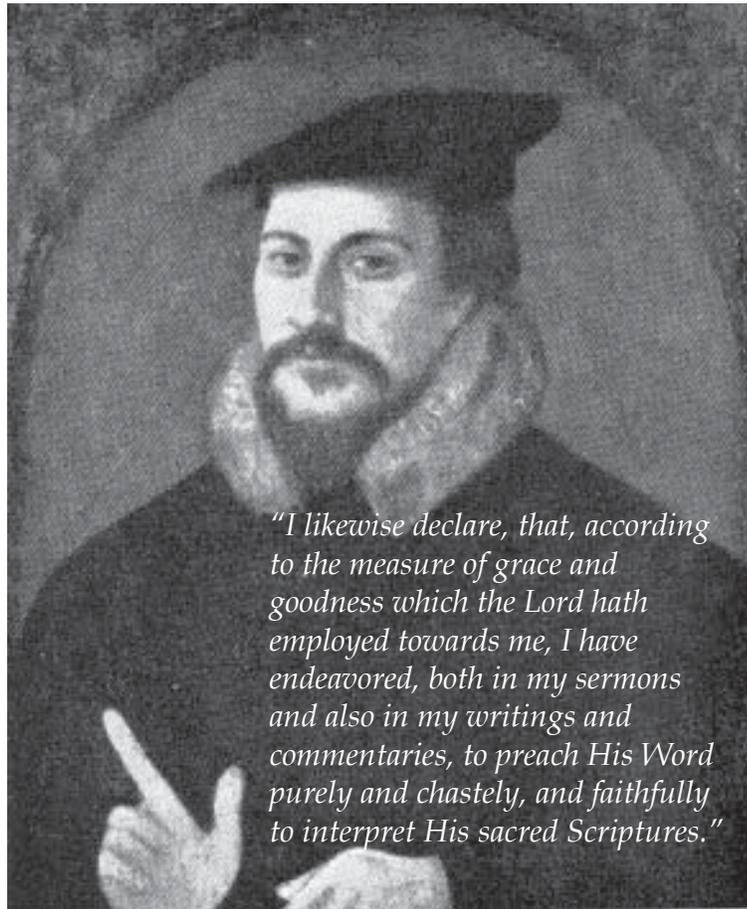

Beacon Lights

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"I likewise declare, that, according to the measure of grace and goodness which the Lord hath employed towards me, I have endeavored, both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries, to preach His Word purely and chastely, and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scriptures."



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Lovest Thou Me? ... Then Go To Society

by John Huizenga



Our God is a covenant God, dwelling in eternal fellowship within Himself and with His people in Christ. There is never a “quiet” moment within God. The Holy Spirit tirelessly searches the deep things of God. The Father and Son never stop speaking one to the other. The result is blessed fellowship and eternal joy within God. This is the love within God.

What are contained within the deep things of God? What is that which brings delight to God and great wonder among all the angels? It is the eternal counsel of God to bring you and I into that very covenant fellowship! At this very moment God is continually unfolding the wonders of His counsel to His people as He upholds every atom of His creation. Every moment in time is filled with gathering men, women, and children into covenant friendship with Himself. In sovereign power and irresistible grace, God draws sinners out of the power of darkness and into His marvelous light. He ever says to them in the way of Christ who shed His blood for us, “I love you.”

In Christ also He ever demands of us that we respond in faith “and I love Thee, Lord.” Does God hear this from you? Does God know your love for Him, or do you listen half heartedly to God while you sit grudgingly in the young peoples society meeting? Do you respond with joy to God, or does God through your parents have to nag and drag you from the telephone, television, games, or work, and force you to spend some time preparing? God has shown His love to us in concrete, undeniable action. Is it clear that we love God? Does God need to ask of you “Lovest thou me?”

The question “do you love me?” is not heard in a good covenant relationship of love and friendship. The love is obvious in words and actions and need not be questioned. Peter’s denial of Jesus was an action that seriously called into question his love for Jesus. It was not that Jesus was unsure, for He being God knows His sheep, but a rekindling of active love was necessary for Peter and for the sake of his covenant relationship with God. He needed to confess his love three times and also obey the command of God to feed His lambs. Does God have reason to ask of you “lovest thou me?” If so, some serious spiritual problems need to be addressed. Your love for God must be made manifest.

When we live in covenant friendship with God we want to know what pleases Him and we want to do those things. We also trust that He who made us and loves us will teach us what is the way of perfect joy and peace with God. We show our love for God therefore, by keeping his commandments. In Exodus 20:6 God says that He shows mercy unto them that love Him and keep His commandments. Love and keeping commandments are not two different things, but are closely related as we see in John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Obedience to God often requires that we do not do what “every one else” does. We have to be different from those who do not love God, and not just a little different, we must do the opposite; that is, we must live the antitheses. God says in Psalm 97:10 “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.” There is no love for God

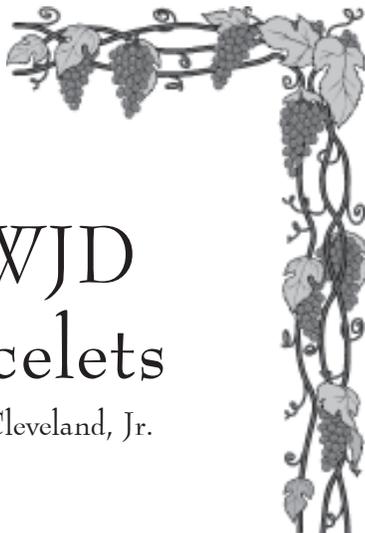
when we flirt with evil, when we see how close we can get without getting burned. When we obey the Word of God we say to Him “I love Thee Lord.”

Obedience to God’s Word implies that we know God’s Word and desire to know it as best we can so that we do not live ignorantly in disobedience. If we do not know what God commands, then we being sinners will not naturally do what God commands, and we will sin. If we do not care to know God, neither do we care to obey Him. A careless attitude is evidence of hatred toward God. The Psalmist writes “. . . I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches” (Psalm 63:6), and again “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.” (Psalm 91:14) We seek to know and obey God because He has drawn us into His covenant love and being made His children, we love Him. The greatest fear of one who is drawn into the covenant fellowship of God is that he will offend God and do things that He abhors. When we seek to know God we are saying to Him “I love Thee, Lord.”

Knowledge is essential for obedience, and to that end God gives to us sound minds to apprehend the knowledge we need. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” II Tim. 1:7. Soundness of mind is a mind that does not shiver and quake with every turn of events. It is a spiritual gift given with regeneration, and therefore not dependent upon age, education, or intellectual ability. It is the child-like faith we desire. In the matter of the soundness of our minds also, we can demonstrate our love for God. We read in Deut. 13:3 “Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” And again in the New Testament we read “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matthew 22:37) This spiritual mind desires to be and must be fed continuously with the knowledge of God’s Word, and therefore we must study God’s Word. When we search the Scriptures and seek to know God’s Word, we are saying “I Love Thee, Lord God.

It is not enough, however, just to study the Bible by ourselves, flee from evil, and live in isolation from the church. It is not enough to meditate upon God’s Word alone in our bedroom. Love for God is not an individualistic activity. If we study God’s Word and grow in our knowledge of Him with delight while looking down our noses at the brother or sister who flounders in sin and miserable ignorance, then all the knowledge is vain, and there is no love for God in us. “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17) How can we best show our love for the brother? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13. Give of yourself to the brother in the Lord. Give of the spiritual life within you. There is no more practical and concrete way to show love for one another than to fellowship together around God’s Word to employ the combined efforts of our minds as the children of God for the building up of one another in the knowledge of God’s Word. For in the knowledge of God’s Word is peace and soundness of mind. In the knowledge of God is eternal life. Hence, there is no more practical and concrete way to demonstrate actively our love for God than attendance and participation in society.

