who urge ungodly practices upon us, but yet we can know that our heavenly Father who cares for even the sparrow, cares for us. What more do we need? What will we lack? Nothing, for God cares for us. Sing Psalter 97:2.

November 10 Read Revelation 19:7-21

Psalm 37:20 Once again in Scripture we see that little word "but". We quite often see this little word; do we stop to examine its importance? In this context it is used to show that the apparent success of the wicked is not success at all. Why? Because our God has all things marked in His sovereign will. He knows His sheep, and He knows the wicked. Their end is sure. It will be destruction in the lake of fire. Do you believe in Hell? You should, because if you do not you will most likely end up there. Hell is a very real place reserved for those who oppose God and His people. The day is coming when the smoke of the reprobate's demise will arise to heaven to be viewed by those who have a place prepared for them in heaven. Sing Psalter 97:3.

November 11 Read Acts 4:31-37

Psalm 37:21-22 People of God, do you show mercy to those in need and give to them in their distress? Or do you think that this is the work of the deacons and has nothing to do with you? The office of deacon is that of priest. Those ordained to show mercy. But because we believe in the office of all-believers, the office of mercy is our responsibility as well. Christians of all ages will have opportunity to show mercy to those who need it. Children and young people, while in school it is not hard to see a class mate who needs a comforting word or some small token of your help. Adults, do you look for fellow church members who need comfort and lend it to them by way of visit, comforting words of Scripture, or even some monetary help? It is our calling to show mercy because Christ was merciful to us. We must pray for grace to do this. Sing Psalter 97:4.

November 12 Read Psalm 37:23-33

Psalm 37:23-24 Young people, are your steps ordered by God? You probably will say, "of course, they are!" Do those around you know that they are? Can they tell it by the places you go, by the activities you do, and by the company you keep? Do you delight in walking in the way of God-that narrow way that leads to heaven? David delighted to walk in God's ways. He knew that he sinned and strayed from the path. But it was also his experience that his shepherd would lead him back unto the right way. He had tasted grace and delighted in it. Young people, this may seem difficult now, but you will reap rich rewards by walking in God's paths now and in eternity. Sing Psalter 98:1 and 101:1.

November 13 Read I Peter 5:1-11

Psalm 37:25-26 Earlier in this Psalm we looked at the believer's duty to be merciful and help those in need. David's experience is that because God is merciful, the people of God are not in need. By nature we do not want to help those who have needs. We want to be greedy and selfish. That same person is also merciful. He, too, lends to those who have needs. What is his reward? His children are blessed by God. While our good works are not the tools which take us to heaven, they are the fruit of our salvation in Christ and are blessed by God in this life. Humbleness is not popular in this world. Being humble and helping others for no recognition is unheard of. But this is the way the God leads His people. Be humble and merciful. Sing Psalter 98:2 and 101:2 & 3.

November 14 Read Nehemiah 13:10-22

Psalm 37:27-28 People of God, are you obeying the command, "depart from evil"? Are you fleeing the old man of sin and cleaving unto the man of righteousness. Evil is all around us. We find it at work, at school, and at play. Fleeing from it may mean a change of plans. It may mean telling friends or coworkers that you can not do what they wish. It may mean facing scoffing and affliction. Does this mean we have nothing to do? Of course not. The next phrase says to do good. There is plenty of good that we can do in this world for God's sake. There are many elderly who needs someone to visit them and to keep them company. There are people who could use a hand around the house. There are fellow students who could use a helping hand. Nehemiah was busy doing good. Did everyone like him? Probably not! But he had the praise of God saying, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Sing Psalter 98:3 and 103:1.

November 15 Read James 3:5-12

Psalm 37:29-31 These three verses speak of the blessings of walking in the way of the righteous. People of God are we happy with such blessings? They do not speak of fame, fortune, or high position on this earth. But they speak of the works pleasing to God. Are we happy enough to have heaven as our reward? Are we willing to live there forever in communion with God? Are we willing to speak of judgment and wisdom? Is God's law in our hearts so that our steps do not slide? These things should be a joy to us. Are they? Are we seeking to put God's law in our hearts? It just doesn't go there by osmosis, you know. There is a lot for us to consider in these verses. Let us do that with our whole being. Sing Psalter 98:4.

November 16 Read Dan 6:10-23

Psalm 37:32-33 Most of us should know the story of Daniel in the lion's den well. Could we be put in the lion's dens of today for worshipping our God in the way he commands us? The wicked watch us just as hard as they watched Daniel. Will they find us in church, in the catechism room, in the society room discussing God's Word? Just being there is not enough and does not please God though it does make Satan happy. Or worse will they find us in the bar, on the dance floor, watching the movie in whatever form? The wicked are watching. What do they see? Jehovah will be with us when the wicked attack but our sin does rise up against us. Sing Psalter 99:1.

November 17 Read Psalm 37:34-40

Psalm 37:34 This verse serves as a summary to the Psalm. First we are called upon to wait on the Lord. This can be very hard at times. Sometimes we are like Jacob and want to do the Lord's work for him. Secondly we are called to keep His way. This goes hand in hand with the first admonition. We must learn that it is not our way that is the right way, but it is the Lord's way we must follow. This way is summed up in the two commandments which summarize the law. We are to love the Lord our God, and we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. What is the reward for waiting upon Jehovah and keeping His way? That reward is twofold. First of all we will have eternal life in heaven. What more could we want? Secondly we will see the wicked who seemed to have the preeminence in this life brought to their eternal reward. God is good and knows how to give good gifts to his people. Sing Psalter 99:2 and 101:4.