Go to society! If you think you know it all and don’t need to go, you sin by hating the brother. If you don’t go because you are ashamed of your ignorance, you sin in pride for your self image. Go to society; prepare; and be diligent to participate; seek fellowship around the Word for the glory of God; then there will be no need for God to ask of you, “Lovest thou Me?” ❖



WWJD Bracelets

by John Cleveland, Jr.

The following text was inadvertently omitted from the end of the September article "WWJD Bracelets" by John Cleveland Jr.

These verses must be taken in the spiritual sense and not the physical sense. The Old Testament saints were to do this spiritually in their hearts. We never read of the saints doing this physically and we never read of God rebuking them for not doing this physically either. It would also be impossible for us to do this physically because it would mean that we would have to put the entire law of God on our hands and foreheads.

Another argument that is used is that these bracelets are a good way to witness and that they are a mark that distinguishes us from others. But how can these bracelets distinguish us from the rest of the world when, as we have seen already, many people wear the bracelets as a fashion statement and don't even realize what WWJD stands for? We already have a sign that distinguishes us. This mark is Baptism. Also, this is not the way we witness to other people. We witness by confessing and living out the knowledge of God that He has sovereignly worked in our hearts. The good witness is one that glorifies God. When we live out that truth others will see this, and ask us what it is that makes us live the way we do, and what the reason is for the hope that is in us.

In conclusion, we see many things that are wrong with these bracelets. Just to review, here are the three main things that are wrong with the bracelets. First, they are a temptation to idolatry. Secondly, there is a problem with the question. And thirdly, by wearing these bracelets one associates himself with people who promote false doctrines and evil practices.

The Reformation

By Allen Baird

*After darkness, light
The fearful hold of priest-craft gone
As the gospel shines among us throng.
After blindness, sight.*

*After chains, release.
The church's war with God is o'er
And Satan masters us no more.
After conflict, peace.*

*After merit, grace.
No longer to the Pope we bow
For Christ the King is center now.
After man, Thy face.*

Allen is a member of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.

Meeting in the Supermarket

by J.P. de Klerk

Rosemary Roberts always went shopping in town on Saturday mornings, when her husband could look after the four children.

It was for her like an outing. She enjoyed picking what she needed in a supermarket, working through the list she had with her, comparing the prices and differences in quality, pushing the trolley in front of her. She had become so used to the geography of the building with various lanes that she never had to ask where she could find a particular item. She had also noticed that there were obviously more women who planned to do their shopping on Saturday mornings. She recognized the faces and started to greet some women. This time there was a surprise. A voice said, "Hey, Rosemary, I've not seen *you* for years!"

"Well, no, Olga, how are you?" Rosemary had always admired her, because Olga never had so much as a hair out of place and seldom put a foot wrong. In the years since school she was also married and she had two children, but she lived in another city and was only in town because of a visit to an old aunt and her husband, who were married fifty years.

"Let us have a cup of coffee here in the little restaurant of the shop. Look, the stairs are over there," said Rosemary. They did, and had cake too.

"Now, tell me, how is your family?"

"And how is yours?"

Soon they were talking about the education of the children.



"It is not always easy," said Olga, "but my husband is a farmer and he often compares them with his riding horses. He says that they all want to know for sure, that we are serious with our discipline. His sister has twins and they go sometimes straight against the rules of their parents. He tells her too what he does with his horses. And I know he is right. He says, "Maintain an *even* pressure to bear upon the bit, through the medium of the reins. Solidly seated, mindful of everything. *Guide* the horse being the master, quietly but *firm, clearly* showing the way to go. Correct *immediately*, whenever that is necessary, and dare to punish wrong behavior." Now, he has the best riding horses in our district and has won several prizes with them.... We don't need any prizes, but up till now the Lord gave us wonderful children, obedient, helpful, active members of a society of the church."

"O, I see, I can still learn something from you. We should meet more often. Could we chat now and

then by telephone with each other, if you don't mind?" asked Rosemary.

"But of course," said Olga. "That is what friends are for." They exchanged their telephone numbers, jotted down recipes, and finally had to hurry to finish their shopping. But they agreed it was worthwhile to meet again.



J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Joy in Bible Study

by Rev. Richard J. Smit

Bible study is work. It is not “fun,” but difficult and strenuous work. It is that for many reasons, but especially because of the weakness of our flesh. To the flesh, searching the Scriptures is boring, unnecessary, too difficult, and is repulsive. Over against our rebellious flesh, Scripture declares that the study of Scripture in connection with the preaching of the Word is vital to the believer's growth in the grace and knowledge of his Lord Jesus Christ.

Hence, the wise in heart know that although Bible study is work, yet the rewards are blessed. They know that from experience. They know that from many examples in Scripture and Church history. Above all, they know that because Scripture says so. In Psalm 119:162, we read the inspired Psalmist confess: *I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

According to this text, the gracious reward upon faithful and diligent Bible study is great joy for the believer. Do you desire to have that spiritual, lasting joy?

The Occasion for Joy

The Psalmist says that the occasion for his rejoicing was the Word of God. In the context of Psalm 119, the Word means the sacred writings that contained all the laws. It included the ten commandments, the ceremonial laws, and the civil laws which governed Israel's life. It also included the history of creation, the Flood, Abraham, Israel's bondage and deliverance from Egypt, their wanderings in the wilderness, and the history of Joshua and the Judges. Exactly how much of the Old Testament books of the Bible that the Psalmist had is not known.

What is certain is that the Psalmist had the inspired, infallible Word of Jehovah. On the basis of what he had, the Psalmist did know that Jehovah is the Covenant God of His people. He knew that Jehovah was the Redeemer of His people. Psalm 119 itself even reflects the

Psalmist's sure knowledge that only Jehovah could quicken him to see and know the living truths of His Word. He had that knowledge of Jehovah from the Scriptures graciously given him in that age.

Today, you and I have the complete canon of Scripture. We have the full revelation of our God in the infallibly inspired Scriptures from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. In our Bibles, we have been given all that is sufficient to know our God and to rejoice in the knowledge of Him.

How could the Psalmist rejoice when he had only part of the Scriptures? The answer is that whether in Genesis or in Revelation, there God reveals Himself to us in Christ. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is found on all the pages of Scripture. Though the Psalmist lived in the age of types and shadows, and although he did not have all the books of the Bible, yet he had the Truth of the Gospel in the Scriptures infallibly inspired unto his time.

Because he had the Word of Jehovah, he could rejoice. He rejoiced in that Word of Jehovah because that Word was the Good News to him. It was priceless wealth and riches concerning his salvation in the Messiah.

For the very same reason, we rejoice at Jehovah's Word. Our joy is much fuller because we also have the New Testament Scriptures. We have the revelation of the fulfillment of all the types and shadows of the Old Testament. We see the truth in the full revelation which centers in our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we see the full accomplishment of the foundation and basis of all our salvation. Jehovah's Word speaks to His chosen concerning the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah reveals to us in the Scriptures our blessed destination on the basis of Christ's work. Jehovah tell us that this goal is sure because He sovereignly accomplishes

our salvation by His sovereign Spirit and grace. In that Gospel, we rejoice.

Above all, the believer rejoices in God's Word because there the believer stands face to face with the glory of his God. Principally, his joy is always that God is God, and that God, Who is God, is *his* God for Jesus' sake. He rejoices in the truth that God makes known the glory of His Name according to His sovereign and eternal good pleasure. The child of God, who loves God, rejoices that God is glorified in all the works of His hands. Therefore, the child of God rejoices in God's glory even in the forgiveness of his sins because there God's mercy and righteousness are gloriously made known in Christ to His honor and praise.

As the believer searches the Scriptures, this is the wealth, the beauty, and the glory of the Word over which he rejoices. For him to daily search the Scriptures and to behold in saving faith the riches of salvation and the glory of his God in Christ is most delightful.

The text goes on to describe that manner in which we receive that great joy in Bible study personally or among those of like-precious faith in a Bible study society.

The Manner of Our Joy

The text implies that there are three ways in which we ought never approach and search the Scriptures. Those who sinfully do such things will experience no joy in Bible study.

First, we must never approach the Bible as if we know it all already

First, we must never approach the Bible as if we know it all already. Such pride in thinking that we know all the essentials of the Reformed Faith destroys Bible study. The end result is that we think that there is no more value in Bible study and no more treasure of the Scriptures to be had. Such a proud attitude denies the inhaustibility of the Scriptures, and the smallness of our knowledge of the Scriptures. However, we must penitently realize that we can never "arrive" at an exhaustive knowledge of the inexhaustible riches of the Word.

Secondly, indifference toward the Holy Word is another sin which quenches the fire of joy in Bible study. Spiritual indifference is an evil plague in which one re-

gards the Scriptures in irreverence as unnecessary, worthless, and irrelevant. To be indifferent to the Word is to snub the glory of God revealed in His Word. As His Covenant children, we may never snub Him, but only fear Him in reverence and zeal.

Thirdly, we must avoid approaching Scripture intellectually. We may not treat Bible study merely as a time to stimulate our mental processes or to test our skills at debate. To do so is willfully to overlook the fact that Bible study is always a spiritual activity. It involves not only the mind, but the heart and soul, too. When we gather around the Word, we are gathering in fellowship around the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before that Word, the believer must not stand above Scripture intellectually, but humble himself before the Word as it speaks to his heart and unfolds before him the mysteries of the Truth.

Positively, the text tells us the proper, spiritual approach in Bible study and what will be the inevitable result. The text illustrates this for us in the figure of a man who finds great spoil. This illustration may be applied to Bible study in two ways.

First, the text can be illustrated by this man as a warrior. He fights a long and difficult battle. He overcomes the foe. After the battle, he collects the spoil of victory. He rejoices with great gladness that his foe has been defeated as he counts up the sum total of all his booty.

Similarly, the believer in Bible Study is engaged in a battle. This is part of his work to contend for the faith. His battle is against his own flesh which hinders him from diligent study. His battle is also against false doctrine and heresy. In the way of expending much energy, blood, sweat, and tears, the believer arrives at a greater knowledge of the Word of God.

At the point in which the foe is defeated, great joy resounds in the heart of the believer. He rejoices to know by experience the goodness of Jehovah in delivering him from sin and freely putting in his heart the riches of salvation in Jesus Christ. Peace and joy reign in his heart as the foe is vanquished by the very Word the believer studies.

Secondly, the Psalmist's discovery of spoil may be illustrated by a farmer. The farmer has plowed the same field for many years. Then one year unexpectedly his plow bumps into a large, hard object in the ground. The farmer stops, hastens to his plow, and quickly grabs and pushes away the dirt from his shiny plow. Suddenly to his delight he discovers a wooden treasure chest con-

taining thousands of gold coins. He had passed over that field for years and years, but this time he has found great treasure.

Similarly, the believer may work with Scripture year after year. Perhaps he has read a passage a hundred times, like Psalm 53. He plows through the meaning of Psalm 53 never aware of the wonderful riches yet buried further below. Then suddenly before his eye of faith God places before him riches and treasures of Jehovah's tender care as our Shepherd which before he had never seen or known. Joy floods his heart as he grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is that the manner of your rejoicing over Scripture in Bible study? The Lord rewards the faithful and diligent believer with spiritual joy in Bible study. Yes, it will require much warfare against the foe and much plowing through Scripture, commentaries, and concordances, but the wealth of the Scripture reaped requires such effort and affords unspeakable joy.

Understand clearly that the true joy of the believer is only God-ward. For having received the undeserved treasure by God's grace alone, the believer is joyful in the Lord Who is faithful to lead us by His Spirit into the Truth. We rejoice that God imparts to us who are undeserving those treasures of salvation wrought for us in Christ. He is the substance of our joy and our strength to persevere in diligent Bible study.

Examples of the Text

That is not always the attitude toward Scripture, however. Hostility and rage have often characterized wicked men's approach and reaction to the Scriptures. An example of that is found in Judah's wicked king Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36). Jeremiah brought the Word of the LORD to Jehoiakim. After reading three or four leaves of the scroll, Jehoiakim cut them off with his pen knife and tossed them into the fire. Jehoiakim had utter contempt, rebellion, and hostility for Jehovah and His Word.

Such a way of handling Scripture occurred in the time of the early church. False teachers and heretics would literally cut out passages of Scripture that did not suit their own ideas. They wanted a Bible that supported their false doctrines. In pride, they snubbed the glory of God. For such like them there is no joy, nor peace.

As we study the Scriptures, we may not cover the Word of God and cover up His glory. The fact that we must not even change the Scriptures, lest we snub the glory of God in the Truth, implies what version of the Bible we must use in our Bible study as young people. Our delight in the Word of God demands that we

use that version of the Bible which is the most faithful to the original languages.

To this day in the English, the Authorized Version (1611) is still the most faithful version of the infallibly inspired Scriptures in the original languages. For the English-speaking believer who desires the most faithful translation and who desires to delight in the infallibly inspired Word of Jehovah, God has given him in His providence the Authorized Version of 1611. That behooves Protestant Reformed young people to use it alone in society.

The history of the Church also sets forth positive examples of those who rejoiced at the Word of God when they were graciously given a greater understanding of it. There was the publican who came to the temple, and would not even dare lift up his eyes unto heaven. He was burdened with the weight of his guilt. He only prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" That man went home rejoicing because he had found by faith great riches in the Gospel at the house of God.

In addition to the publican, there is also the example of *Martin Luther*. He struggled with the Word. He fought a warfare against the heresy of Rome's free-will, works-righteousness, and common grace. He was at a particular point in his life, a lone warrior on the battle field for the Faith as he stood before the Diet of Worms. There in

the believer may work with Scripture year after year. Perhaps he has read a passage a hundred times, like Psalm 53. He plows through the meaning of the Psalm 53 never aware of the wonderful riches yet buried further below. Then suddenly before his eye of faith God places before him riches and treasures of Jehovah's tender care as our Shepherd.

his stand upon the Word of God, he then and throughout his preaching and teaching rejoiced at the riches of the Word graciously given him through his contention for the faith.

Luther had in his own life passed over the passages in Romans many, many times. He had struggled with the question, "How can a man be right with God?" He plowed over the same texts in Romans many times, but found no answers to the struggles of his heart. Then, unexpectedly the Lord revealed to him the treasure of justification by faith alone. He rejoiced at the truth of justification: not by works, not by merit, but by the God-given, God-worked faith *alone*.

Martin Luther rejoiced at Jehovah's Word as one who found great spoil! The spoil of victory over the enemy of Rome! The spoil of a treasure unexpectedly and wonderfully revealed to him by God. With that treasure, he enjoyed great comfort, joy, and peace in his soul.

After his godly example, the young Reformed believer walks. He studies in the confidence of the promise of Christ that He will lead us into the truth. He stud-

ies by faith in the hope that God will grant him joy in the study of His Word.

In conclusion, that means that he studies after the example of Christ Himself Who rejoiced at the Word of Jehovah. He studies in the power and strength of Christ Who delighted in the Word of Jehovah even in the deepest, hellish agonies on the cross. On the basis of that redeeming delight of Christ, we have in principle the life and strength of delighting in Jehovah's Word.

In that hope and confidence, the believer must study the Word of God, and may rejoice, for example, with a versification of Psalm 119.