November 18 Read II Kings 9:30-37

Psalm 37:35-36 These two verses are an expansion upon the last part of verse 34. What should our response be to such a work of God. Our response should not be one characterized by revenge, but rather we should be comforted that God does care for His people and that His promises are sure. We read about the end of Jezebel. To the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, her death must have brought relief. But it should have also brought renewed zeal in serving Jehovah whose promises are sure. When we see the wicked's destruction does it fill us with confidence that His ways are sure? It should. Sing Psalter 99:3.

November 19 Read II Timothy 4:1-8

Psalm 37:37-38 David continues with the contrast of the end of the wicked and that of the righteous. Paul in his epistle to Timothy speaks of that peace that he expects to receive. He has faced Satan in many forms. He is awaiting sentence at the hands of a cruel ruler. He

believes that no matter what man decides to be his fate, God is sovereign and God will reward him either in this life or the life to come. Are we living the life of the perfect and upright man? Are we anxiously awaiting the end of this life and the beginning of the promised peace which is in heaven? Let us pray for that peace, and let us pray for the grace to live a life of sanctification on this earth. Sing Psalter 99:4 and 101:5.

November 20 Read II Kings 6:8-18

Psalm 37:39-40 People of God, do you believe that God is your strength in times of trouble? Do you confess this as you lie on the hospital bed wondering what will be the outcome of surgery. Do you confess this as you look over your finances and wonder how you will make ends meet? Do you confess this when you are faced with a situation in which you must admonish someone for walking in a sinful way? Satan uses these and other like situations to put the elect in trouble today. These are the battles we must fight. Are we trusting in Him in all ways and at all times? Do we have the hearty confidence that He will deliver us from all evil? It is not an if-then proposition. It is a statement of fact from a sovereign God that He helps us because we trust in Him. That trust is based upon the unshakable faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us praise God from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalter 99:5.

November 21 Read Psalm 38:1-14

Psalm 38:1 This Psalm of David is a prayer to God. In some Bibles the title added to it is "A Psalm of David," to bring to remembrance. Throughout the Psalm, David confesses that because of his sin he has lead a hard life. He does this not to complain that God has not treated him fairly. Rather he wants to throw himself on the mercies of God his salvation. In the first verse he realizes that the life he has lead is worthy of rebuke and chastening in God's displeasure. If David, the man after God's own heart, realized this, what about us? Are we aware exactly what kind of life we lead? Are we ready to confess all of our sins and ask for God's forgiveness? People of God of all ages, we must examine our lives and realize the depths of sin to which we fall. Then we must throw ourselves upon God's mercies. Sing Psalter 102:1.

November 22 Read I Chronicles 21:1-8

Psalm 38:2-3 The Bible reading for the next several days is the familiar account of David numbering the people. While I do not know that this forms the background for Psalm 38, it appears that some like experience of David brought about the penning of this penitential Psalm. David confesses that the hard times he has experienced were brought about by God. He does not blame them on some wicked man though we know that wicked men sought David's destruction often. His sin caused him much grief in life, and he knew it. People of God, do we confess that our sins are the cause of our miseries in this life? Do we see that the hand of God rests upon us because of our sins which testify of our unfaithfulness? This is necessary for the child of God. The first part of our Heidelberg Catechism testifies to this. Let us confess our sins before God and seek to walk in a new and holy life. Sing Psalter 102:2.

November 23 Read I Chronicles 21:9-13

Psalm 38:4-6 David continues with the litany of troubles to which his sin had brought him. He is not doing this out of self pity. He is not doing this to condemn God which might be our reaction at

times. He is doing this because the only way of deliverance for him and us must be the complete knowledge of our misery and the confession of that misery. This is not the works righteousness of the Middle Age monk. This is the way of salvation ordained by God. Notice the words David uses to express the depths of his misery. He sinks under its heavy load. His physical condition is affected by his sin. Nothing he does throughout the day can erase the thoughts of his sin. All appears hopeless, except David knows his God is merciful. Do you? Sing Psalter 102:3.

November 24 Read I Chronicles 21:14-17

Psalm 38:7-9 These three verses are a continuation of the depths of misery into which David has been plunged by God on account of his sin. In verse 8, he speaks that his spiritual condition has caused him to cry out in pain. He cannot see a way of escape in his own life and way. He needs something more. In verse 9, he lays out all of his troubles before God. This is a prayer, young people. Do you pray this way? Do you confess your sins before God in prayer? Are your prayers specific in nature, or are they a few mumbled words of embarrassment that say nothing. This prayer of David was pleasing before God and was answered by God. Let us pray for forgiveness of all our sins. Sing Psalter 102:4.

November 25 Read Matthew 26:27-56

Psalm 38:10-11 Young people, do you feel deserted at times by those whom you account as friends? David had that experience. His son rebelled against him, and in that rebellion one of his best friends, Hushai, deserted him. Our Bible reading for today accounts for us the Jesus's experience during the night in which He was betrayed. As He prays in the garden, his inner circle sleeps. David is a type of Christ. We can see Christ in some of his experiences. Christ became a man like us. Why? So that He could undergo the wrath of God for our sins. Christ was like us in all points except sin. Do we go to Him often in prayer? Do we seek the help of our elder brother? This is the only way out for sinners like us. Pray to God through Christ for forgiveness of sin and experience the mercy afforded us. Sing Psalter 102:5.