"How I love Thy law, O LORD!

Daily joy its truths afford;

In its constant light I go,

Wise to conquer ev'ry foe."

(Psalter 333, verse 1) ❖

Rev. Smit is pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Dating and Marriage

The Calling of a Young Wife (2)

by Rev. Steven Key

In our last article in which we began our study of Titus 2:4,5, we called attention to the love which a young wife is called to give her husband and children.

According to this inspired Word of God, that calling to love comes to virtuous manifestation, as we see in verse 5.

Discretion

In the first place, we note that the young wife is to be marked by discretion.

To be discreet is to be of sound judgment, wise in conduct and management. To be characterized by discretion is to have a spiritual-minded perspective and approach to all decisions necessary in the home.

The discreet woman avoids that which would injure her own soul and influence, or that would injure her husband and children. She realizes that what she takes into her life and what she does will have its effect through the years. She realizes that what is in harmony with God's will shall certainly have a good end, but the bad is a means to a grievous outcome. Therefore she seeks to do what is right in God's sight, and rejects the bad. A n d

she knows, because the heart is deceitful above all things, that she may not rely upon her own feelings or opinions as to what is right in a given situation; but she must seek God's will in all things.

The young woman who is discreet is a young woman who prays. She prays for wisdom, for sound judgment, for the fervent desire to walk according to all God's precepts. And God grants her request. The enemy is not able to "pull the wool over her eyes." She seeks the glory of God and His praise.

And when she errs, for she still struggles with her sinful nature, that error is the exception, and her husband and children will recognize it as such.

Chaste

The young wife must also be chaste.

That is a reflection of the love she has for her husband, love flowing forth from the love of God in her heart.

She is chaste, pure, expressing a life of holiness. She is careful about her conduct, her influence, her plans and purposes. She guards her tongue, that source of much impurity and evil. She is careful concerning her dress. She does not live for extravagance, is not wasteful. She is cautious about where she goes and doesn't keep company with those who are unholy and impure.

To this godly young woman, pure and upright womanhood is a pearl of great price. She possesses self-control, not to be led astray like the silly women who are worldly and ungodly.

This holiness characterizes her life because she anchors her life to Christ, the Rock.

These are among the attributes that you women who are older are to set before the young women.

Keeper at Home

In addition, a God-fearing young wife is to be a home-worker and good.

In our society and in the day and age in which we live, this text has become one that most preachers would like to avoid. The expression "keepers at home" is so unmistakably clear, that in churches where young mothers working outside the home has become the norm, rather than the exception, the teaching of this Word of God presses upon the waywardness of many. That makes it uncomfortable, not only for those who have disobeyed this Word, but also for the preacher who must preach it without regard to the faces of men and women.

The consequences of disobedience to this commanded place of the mother are seen even by society.

Many want to deny those consequences, but they are evident in undisciplined children, broken marriages, two-income families filled with financial strife over where money shall be spent, and many other societal evils. But we do not make judgments in the matter on the basis of bad results in society when mothers leave their God-given calling in the home.

We stand before the Word of God Himself. As Christians the Word of God is the standard for us, both concerning what we believe, but also how we live.

Remember, the Apostle gives instruction here concerning that lifestyle which is *becoming*, i.e., which is consistent with sound doctrine. This is the kind of lifestyle that is in harmony with God's truth.

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It is God's will that young mothers are to be "keepers at home," home-workers. For there is a steep price to be paid in the violation of this Word of God.

Again, you will notice that the text speaks specifically of those young women who have children in the home. And the text speaks not only of toddlers, but children from infancy through the age of adolescence. When you have children who come home to an empty house after school, or who are regularly left during the summer months without mother's direct supervision and guidance; when you have children that are turned over to someone else's care during the day, there is a forsaking of the God-ordained bond between mother and children, and the responsibility that God has given father and mother with respect to their children.

The inspired Apostle puts it this way in I Timothy 5:14: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Mothers with children at home are not to be off working outside of the home, but in their house, serving

God, literally, as the “despot of the house.” Now, in the usage of our language that term *despot* often carries the connotation of a tyrant. But the meaning is simply that in the home during the day there must be one with authority, one who is governing. The husband is out of the home, laboring in obedience to God’s will for him. The wife and mother must be in the home, governing and giving constant guidance, also spiritually, for the welfare of that home.

No exceptions are mentioned. Sometimes there is argument made that there must be exceptions to this, if financial necessity requires a second income. But where do you find such an exception in the Bible? Where do you find it? I don’t find it anywhere.

I find much instruction in Scripture concerning what we must do in times of financial distress.

I learn from Scripture that when I consider myself lacking, I must first examine my own lifestyle and expenditures. Do I have a mistaken notions about what are necessities and what are luxuries? Are there things that we can do without, or lesser things that will suffice our needs?

I learn from Scripture as well, that when I look at my budget and my expenditures and find that I am not mismanaging as a poor steward those gifts which God has provided, nor neglecting my calling to labor for the provision of my family, then I must seek help from others. I Timothy 5 is clear on that, to mention one passage.

The others from whom I must first seek help are my relatives. That is nothing shameful. That is the way God would have us go. And Christian relatives, parents, brothers and sisters, even aunts and uncles, should be sensitive to the needs of such families and stand willing to help them. I Timothy 5:8 is clear: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

And then, the Bible tells us, if our needs are such that our extended family cannot help us, we are to seek the mercies of Christ from His appointed deacons. Again, that is not a shameful thing, when God has providentially placed you in that position. That is a tremendous blessing, to know that God has appointed a means to care for you in time of need. And let me just mention, that includes provision for the Godly instruction of our children in our Christian schools. When we are needful for financial assistance, that help must be there, also in order that we may fulfill our covenant obligations in the Godly instruction of our children. God’s mercies provide for us through the office of deacon. We must not

seek another way than the ways which God points us toward.

The Bible tells us how to deal with financial distress. Let us heed God’s wise instruction.

But never does the Bible give as an option, the mother’s forsaking of her calling to be a “keeper at home.” That is a necessary and tremendously important aspect of her calling, a manifestation of Godly virtue on the part of a young wife and mother in the church.

As to those who object that the church would make the house a prison for mothers, we will not be led astray by such argumentation, shall we.

You understand that it is not at all the point of this text to confine young women exclusively to the house. She has other callings within the body of believers that will take her out of the house from time to time, often with her children.

Besides being an integral part of her husband’s household, she is an integral part of the church, and lives in the fellowship of the saints.

Good

The God-fearing young wife also shows love for her husband by showing herself “good.” She is to be taught to be “good.”

The reference to being “good” is a reference to the fact that she is not only the home-maker, but a helper in the body of Christ. She is ready to come to the assistance of other members of the congregation. She visits others in the church, particular to speak encouraging words. She takes her time by showing pure religion and undefiled, visiting the widows and orphans.

Unlike one who fills her day with work outside the home, this virtuous woman has time for others.