November 26 Read Mark 15:53-62

Psalm 38:12-14 In this text we again see David as a type of Christ. As Christ stood before the Sanhedren, He was silent not answering the false charges against Him. David had the same experience. He did not answer because he knew he was being chastised by God for his sin. Christ underwent the false accusations not for His sin, because He had none, but for ours. Because Christ experienced the suffering that Friday evening, we have the assurance of salvation. The wicked will mock us and accuse us falsely now and in the future. We must undergo this chastening because of our sin. By grace let us bow our heads and place our trust in Christ our redeemer. Sing Psalter 102:5.

November 27 Read Psalm 38:15-22

Psalm 38:15-16 This section begins with the word "for". In our English grammar the word "for" is used to give a reason. What was David's reason for his ability to withstand those who would spitefully use him. That reason was because he could hope in the Lord. This was not the wishy-washly hope of the world. This was the hope that maketh not ashamed. This was the hope which came from a faith in the covenant God. David prayed as he was mocked

for he knew that the only way of deliverance for him was if God would sustain him in his trials. Do you have that hope, people of God? Do you have faith to trust in the covenant God? If we do, we will never fall. Today, we readers celebrate Thanksgiving. Let us be truly thankful for the good spiritual gifts God has given us. Sing Psalter 103:1.

November 28 Read Job 31:33-40

Psalm 38:17-18 Christian people, are you truly sorry for your sin? Are you sorry for committing those things which violate the law of our holy God? Or are we only sorry for the consequences of our sin? There is a big difference. If we are only sorry for the consequences, we will sin again but try not to be caught in our sin. Look at those who abuse alcohol or drugs. Their sorrow is only because they may be caught by the law. They will look for ways to avoid the law while indulging in their lusts. We can be no better. True sorrow is first of all that we realize that we have sinned against God and are no longer worthy to be called his sons. Secondly true sorrow means that we resolve to walk a new and holy life. Let us be truly sorrowful for our sins; God will bless us. Sing Psalter 103:2.

November 29 Read I Peter 3:8-18

Psalm 38:19-20 Young people, do you follow that which is good. Could you be convicted in court for doing what is right because of a preponderance of evidence. David was. Daniel was. Christ was. Can we add our name to that list? If we can, we must expect persecution from those who hate the good. We can be afflicted by Satan's children on every side. This should be the experience of every child of God no matter his age. Let us be busy in well doing. Not so that we can obtain our salvation by our works, but because we are thankful for salvation that has been given us by God. Let us be convicted in Satan's court for doing good, and we will be found in God's court singing praise to the Lamb who lives for ever. Sing Psalter 103:3.

November 30 Read Isaiah 12

Psalm 38:21-22 David finishes this Psalm with the plea that God will not forsake him. He prays that God will be with him at all times. He prays that Jehovah will help him quickly. We need to make this plea a part of our daily prayers. We, too, are buffeted on every side by the storms of evil. We, too, have those around us that seek to do us harm. We, too, are tempted by a multitude of evils. Are you praying, people of God, for deliverance? Are these kinds of prayers part of your life, young people? Like David we need God to help us. David knows to whom he prays. It is the Lord of his salvation. It is Christ through whom he can do all things. Let us pray now for such deliverance, and let us pray always for this help. God will hear us because he is the God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 103:4.

The Marks of the True Church (1)

by Aaron Cleveland

The true Church of Christ has three marks which distinguish and separate it from all false churches and religions which claim to be true. We do well to remind ourselves of these three marks as they are found in the Bible and summarized in our creeds. It is even proper that we take care to examine the church we attend and be sure that it possesses these three marks.

The true Church is distinguished by three marks. Article 29 of the Confession of Faith states very clearly what these marks are. 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.

Lord's Days 25 and 31 of The Catechism also speak of these three marks. Answer 66 reads: "The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel." Answer 67 reminds us that "the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments."

In Q&A 83, the preaching and Christian discipline are described as "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." It is evident after reading these two Lord's Days and Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, that the true church is marked by pure doctrinal preaching, proper administration of the sacraments, and Christian discipline.

The first mark, pure doctrinal preaching of the gospel, is the most important mark of the true church. Without pure doctrinal preaching, there can be neither discipline nor the proper administration of the sacraments. Both are dependent upon pure doctrinal preaching of the gospel.

When we look at Article 29 once again, it is striking how specific this article is as to what the first mark is. It does not simply read preaching. Nor does it read only

doctrinal preaching or pure preaching. Rather, it reads "the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein." In I Cor. 1:17, 18 we learn what type of preaching this is. When the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached, "the cross of Christ is preached" and everything that the cross involves. The worthlessness and inability of man, and the power of God through Christ is preached.

The Word of God allows for no substitutes or "wisdom of words" which are frequently preached from many Reformed pulpits today. Ministers speak of some worth that man has apart from God and man's ability to earn some of his salvation. The work of Christ on the cross is put down and man is elevated. The preaching of the cross becomes "foolishness." But God's Word will have none of this, for by this "foolishness," He saves "them that believe" (vs. 21).