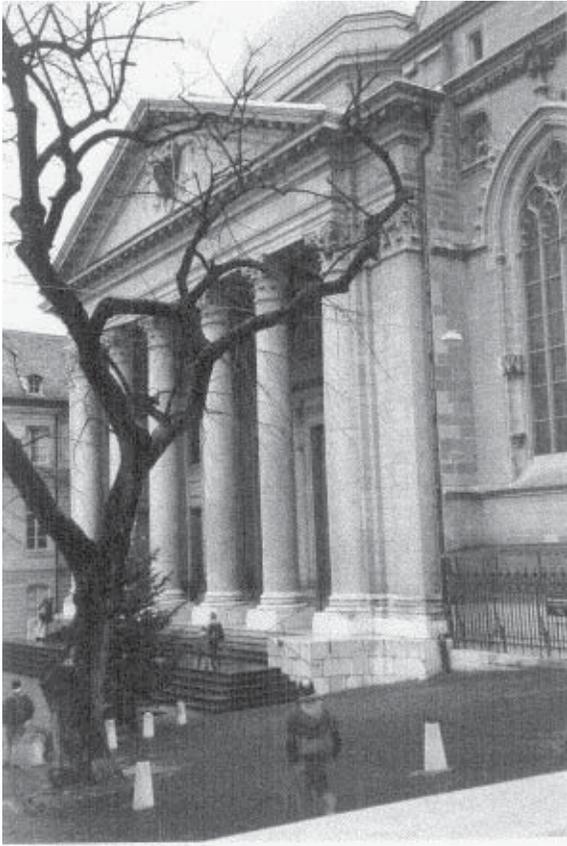
Not only to be discreet, chaste and keepers at home, but good—that is the calling of the young wife.

You older women must teach these things to your daughters and younger sisters in Christ. (To be continued.) ❖

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Remembering the Reformation

by J.P. de Klerk



The only Reformed Cathedral in the world is found in the Swiss city of Geneva. The picture shows you a recent photograph of the main entrance, made of natural stone in the eleventh century in the highest part of the city. In 1534 the building was given to the Reformed Congregation and all the statues outside and inside the cathedral carefully removed. The French speaking people make a distinction between the Protestant Church (Temple Reformée and the Roman Catholique Church [Eglise Catholique]), but the Reformed Cathedral of St. Peter (Saint Pierre) was not altered. It is a huge building with a very high round ceiling in the middle. Dr. Johannes Calvijn (Jean Cauvin)

and his older friend Guillaume Farèl have preached here for thousands of people.

The first period that Calvin lived in Geneva was from July 1536 to April 1538. The second period was from September 13, 1541 until May 27, 1564. (His body was buried in a part of Geneva with the name Plainpalais, but his grave has not been found.) He died of tuberculosis with several complications. He was born in the French city of Noyon (province Picardia) in the northern part of the country. He received home schooling by the family Hangest de Montmor. The local Church made him curate in 1521, with a good income. In 1523 he went with the family Hangest de Montmor to Paris, where he went to college (named Collège de la Marche de Mathurin Cordier) where he was taught Latin and French. He came into contact with Protestants and began to study the French translation of the Bible (of Mr. Fèvre d'Etage). Although the Inquisition entered Paris, Calvin studied, together with Pierre Robert Olivier. In 1528 he studied more intensely at the University of Orleans, and a year later in Bourges where the Lutheran teacher Melchior Wolmar taught him Greek. He started preaching in Lignières.

After the death of his father, in 1531, Calvin went back to Paris to study literature at the Collège de France (founded by king Francois I of Valois who favored the Reformed people, but later he changed his mind). He went to meetings, like biblical societies, in secret with guards outside to warn them in case enemies of the Reformation would come to attack them. Here his first books appeared. In 1533 he had to flee. Margaretha, queen of Navarra, called him back and wanted to protect him, but there were too many enemies around in the city, so Calvin decided to flee again. He went to Saintonge, where his friend, Du Tillet of Angoulême, lived. He adopted temporarily the name Charles d'Espeville.

He studied and wrote books, but in 1535 he started travelling to many cities in France and Switzerland.

Probably the reproduction of a rare painting of Calvin, discovered in the German castle of Aschbach, was made in that time.

In 1536 appeared his book *Institution in the Christian Religion* for Catechism purposes, going in the footsteps of Luther. He was then 26 years old.

With Du Tillet he fled to the residence of the Duchess Renata of Ferrara, sister of Francois I. She was a courageous follower of the Reformation and Calvin remained in contact with her in correspondence the rest of his life. He had to flee again. In July 1536 he was back in Geneva. He preached in the St. Peter Cathedral without immediately saying who he



was, and without a salary. In the city of Bern, he went with Farèl to defend the Reformation before a forum of Roman Catholic theologians and convinced many. So, in 1537 in Geneva the Reformation became a fact. From there it would go all over the world. Missionaries traveled with merchants and reached island-states in the Pacific.

Calvin however had to flee again. From September 1538 to September 1541, he served a congregation of other refugees in the city of Strassburg (he preached four times a week and was paid one guilder). Sometimes he did it in German. In 1539 he made the first hymnbook for the Church, with 18 Psalms (for 8 of them he made the melody himself) Later, in Geneva, another book with all the Psalms was made (melodies made by Maître Pierre, Louis Bourgeois and Matthias Greiter).

A contemporary of Calvin made a small statue of him, of clay, which can still be seen in the “Musée historique de la Reformation” in Geneva. In those days he wrote also the “Testimonium Spiritus Sancti” (about the Holy Spirit) and his first exegese (comment) about the letter of Paul to the Romans.

In August 1540, Calvin married Idelette of Bure, who was the widow of Jean Stordeur in Liège (Southern part of The Netherlands), with two children. Calvin got a son with her, but that child died soon.

At the request of the Church, Calvin returned to Geneva on September 13, 1541, and together with the ministers there he organized preaching once every day, and three times on Sunday. In 1543 a third edition (in Latin) of Calvin’s *Institution* appeared. The government in Paris was furious and on February 14, 1544, this book was burned in public in front of the Notre Dame Church.

In 1545 the Geneva Catechism appeared. However, in 1542, Geneva had been stricken by famine and the plague; many people died, but Calvin was able to continue his work.

In 1543 he sent a letter to the German emperor Charles V with the heading “The necessity of Reformation in the Church.” The Roman Catholics reacted with organizing opposition against Calvin on a large scale, approaching in a crafty way some of his friends, who didn’t have the courage or knowledge to defend themselves. Calvin was very disappointed when he discovered that former friends were suddenly against him. A movement, “the Libertins,” attacked him in pamphlets, and Calvin produced a clear answer to stop their mouths. Calvin wanted pure Christianity in the city and introduced a strict law for the behavior of the inhabitants. People who did not care about the rules were punished and took revenge by spreading false reports and accusations against Calvin, which he often was not even aware of.

In 1549 the followers of Calvin and Zwingli came to an agreement, named the “Consensus Tigurinus.”

On June 5, 1559, the Geneva Academy was founded with four young theologians in the “Auditoire” opposite the St. Peter Cathedral. The first rector was Beza.

Calvin often felt sad because in 1549, his wife, Idelette, who had always encouraged him, had died. He worked almost day and night at correspondence with friends in other countries, but he often did not feel well. His health became a problem, but he remained productive as defender of the faith, the Bible and the Reformation till his last day on earth. ❖

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The Song of Zion

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

Devotionals by David Overway

October 1 Read Psalm 71:6

In verse five, David confesses that he trusted in the Lord all throughout his childhood and adult years to the point of his writing this Psalm. This confession, however, is not a boasting in himself but a praising of his God. This is clearly seen when we consider verse five together with verse six, for in verse six, we simply find a continuation of the confession David began in verse five. In verse six David praises God's goodness to him in that God had held him up or sustained him from his mother's womb. David knows that God loved him even before he was born and that in that love, God cared for him in the womb. David knows that it was God's mighty hands that lovingly took him out of his mother and "delivered" him when he was but a fragile, helpless infant. David knows that God alone caused him to grow and develop into a little boy and, later, into a man who trusted in his God. David knows that God sustained him throughout his whole life both physically and spiritually. David believes in preservation. He does not boast, instead he praises. Sing Psalter 190:4.