I Cor. 2:4 is further explanation that the pure doctrine of the gospel is not composed of the "enticing words of man's wisdom." Rather, the preaching is the "wisdom of God" (vs. 7) which is hidden to the unbeliever.

The second mark of the true Church, and present only if the first is present, is the pure administration of the sacraments. The two sacraments instituted by Christ are holy baptism and the holy supper (LD 25, Q&A 68). There are two and only two sacraments which Christ has instituted and not seven as the Roman Catholic Church administers. These two Christ-instituted sacraments are spoken of in I Cor. 10:2-4 where we read: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

It is important to note that the preaching and the sacraments cannot be separated from each other. For "the sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel" (Q&A 66). It is impossible for the sacraments to seal to us the promise of the gospel, when false doctrine is

preached. Likewise, it is impossible that improperly administered sacraments seal the promise of the gospel. The Christ instituted sacraments seal the promise of the gospel only when the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached.

Proper administration of the sacraments means that unrepentant sinners are kept from the Lord's table and baptism is administered only to adults who have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and to the children of confessing parents in good standing. The sacraments are improperly administered when they are separated from the preaching. They are also improperly administered when they are not closely guarded by the elders of the congregation. Partaking of the holy supper by children is a glaring example of the improper administration of the this sacrament. Churches that baptize the children of any parents outside of the church, improperly administer the sacrament of baptism.

The third mark of the true Church is the exercising of church discipline in the punishing of sin. Once again, church discipline cannot be practiced where there is no pure doctrine of the gospel preached. The proper method of church discipline is found in Matthew 18:15-18. It is our duty to go to the brother first if he has sinned against us. It is our calling to tell him of his fault. If he will not listen, then we are to bring one or two with us, "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Again if the brother refuses to hear, it becomes the duty of the church elders to discipline this brother after we have brought the matter to them.

Discipline is also exercised from the pulpit when the gospel is preached. Q&A 84 of The Catechism explains this with the following words:

Thus: when according to the command of Christ, it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God, and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted: according to which testimony of the gospel, God will judge them, both in this, and in the life to come.

Preaching the cross of Christ means that sin is pointed out in the preaching and God's judgment against the sinner. When sin is glossed over and not pointed out, christian discipline is not carried out. Pure doctrinal preaching

means that sin is pointed out and the sinner is called to repentance and faith in Christ.

In the church world today, there are many false, unbiblical notions as to what ought to characterize the true Church. The Bible and the creeds have been tossed out the window, and many churches, including those who take to themselves the name "reformed," have advertised themselves as churches that are "friendly, seeker-sensitive, and socially and politically active." No longer do sound preaching and discipline fill the pews, but the time has come for friendliness and seeker-sensitivity.

While friendliness ought to characterize the true Church, it is not among the Biblical marks of the true church. Hand shaking as part of the worship service and coffee and refreshments afterwards do not distinguish the true Church from the false. Often these so-called "friendly" churches have ever so friendly pastors who go to great lengths to comfort their congregations and raise the self-esteem of their members. They may preach, but they don't preach Christ and His cross. Rather, they preach man and his goodness.

Neither does "seeker-sensitivity" mark a church as true. These churches seek to build their membership as fast as they can through silly, as well as unbiblical outreach programs. Such programs include Super Bowl parties, where anyone and everyone is invited to the church on Sunday, not to hear the preaching, but to watch the Super Bowl and enjoy some food and drink. Maybe a five minute halftime talk is thrown in for good measure. Other activities include bringing in bands and guest speakers and doing away with the more formal aspects of the worship service. It is figured that the sermon may be intimidating to those who are visiting. Really, attending church becomes no different than going to a concert or a ballgame.

Social and political action also do not mark a church as true. Ministers in these churches, instead of preaching the Kingdom of God, tell their members to do all they can do to make this world a better place to live. The gospel of social change and world-improvement is preached instead of Christ crucified.

Standing in stark contrast to this is the true Church. Instead of the social gospel stands the pure doctrine of the gospel. Instead of the bland messages where the goodness and worth of man is extolled stands the preaching of man's total depravity and his complete dependence upon God for all things. Instead of the tolerance of sin and alternative lifestyles stands sharp preaching against sin and vigilant discipline of the sinner.

Do not be fooled. The true Church of God on this earth possesses these marks. There are no substitutes for these marks. The true Church is easily distinguished

from the false church. Does your church possess these marks? ❖

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Convention Speech

What He has DONE for Me

by Rev. Doug Kuiper

Yesterday Rev. Cammenga explained who God is for us, and what knowing God means. In addition to what he said, you know that God is our Father in Christ, and our Friend. He loves us as His children, and fellowships with us in love as His friends.

The topic today, is "What He has DONE for me." The topic as it is worded makes the assumption that God has done something for us, and asks the question, "What is it that He has done?" But what if the assumption is not true? What if God has not done anything for us? We will begin by questioning the assumption, and asking; "Has God done anything for us?"

To this question some people will give the answer, "No; God has not done anything for us." Atheists will go farther: "There is no God to do anything for us." This answer manifests unbelief; it is a wrong answer. Others might say, "There is a God, and He does many things for many people, but He does nothing for me." This reveals about the speaker at best that he or she is caught up in self pity for his situation in life, or at worst that he or she also does not trust in God.

Scripture shows that the answer "God does nothing for us" is wrong. Matthew 5:45 makes clear that God gives gifts to every person who ever lives: God gives every person sunshine and rain. No, this does not mean that He shows every person His love or favor; but it does mean that He gives every person good gifts. Nobody can say God does nothing for him.

Others answer the question by saying, "God does some things for me, but not everything." A prevalent idea today is that God does only that which is good, and Satan does that which is bad. For example, God does not want a loved one of ours to die, or God does not want us to be sick. Satan does these things. This idea is also unbelief,

and reveals a wrong understanding of God. Job said in Job 1:21 that the Lord both gave and took away, and in Job 2:10 that we should receive both good and evil at the

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not everything, for His children.**

hand of God. These words of Job show that one is wrong who thinks that God does only some things, but not everything, for His children.

Yet how easy it might be for a Christian young person to give this answer! The young person knows that God has saved him or her, and has given spiritual blessings as well as material gifts. But the young person compares himself with other young people who have many things, gifts, talents, abilities, for example—while he thinks he has none of these. Furthermore, the young person has troubles in his or her life—for example he thinks that he has no friends. The young person's attitude is that God has not been fair; God has given some things, but not everything. Job shows that such an attitude is not right.

The only other possible answer is, "God has done everything for me." This means that, in addition to saving us, God in His providence gives us gifts which we enjoy and trials which perhaps we do not enjoy. He gives health and sickness, riches and poverty. The young person might think that God has given others gifts which he wanted, but then he must also confess that God has given him the gifts which he has, whether or not he is happy with them.

We see, then, that the assumption which today's topic makes is true. For the child of God, the only answer to

the question, "Has God done anything for me?" is, "Yes; He has done everything for me!" So the question today is, "What has He done for us?"

The short answer to the question has been given: He has done everything. The longer answer will comprise the rest of the speech. The goal of the speech is not to

"God has done everything for me." This means that, in addition to saving us, God in His providence gives us gifts which we enjoy and trials which perhaps we do not enjoy.

remind us of every individual gift which God has given us, and of every doctrinal truth which is pertinent, but to emphasize again that this God is my God, our God, and that what He has done benefits us, His people.

Let us first understand, then, what God has done for us providentially. In His providence, He has given each of us many material gifts.

It is obvious to me, as I look over the crowd, that He has given to each of us life. Not a person here is dead. He has also given us that which sustains life. Each of us had breakfast this morning—if we did not, it was because we chose not to, not because He did not provide it for us. Each of us is wearing clothing, nice clothing. None have come here wearing rags. Each of us has a place of shelter which we call home. God has given us all these things!

In addition, He has given us parents, family, and friends. Our parents sacrifice to bring us up in Christian manner. They teach and discipline us, so that we understand better how to live a godly life. We have brothers and sisters, and we have friends, to be our companions. The point is, we have fellowship with other human beings. We are not alone. This is a gift of God!

Each of us also has talents and abilities by which we might serve Him. Maybe those talents are musical in nature, or perhaps they are athletic. Maybe we are a compassionate person, who likes to help people in need and give ourselves for others. Perhaps He has given us a good mind with which to learn and study. These are His gifts.

It is true that not all people have the same gifts, and that even those who do have the same gifts do not have

them in equal measure. One has both a father and a mother; another has only a father or a mother. One has much health, while another is often sick. One has more money, and more nice clothes, than another has. One's talents are more prominent than another's. Yet another thinks that he has no gifts at all! It is easy for us to feel that God has overlooked us when He gave gifts.

Let us remember that God has given each of us exactly what we need—not, perhaps, what we think we need, but what He determined we need to serve and glorify Him. That God gives one more than another does not mean God loves one more than another. Therefore, we may not be jealous of what others have. What I have, God gave me!

What has God done for me? He has supplied all my material needs. This means I am significant in His sight! This shows that He is my loving Father, who cares for me, His child. All that He gave me (says the Christian young person), He gave in His love for me. Is this what you say, young people?

God has done even greater things than these. He saved us! When we speak of His great work of saving us, we must always remember our own unworthiness. He saved us although we did not deserve to be saved. In fact, He saved us although we once despised Him. To make more clear the point that He saved us graciously, I will explain four aspects of His saving work.

First, in saving us He made us His children. To magnify His grace, though, remember that we are His children by adoption.

Imagine that a couple who cannot have children goes to an adoption agency, where they are shown many children and told they can have their choice which one to adopt. Most of the babies are beautiful, but one in particular is ugly. Furthermore, the couple knows that the natural parents of this ugly baby are wicked people—liars, thieves, and murderers. One might say that, humanly speaking, these facts make this ugly baby most undesirable. Yet the couple decides to adopt this baby!

This is what God did for us. We were, by nature, the children of the devil, His enemy. Spiritually, we were ugly. Yet He adopted us to be His children! This shows His grace—He did what we did not deserve.

Second, in saving us He made us His wife. Certainly He did not make each of us individually His wife, so that He has many wives. Rather, He made the church His wife. Inasmuch as we are part of the church, we share

in being His wife. The point to be understood, again, is the grace of God in saving us.