October 2 Read Psalm 71:7

Remember that in this Psalm David cries out to God to be near him and to deliver him from his enemies. Keeping this in mind, we cannot understand the word "wonder" in this verse to have a positive connotation. It is not as though David would say "I am a wonderful person unto many" or "I am perceived as a terrific person, a like-able guy, a respected man by many people that know me." No, David at this time experiences affliction, persecution, and humiliation as he sought escape from his enemies. It appeared to his enemies and all who looked on as if David was losing everything. Nobody likes a loser. David had become a wonder, a horribly amazing sight, a repulsive spectacle, or as Calvin puts it, "a detestable monster." He was despised and rejected of men. All they that saw him laughed him to scorn, and said "It is clear that God is not for him or he would not be so afflicted by his enemies." But David runs in faith to his Strong Refuge and says, "No matter what men may think of me, I am accepted of my God and never, ever despised by Him." Sing Psalter 191:1

October 3 Read Psalm 71:8

We cannot fill our mouths with God's praise and honour. We can only fill our mouths with unrighteousness and evil. Whether we are saved or unsaved, we cannot fill our own mouths with the goodness of God's praise and honour. It is not as though once we

are saved, we are absolutely free and it now depends on the pleasure of our will whether we will do good or not. No, not at all. It is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure. God has given us a new man in Christ through Whom He operates and through Whom He graciously blesses us with the actual performance of good works. Our good works also are part of our salvation and thus are God's work alone and His blessing to us. Mysterious work. Amazing work. But God's work. And so we pray to God with David "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day." Sing Psalter 191:1

October 4 Read Psalm 71:9-11

In verse nine, David speaks of his old age and his failing strength. He is acutely aware of his limitation and weakness. He prays for God's gracious preservation. God has upheld him in infancy, youth, throughout life, and now in his old age he prays that the Lord will continue to be a God unto him. For not only is he weak and old, but also his enemies perceive him as forsaken and defenseless and begin their treacherous plotting against his soul (vs 10-11). We are all in this dire situation. Often we do not realize it as clearly as David does here, but the truth of our condition remains nevertheless. Whether young or old we all are weak and need our God. Our enemies, too, plot against us, speaking against us together, seeking to persecute and take us. We need not fear, but learn from David what to do. We also tell God all about our enemies and their evil intentions. And then we turn to him, hoping in his promises, and with this hope are emboldened to cry to Him: "Forsake me not!" Sing Psalter 191:2,3.

October 5 Read Psalm 71:12

David's enemies are preparing to close in on him. His situation is serious. He calls God to hasten to help him. But notice how he expects that God would help him. He says, "O God be not far from me." In God being near to him he is helped and delivered from his enemies. Either our enemies are near us and we are in trouble or God is near us and we are helped. Of course, the idea of "near" is not proximity or nearness in space for God is everywhere-present and our enemies (our old nature, Satan, and unbelievers) are always with us and very close. Instead the idea is that if God is "near" to us we are consciously in His presence, experiencing His good influence on us and His holy power coursing through us. This is the activity of faith. By faith we are helped. By faith we draw near to God. And as we through faith experience this blessed reality, our enemies lose their power and influence

over us and are “far” from us and we are delivered. “O God, be not far from me”... “Lord, increase our faith.” Sing Psalter 191:4.

October 6 Read Psalm 71:13

Some openly teach that prayers such as these are not to be uttered by godly Christians. Others really teach the same thing by simply ignoring divinely-inspired passages of Scripture such as this one. This must never be in the true church of Christ. Instead, these prayers must be prayed with holy zeal individually and within the congregation, sung with gusto from the Psalter, and preached sharply and clearly from the pulpit. These prayers are a vital part of the Christian life. For it is true that either God is “near” us or our enemies are “near” us (see vs 12 and comments above). When God, in his might, draws near to us our adversaries most certainly are confounded, consumed, and covered with reproach and dishonour. This happened principally on the cross and was signified when Christ said “It is finished.” And this will be realized ultimately when he comes to us again on the clouds of heaven to judge and destroy all His (and our) enemies. Therefore, knowing that God comes to us only in the way of the destruction of our enemies, we heartily shout to heaven the Psalmist’s battle-cry: “Let them be consumed!” Psalter 191:4.

October 7 Read Psalm 71:14

“But I will hope continually...” We take comfort in God’s preservation of us in the past, we confess our weakness and our dependency on Him, we pray that He be near us and not forsake us, and we tell Him of our enemies and ask for their destruction. And in all this we hope. Hope firmly believes that God, according to his sovereign counsel, will keep his promises as they are revealed in His Word. Hoping in this way, we have confidence that our present situation is not our final destination. We look for something better. In “good” times we look forward to continued good times and know that God is leading us on to even better days. In hard times too, we expect that God will deliver us and restore us and, in His time, once again give us better days. When we hope, then, we have rest and comfort and great joy and therefore we also will certainly praise God more and more. Sing Psalter 191:5.

October 8 Read Psalm 71:15-17

Here David speaks of Christ. For what does David praise God (vs 14)? For Christ (vs 15-16). God elected us in Christ from all eternity. His promises to us were ours from eternity as we were in Christ from all eternity. Our Father has promised to rescue us from our enemies and to save us for Jesus sake. A righteous earthly father keeps the promises he makes to his children. So too with our Heavenly Father. Being righteous, He must keep His promise. Being righteous, He does keep His promise, and shows us his righteousness by saving us. And so we with David speak of His righteousness and of His righteousness alone. The only way to “go in the strength of the Lord God” is to go speaking of His righteousness. Speaking of His righteousness we are speaking of Christ. Speaking of Christ we are strong. Sing Psalter 191:6-7.

Devotionals by John Huizenga

October 9 Read Psalm 71:18; Acts 13:26-37

When you become old and gray, what do you hope to have accomplished in life? David hoped to show to those around him the strength of God. He desired of those who looked to David and remembered his life that they praise God for all that He had done for David. Acts 13:36 compares the service of David to the people

of his kingdom to Christ. David after his life of service, died and his body was buried and decayed, but Christ saw no corruption. His work does not stop with the memories of His earthly life. Christ lives and forever displays the power of God in the salvation of His people. Though our lives are brief, may they testify to everyone around us of the power of God in Christ. Sing Psalter 192:1.

October 10 Read Psalm 71:19; Isaiah 40:18-27

God reveals in these verses a very important concept for us to understand if we are to know the truth of God’s word. God can not be compared to anything. He is the wholly other. Often God does compare Himself to earthly things to help us in our feeble earthly understanding, but we must always remember that there is a fundamental difference between God and all other things: He is the Creator, and everything else is a creature. When we study the word of God, we will quickly go astray if we try to judge the ways and works of God according to our standards. Many become angry at God when they are made to see the doctrines of sovereign election and reprobation and decide to change God to a God of love and love alone. But we must rejoice in the truth that the righteousness of God is perfect, exceeding the height of heaven. Sing Psalter 192:2.

October 11 Read Psalm 71:20; Ephesians 4:1-16

Perhaps the doctrine of sovereign reprobation would tempt us to doubt the righteousness of God; sore trials also tempt us to doubt the righteousness of God. But knowing the greatness of God’s righteousness, we also know that God restores His people from the depths of despair. Ephesians 4:9-10 directs our attention to the foundation of this hope found in the ascension of Christ. He who has now become the head of His people first descended to the depths of hell and was raised and ascended to the right hand of God. He knows all the sorrows of His people. They are members of His body. In the way of sin and sorrow, God reveals to us the depths of His love and mercy. Sing Psalter 192:3.

October 12 Read Psalm 71:21; II Corinthians 2

“Thou shalt increase my greatness.” These are words the child of God would not dare to utter in himself. In the light of the rest of scripture, it is evident that these words of David were true for David only as the type of Christ, and these words are ours only in Christ as we see in 2 Corinthians 2:14. Knowing our sins and place in the world among wicked men we feel all but great, but our greatness is in Christ alone. The greatness we have does not attract praise to ourselves, but rather unto God. Instead of making us swell up in pride, this greatness brings comfort to our hearts. Let us pray for the grace to seek greatness in Christ rather than greatness in ourselves with the praise of men. Sing Psalter 192:4.