Another story will demonstrate this. Imagine that a woman had given birth to a daughter, but did not want the daughter. So, after giving birth, the mother did not wash nor clothe her child; rather, she left the baby alongside the road to die—dirty, cold, and naked. Along came a man who saw the infant girl in her misery, and had pity on her. He took her home, washed her, clothed her, fed her, and loved her in every respect. Over the years she developed into a beautiful young woman. Many men hoped that they could marry her. Rather than allowing any other man to marry her, however, the man married

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experiencing God's intimate
fellowship and unending love.

her himself, to demonstrate the faithfulness of His love for her.

This story is taken from Ezekiel 16. The story continues, taking a sad turn. However, I have recounted the part of the story that is important for us today. Old Testament Israel, and therefore the church of every age, is this infant girl. The world out of which she is called hates her and seeks to kill her. God loves her, cares for her, and causes her to live. And God married her! In so doing He shows us that our salvation consists of experiencing God's intimate fellowship and unending love. We do not deserve this love and fellowship; He gives it graciously.

Third, in saving us God made us His friend. This relates closely to our being His child, but we consider it separately.

That we are made His friend is a matter of grace, because we were by nature His enemy. That we were His enemy means not simply that He hated us, but also that we hated Him, and sought evil to come upon Him. Now which one of you, if you knew of a person who hated you and sought to ruin your reputation or even kill you, would go to that person and make him your friend? You would likely say, "He doesn't deserve that!" And that would be true—such a person would not deserve to be your friend. Neither did we deserve to be God's friend. Yet God made us His friend! He has fellowship with us in Christ. So we must do the same to each other.

Fourth, in saving us God made us His servant and glorious possession. This Paul teaches in Ephesians 2:10

when he says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..." The word "workmanship," refers to a piece of art, or a piece of handiwork. Think of a beautiful piece of art, which brings glory to the artist. When God saved us, He made us His possession, so that He owns us! He makes us a beautiful piece of art which draws attention to Himself! Because we are owned by Him, and were created for the purpose of glorifying Him, we are His servants.

These four aspects of His saving work demonstrate both His grace in saving us, and the blessedness which we experience being saved. The grace is evident from our own unworthiness, and the blessedness consists of knowing Him and having a personal relationship with Him, as a child knows his father, as a wife knows her husband, as a friend knows his friend, and as a servant knows his master.

All this God did for us by sending Christ to die on the cross. We, spiritually unattractive by nature, are spiritually beautiful in God's eyes on the basis of the atoning work of Christ! To know God, and to know what God has done for you, means also that you must know Jesus Christ, whom God sent, and know what Christ did on the cross. There He suffered God's wrath against our sins, so that God could view us as sinless; there He showed Himself to be perfectly obedient, so that God could view us in Christ as righteous; there Christ earned for us the eternal life which we did not serve.

God sees us as sinless, but are we? God sees us as righteous, but are we? By nature, we are not. To illustrate this one last time, imagine a girl who thinks she is very beautiful and attractive. She thinks that she has few, if any flaws. But if, after getting out of bed in the morning, she look immediately into a mirror, she might consider herself to be unattractive after all.

Likewise we can easily be reminded of our spiritual unattractiveness by looking into the mirror of the law. It shows us our misery, as Lord's Day 2 teaches us. By nature, we are sinners.

God sees us differently in Christ. Indeed, we are different in Christ. In Christ we are righteous. Thank God for His grace!

What has God done for us, then? He sent Christ to save us, and His Holy Spirit to work in us, causing us to know God and Christ. Young people, do you believe that?

❖

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

Interview with Rev. C. Hanko

Part 2: The Pastor

Question:

Could you give us a little background of what was going on in the Reformed church world at this time? (1920's)

Answer:

At that time there was a strong antipathy, almost hatred, between the people of the Secession of 1834 and the people of the Doleantie of 1886 led by Kuyper. So much so, that when a man came to a women's home in Hull, Iowa, to collect for Calvin College, and stood by her bookcase and said "I don't see a single book of Dr. Kuyper in your library," she said, "Get out! That name is not mentioned in this house. And I don't give you a penny". That's the way they felt.

In that same congregation I visited a man who said, "I'll talk to you but don't you dare to object to or condemn Kuyper." He had a whole row of Kuyper's books. So I said to him, "I tell you what. We'll leave Kuyper up there on the bookshelf and we're going to talk Bible." He agreed to that, but every once in a while that hand would want to go up there to get Kuyper to support him. Later he joined our church in Hull, and after a couple of years he came to me and he said, "You know, Kuyper was not always right." Which was quite a concession considering how he felt about Kuyper. That tension was very strong.

When I worked in Randolph, before our church there was organized, a man called me up and said he'd like to talk to me. When I got there he said, "I want you to answer one question with a yes or no - nothing else." I said, "That's hardly fair. You should give a man a chance to explain himself." "No," he said, "Yes or no." "Well," I said, "go ahead, ask your question." He said "Did God will sin?" I said, "That takes an explanation." "No," he insisted, "Yes or no." He was not Kuyperian, I could tell that. So I said, "If you want to know, yes, God wills sin." "Get out!" he said, "Get out of here as fast as you can." He had no time for me. That was common sentiment.

They were very much opposed to each other even though two movements had joined in 1892.

Question:

When you graduated from seminary you accepted a call to Hull, Iowa. After having been right in the center of things in the years following 1924 did you find it difficult to head out West?