October 13 Read Psalm 71:22-23; Luke 1:39-54

Why do we sing praises to our God? The Psalmist gives three related reasons for praise: God’s truth, His holiness, and the salvation given to His people. God’s truth is the harmony between His perfect counsel and plan, and what God says and does. His holiness is His separation and freedom from every evil that exists. This true and holy God has revealed to His people His plan of salvation and eternal life for them. When Mary knew that the promised Savior was come, she also sang a song of praise that confessed the truth, holiness, and salvation of God. May we also sing with these truths of God in mind. Then we sing praise from the heart to God, and God is glorified. Sing Psalter 192:5.

October 14 Read Psalm 71:24; Matthew 12:22-37

One of the most powerful means for Satan to bring great sorrow and confusion among men in this world is the tongue. It is the heart of man that has been totally blackened by sin, but it is the tongue that spews forth the corruption to the sorrow and confusion to everyone around; nothing else can come out of the mouth of natural man. What a contrast we find in the scriptures we have just read. The Psalmist proclaims that he will speak righteousness all his days. This sounds like life in heaven! What a different place this world would be if everyone spoke only of God's righteousness! God gives to His people a new heart that begins even in this life to speak of God's righteousness. Often the old man of sin succeeds in sending corrupt speech through the same mouth, but the new life is there and can only grow stronger. Let us strive to proclaim God's righteousness in our words today. Sing Psalter 192:6.

October 15 Read Psalm 72; I Chronicles 22:1-16

The title for this Psalm indicates that it was written for king Solomon. Solomon was the type of Christ as the King of Peace and therefore the fulfillment of this Psalm is in Christ reigning over the church in glory. Peace could exist within the mighty kingdom of Solomon only when the judgments of God were given to him. Peace and glory did come to the earthly kingdom of Solomon, but being merely a type, it was not perfect and had to make way for the kingdom of Christ which is perfect and heavenly. Heaven will be filled with those who knew themselves poor and made rich in Christ. Let us seek righteousness and peace in Christ today. In all our trials and experiences of life we will find peace knowing who we are in Christ: redeemed servants for the glory of God. May we long for perfect righteousness and peace in heavenly glory. Sing Psalter 193:1; 198:1.

October 16 Read Psalm 72:3; Ezekiel 34:1-16

Mountains are majestic and beautiful to those viewing them in safety. Mountains are also filled with danger and were the places where the highway robbers roamed in Israel. Solomon was able to purge the mountains of the danger and thereby give peace to the people no matter where they went. Christ also has been given all power and authority to drive away every fear. Even the darkest corner is made light by the power of His grace and all evil is destroyed and banished. Our last enemy, the one that had its stronghold firmly rooted in the mountains of this life, was death itself. But Christ has conquered death, and has made death the entrance into eternal glory. Now where death once reigned God feeds His people forever in the green pastures of His Word. Look to Christ, He will give you peace. Sing Psalter 193:2; 198:2.

October 17 Read Psalm 72:4; Jeremiah 51:1-26

Solomon's kingdom had peace, but it was not long after him that God used Babylon to oppress and chastise his people because they walked not in His ways. Babylon became even a "destroying mountain" (Jeremiah). Babylon was used by God, and God continued to fulfil His counsel by bringing forth Christ in the way of the destruction of Babylon. The power of Christ is decisive and complete. The enemy is broken into pieces until the pieces no longer pose a threat and in fact pave the way for God's people. May we not fear what is a mountain in our eyes. By our own strength, we could not move a crumb anyway. God will take care of us. The most imposing enemies are utterly destroyed by God. Sing Psalter 193:3; 198:2.

October 18 Read Psalm 72:5; Luke 1:26-32

The idea of "forever" is conveyed here and in other of the Psalms with reference to the endurance of the moon and sun. To man it appears as though the sun and moon would last forever in comparison to so many other things, even the mountains, which steadily erode away. God does tell us that the sun and moon will be preserved through all the time of the gathering of His church, but when that work is finished, then the sun and moon will come to an end as well. But just as the sun and moon continue through all time, so the kingdom of Christ will continue through all eternity as the church renders endless praise to God. God is never cut short in His work. He continues faithfully until all is accomplished. Let us be mindful of these truths when we watch the sun rise each morning and watch the moon in its course. Sing Psalter 193:4; 198:3.

October 19 Read Psalm 72:6; Deuteronomy 32:1-14

The word of God considered today brings before our eyes a picture of a refreshing shower of rain upon a pasture where sheep graze. Without rain, the grass would become brown and the sheep would become hungry, but the rain ensures plenty to eat. So it is with God's people under the rule of Christ. God has sent to His people Christ, the very Word of God. God's people desire nothing more than for God to speak to them, and He sends this speech (doctrine and instruction) as a gentle shower of rain. The Word is our salvation revealed to us in the Scriptures and proclaimed each Sunday from the pulpits. The word nourishes our hungry and thirsty souls. It brings comfort and peace so that we do not worry about tomorrow. Sing Psalter 193:5; 198:6.

October 20 Read Psalm 72:7; Isaiah 32

Remembering that this Psalm was written for Solomon we understand the idea of earthly prosperity to be limited to his reign which is but a picture of Christ and spiritual prosperity. Remember also that the idea of the endurance of the moon is that of eternity. The Psalter is a bit misleading when it reads "until the moon shall fade." The reign of Christ is not earthly as He Himself plainly stated. The earthly belongs to Solomon's reign which has passed away to make way for that which is the real thing. Under the rule of Christ, the life of the church will only grow continually. There is no end to the Word of God which nourishes His people. Let us ever look forward to life eternal. May we ever be comforted in this life in the truth that the spiritual life which God plants in His people will never be quenched. Sing Psalter 193:6; 198:5.

Devotionals by Ryan Hanko**October 21 Psalter 194:1, 198:5; Psalm 72:8**

Our God is the Creator of this entire earth. Therefore, He is the Ruler of it by right of ownership. His kingdom stretches to every part of the earth, both land and sea. This verse speaks first of all of the dominion of God over the whole created world, but also in a more specific sense of the kingdom of His people—signified in the O.T. by the land of Canaan. The promised land stretches from the Mediterranean to the River Euphrates. God's rule over this kingdom is a gracious, loving rule. Under His rule, all our spiritual and physical needs are provided for. His dominion over this kingdom pictures that of heaven. This heavenly kingdom is our hope for eternity as we make our pilgrimage through this life.

October 22 Psalter 194:2, 198:6; Psalm 72:9

Those peoples that inhabit the wilderness are the wild and the lawless. They desire the “liberty” that this place affords them. There they are free from the restraints which others may put on them. Yet God will subdue these people as well. He will bring them under His dominion. Those who refuse His authority, God will break and humble. The tongues which curse God deserve to lick the dust. If they will not joyfully and willingly bow to the omnipotent God, that same God will prostrate them at His feet. There He will make them lick the serpent’s meat, filling them with the food of their father, the Devil: who, like them, will soon be forced to bow at the feet of Christ.

October 23 Psalter 194:3; Psalm 72:10

In the kingdom of Christ, His people are not taxed. Instead we, His subjects, bring our free-will offerings before His throne. Even kings and those in high places will bring Him their gifts. We have been given the greatest gift possible - salvation and life everlasting. To give us this, God sent His only, begotten Son to be killed by wicked men. We, out of thankfulness for so great a gift, should cheerfully give of what God has blessed us with. Our gifts to Him are our obedience to His loving rule and all of the duties and work that proceed from this. If only our earthly rulers today would listen to what this verse has to say, that by their so doing, their subjects would imitate their example!