Answer:

That wasn't too bad because Hull at that time was the doorway to the West. Anyone who went out West stopped in Hull. We always had company. And especially at the time of Classis we had a house full of people. It was sort of an open house. One noon we had 13 men around the dining room table. So we didn't notice so much that we were removed from the center of things.

Question:

You spent the depression years in Hull. Any memories of that period?

Answer:

Yes. I remember one time I had 50 cents in the house. Well, what do you do with 50 cents? You can't get any groceries to speak of. So I had this 50 cents, and collectors came from the school, and the school was hard up too. They asked if I could donate a little bit. I said, "Would you take 50 cents?" They said, "Sure, we'll take anything. We're hard up." So I handed them the 50 cents. We talked a little bit and they got to the door and he said, "Say, was that your last 50 cents?" I said, "What does it matter. You might as well have it. It's not doing me any good." He said, "I'd never take a man's last 50 cents," and he gave it back to me.

Question:

You also served as minister in Oak Lawn, IL and in Manhattan, MT. What is most memorable about those years?



Rev. C. Hanko with Rev. H. De Wolf on the consistory of First PRC in 1950.

Answer:

The most pleasant years of my ministry were spent in Manhattan, MT. We had almost one hundred percent of the men in the men's society. Show me a church anywhere where you have almost one hundred percent attendance at the men's society. We had almost all of the woman in the women's society. We had all of the young people in the young people's society. I really had a wonderful time there.

They didn't have a Christian high school beyond the 10th grade. When Herm got to the point where he was ready for the 11th grade I said to him, "Now if you intend to be a lawyer or a doctor I'll keep you here. But if you intend to go into the ministry or teaching then I'd rather send you to Michigan, to a Christian high school." He said, "Didn't you know I intend to be a minister?" Well, I was surprised because we had really thought that Fred would be the minister, although we had never talked about it. And I said that to Fred too. Fred said, "You thought I was going to be a minister? Not me. It doesn't look good to me!" So we sent Herm to Grand Rapids for two years. By that time Fred was about to go. So I asked him what he had in mind. Well Fred had in mind to be a teacher. So I said he's going to Grand Rapids too.

Then I got the call to First Church. I didn't want to take it. In the back of my mind, of course, I had the problem of my two boys, but I didn't want that to decide. Then I got a letter from Rev. DeWolf: "It's OK if you come, but I hope you don't." Then I got a letter a couple days later from Rev. Hoeksema: "You probably don't know, but we have some serious problems here. I want you to consider this prayerfully. I'm not going to urge you to come, but we need a man badly." Well that decided it. DeWolf doesn't want me. There must be a reason for that. Hoeksema says there is a need. I had the two boys to consider. So I decided to go, much as I hated

to leave. I really did, because that was one of the nicest congregations I ever served.

Question:

Before we get into your years at First Church we want to ask about Prof. Schilder. Did Prof. Schilder visit you when he came to America?

Answer:

That's right. He was in Manhattan for a week. Practically every day we talked. We talked in a nice way. We never got hot under the collar or anything like that. But I had made a chart of the covenant: Bavink's view, Kuyper's view, Prof. Heyns' view, Schilder's view, and Hoeksema's view. I showed him that. He didn't like it very well, that I was making those sharp distinctions. But finally he exploded. "To tell you the truth," he said, "I despise your covenant view." Well, that's the only hard time we had.

Question:

Did our churches have contact with the Liberated churches in The Netherland?

Answer:

Two of our ministers went to The Netherlands. By that time immigrants were coming from the Liberated churches to America. Many here and in The Netherlands were anticipating that there would be thousands, and they asked our men if there would be room in the Protestant Reformed churches. Well, that looked good to them, of course, to have all these immigrants coming to our churches. So they said there surely would be room.

The Liberated asked about our covenant view. Those two men said that we didn't have an official covenant view. That was true in a sense. It was true that we had never officially adopted Rev. Hoeksema's view of the covenant, but it was really the very heart of our churches. If you would ask what is distinctive to the Protestant Reformed Churches, then it is not the denial of common grace, and it is not the denial of the offer of salvation, although that is involved, but it is our covenant view. We are not a negative church. We do not merely take the position that we're opposed to this and were opposed to that.

We're a very positive church, and our positive stand is that we have a covenant view that we treasure. I would say that's the very heart of the Protestant Reformed Churches. To me it's the most wonderful view. You can't compare it to any other.

Question:

What effects did this immigration of the Liberated have on our churches?

Answer:

In Canada there was a man who had come from The Netherlands, but he said, "We're not Liberated any more. We're Protestant Reformed." He said that in The Netherlands they had lost sight of predestination and that their covenant view did not allow for predestination. "The Protestant Reformed have opened our eyes," he said, "and now we maintain that we are Protestant Reformed."

There was another man in Canada who told me how happy he was that he was Protestant Reformed. So I said to him, "If you went back to The Netherlands what would you do?" "Ya", he said, "I'd have to be Protestant Reformed. We'd have to start a Protestant Reformed Church there." Well, it was more or less on those remarks that we organized a church.

Rev. Veldman was there for a year and then the whole thing blew up. We went up there as church visi-

tors, Rev. Blankenspoor and I. Rev. Veldman took a back seat and let me lead the meeting.

This first man took out a document and started reading it. He was thoroughly Liberated. When he got finished I said to him, "Didn't you say to me 'We aren't Liberated anymore? We're Protestant Reformed. We lost sight of predestination and now we've found it again?'" "Ya", he said. So I said, "Well, when were you lying, then or now?" "Then, of course", he said.

So then the second man pulled out a document, and when he was finished I said, "You told me that if you went back to the Netherlands you would have to start a Protestant Reformed Church. Was that a lie?" "Ya," he said, "it was." "Why did you lie to us?" "Well, we needed a church roof, but now we don't need it anymore. We can be our own now." So they were all done with us.

Plenty of deception. But, you know, they had learned deception during the war. Lying and deception were common in The Netherlands and they thought nothing of it. It was perfectly all right. If your cause was just, it was perfectly all right to lie. ❖

Liberated Reformed Church In Katwijk



Katwijk is one of the oldest fisher towns at the North Sea, in the western part of The Netherlands. It does not have a harbor of its own; the ships operate from Ijmniden, but before the winter most of them are brought back to Katwijk for maintenance (they travel via canals). About ninety percent of the population is reformed; the majority goes to the old State-Reformed Church. But since 1945 there is this small Church of the Liberated Reformed Churches, which flourishes. The first minister there was a friend of mine, Rev. Theun Hoff, who is now retired and celebrated this year his 50th Anniversary as a minister. Katwijk has still a lighthouse, built in 1605. The beach is well known and visited by many tourists during the summer months, even coming all the way from Germany. ❖

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

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The Picture of Love (4)

"...Go, and do thou likewise," and with those words Father concluded reading the parable of the good Samaritan. Lydia and Nathan had listened closely. It was one of their favorite stories.

"Hm...that parable is quite a picture of love," said Mother.

"Yes," added Grandmother, who had come for a visit. "We always need to be asking ourselves, 'To whom am I a neighbor?'"

After devotions Grandmother went to her suitcase and brought out two packages. "I brought something along for you," she said to Nathan and Lydia, "but I want something in return. These are colored pencils and I would like each of you to make a picture for me to take back home."

"Sure!" they agreed and quickly became absorbed in their task.

Steadily their drawings began to take shape. Steadily, that is, until their little sister Anna came to help. She plopped herself down in front of Lydia and asked, "Lydia, draw a picture for me?"

Without looking up Lydia replied, "Not now, Anna. Go away."

"Nadan, draw a picture for me?" she persisted.

Nathan glanced sideways at his little sister and sighed, "Okay Anna, come here. What would you like me to draw?"

Anna rewarded her brother with a bright smile and snuggled next to him. "I want a picture of wuv."

Nathan raised his eyebrows and said, "What?"

Anna repeated her request several times. "Wuv! I want a picture of wuv!"

Grandma walked into the room and chuckled as she heard Anna trying to explain. "I think she means *love*. Is that what you mean, Anna? Do you want a picture of love?"

She nodded.

"Well," said Grandma, "that will be a beautiful picture!" and she winked at Nathan.

Nathan rested his head on his hands and sighed again. "Anna, how about a picture of a soft, furry kitten. Wouldn't you like a picture of that?"

Anna considered the offer for a moment and then nodded. Quickly Nathan sketched the kitten on his paper and handed it to Anna.

Grandma leaned over and inspected the drawing. She shook her head. "I don't see a picture of a kitten," she said. Then she looked directly at Nathan and smiled, "I see a picture of love!"

Read the parable in Luke 10:30-37.

In the story, Nathan was neighbor to whom?

To whom are you neighbor? ❖

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



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Church News

BAPTISMS *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”*

Mark 16:16

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM WAS ADMINISTERED TO:

Lynnae Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sid Miedema—Byron Center, MI
Devin Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Hiemstra—Byron Center, MI
Amber Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Scholten—Faith, MI
Kelsey Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Kuiper—Faith, MI
Lydia Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Monsma—First, MI
Anna Eileen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil VanderWall—Georgetown, MI
Austin Delaine, son of Mr. & Mrs. Duane Veele—Georgetown, MI
Jocelyn Lisa, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ed deBoer—Lynden, WA
Aaron Lee and Larissa Anne, children of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Langerak—Hope, MI

Jacob Eugene, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak—Hope, MI
Dustin Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gary Nienhuis—Hope, MI
Tunis James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe VanBaren—Randolph, WI
Abigail Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Don Kuiper—Southeast, MI
Cody James, son for Mr & Mrs. Jim Slendebroek—Southeast, MI
Colin Eric, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lautenbach—South Holland, IL
Marilyn Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Mancusi—South Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10:10

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS MADE BY:

Dawn Fisher—Georgetown, MI
Nikki Haveman—Georgetown, MI
Marc Hop—Hope, MI
James Langerak—Hope, MI

Travis Beute—Hudsonville, MI
Christy Hoekstra—Hudsonville, MI
Timothy Kamps—Hudsonville, MI
Lora Campbell—Loveland, CO
Lorinda Heys—Loveland, CO
Eric VanBaren—South Holland, IL

MARRIAGES *“...and they twain shall be one flesh.”*

Matthew 19:5

UNITED IN THE BONDS OF HOLY MATRIMONY WERE:

Mr. Carl Kalsbeek and Miss Christy Kaptein—Faith, MI
Mr. Andy Dykstra and Miss Sandra Zandstra—South Holland, IL