October 24 Psalter 194:4; Psalm 72:11-12

The greatest and highest of all men will bow in submission before God’s throne. God will humble their pride, and deliver and help the poor and needy. The cries of God’s weak and helpless children touch the heart of their Father in heaven. In our human nature, we are helpless and dead. God by the Spirit, awakens life in us. The beginnings of this new life in us causes us to see that we need help and deliverance outside of ourselves. Our helplessness forces us to go to our great Helper in heaven. Christ knows our weakness and frailty because He lived among us. He is our advocate in heaven and will bring our needs before God, Who alone can help us.

October 25 Psalter 194:5, 198:6; Psalm 72:13-14

Jesus called not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He does not attempt the superfluous work of aiding proud, vain Pharisees in their self-righteousness; but He cares for the poor Publican, who dares not to look up to heaven because of his sin. We ought to seek to be among those needy whom Jesus comes to help. He will keep us from the snares and temptations of Satan and the evils of this wicked world. He protects us as the Great Shepherd watching over His flock. Each and every one of God’s people is valuable in His sight. God, Who watches over even the little sparrow, will watch over us and not allow the wicked to tear us away from the shelter of His almighty care.

October 26 Psalter 194:6, Psalm 72:15

Because Christ died, we live. Now He lives and reigns in heaven. He will be given coronation gifts of the richest kind, presented before His throne by those whom He has redeemed. We pray that all blessings will be upon His head and that His kingdom and cause will prosper. We pray for the coming of His kingdom and the return of our King. When He comes, He will take us to glory to praise Him before Him before His throne for eternity. There, we will gather with the angels and the saints of all time—now made perfect by Christ’s coming—to praise Him perfectly.

October 27 Psalter 195:1; Psalm 72:16

A great harvest will be reaped from a very small beginning. God’s people are never more than a remnant here on earth, yet His faithful are a living seed, from which the church in the ages to come is harvested. His church is continually growing, though, as it grows He harvests it and gathers it to Himself. Taken as a whole, the church of all ages is an innumerable throng. To them, Christ has given all of the blessings that He has earned for them on the cross. He prospers the cause of the church so that they may sing His praise both now and in eternity.

October 28 Psalter 195:2; Psalm 72:17

As long as this earth shall exist and for all eternity before and after time, God and His name will endure. As long as this earth exists—pictured figuratively here by the sun—God will continue His name by saving a people to Himself. These people will magnify Jehovah’s name in time and in eternity. As the happiness of the parent is bound up in that of the children, and the prosperity of the sovereign inseparable from that of the subjects, so the Messiah will not only be blessed Himself, but also will be a source of blessing to all nations. The grateful nations will echo His benedictions and delight to do Him honor.

October 29 Psalter 195:3; Psalm 72:18-20

The last three verses of this Psalm belong, not to this Psalm, but to the second book of Psalms, of which this doxology marks the close. They are a call for profound gratitude and adoration—emotions of the heart. It is, and forever shall be, the goal of our desires, and the climax of our prayers to behold Jesus exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has done great wonders such as none can match, leaving all others so far behind. Yet, there are greater marvels still remaining, which we eagerly wait their being manifested to us throughout eternity.

October 30 Psalter 195:4; Psalm 72:18-20

God is the Blessed God and His name shall be blessed. His name is glorious, and that glory shall fill the whole earth. For so bright a consummation our heart yearns daily, and we cry, “Amen, and Amen.” This word is one that seals all the truths of God and every particular promise of God. It is never likely to arise in the soul, unless there is first an almighty power from heaven, to seize on the powers of the soul, to subdue them, and make it say, “Amen.” There is such an inward rising of the heart, and an innate rebellion against the blessed truth of God, that unless God by His strong arm, bring the heart down, it never will nor can say, “Amen.”

October 31 Psalm 72:30

The last verse of this Psalm is one over which there is much disagreement. The following is a quote from William Streat (a 17th century theologian) which gives the most likely explanation of this verse. “Here ends the prayers of David the son of Jesse; that is, here they are perfected. If any ask hereafter what or where lies the end that all these Psalms were made for, tell them that here it lies in this Psalm and, therefore placed in the midst of all; as the center in midst of a circle, all the lines meet here, and all the Psalms determine here; for it is only a prophetic treatise of the kingdom of Christ drawn out to the lre, and it is dedicated to Solomon, because here is wisdom; other men have other ends, it may be, but the son of Jesse had no other end in the world but to set out Christ’s kingdom in making of His Psalms.”

Psalter 126— God a Very Present Help

by Melinda DeMeester

“**G**od is our refuge and our strength.” Psalm 46:1. This is quite a confession for a child of God to make. Only because we are His children may we make this confession. God is not the refuge of the wicked, nor is He their strength.

At times it is very easy for us to place our trust in the physical things and securities of this world. This can be especially true in the time of troubles. Yet, by faith we know that our God is our surety and in Him alone must we trust. Nothing in this world will keep us from harm and danger or calamities. God alone is our refuge, the One to whom we flee in time of trouble. What a comfort that is! He will keep us from the trouble of the world. Yes, we may experience some of the calamities and disasters of the earth, but God will be our stay. We shall be kept under the shadow of the Almighty. He will always be our faithful God. He shall be our strength even when it seems that the earth is removed from its place and that the mountains are being rent from their foundations. In time of these trials and tribulations, we shall have quiet peace in our hearts, knowing that the Lord has control over all.

God has His abode in the midst of His city, in the midst of His church. We must be thankful that God dwells in the midst of us. With Him, our foundations are sure and will not be moved. He is our stronghold. Without Him, we would not have courage or strength. Our courage and strength comes from God alone. God is always ready to help us. He is our early help. That early help

refers to His being our strength each and every day. He shall keep us and defend us when trouble is at hand.

Another comforting thought is that even when there is trouble, we know that it was sent by the Lord. The God of Jacob, our covenant God, rules and reigns over

all. He is sovereign and determines the ways of the wicked and the righteous. This is proved for us in stanza 3 of Psalter #126. “The nations raged, the kingdoms moved, but when His voice was heard, the troubled earth was stilled to peace before His mighty word.” We may take great comfort in the fact that God is on our side and is a sure refuge for us in any circumstance of life. The Lord, by His will, causes wars to be fought and desolation to be brought to the earth. However, He also causes them to cease. God shall give us abiding peace to us even in the midst of the tumult of the world.

In all this, we must give God the glory! For He is the One who rules over all, who guides us, who keeps us safe and is our strength in

time of trouble. Even the nations of the world know God and are subject to Him whether they want to be or not. “I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:10 The very world and all therein shall magnify God because it was created to glorify His name. May we confess and believe in our hearts the words of stanza five, “The God of Jacob is for us a refuge strong and sure.” ❖

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

Confession of Faith (3)

by Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Reprinted from the Standard Bearer Vol. 63 pp. 256-258.

“**D**o you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?”

This is the first question asked of those who make public confession of their faith.

The Scriptures emphasize the importance of faith. In Hebrews 11:6 we read, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” In I John 5:4 the Apostle emphasizes the importance of faith when he says, “...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Paul writes in Romans 14:23, “...whatsoever is not of faith is Sin.”

Faith Is Knowledge

An important question in connection with confession of faith is: What is the content of the faith which we confess? What does faith believe?

Faith must have content, solid, intellectual content. Our Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that faith consists of knowledge and confidence. Knowledge, doctrinal knowledge, is important in the one who is making confession of faith. He must “know Whom he has believed,” II Timothy 1:12. The first question asked at the time of public confession of faith speaks of “acknowledging” the doctrines of the Bible. The word “acknowledge” has in it the word “knowledge.”

That faith is knowledge is plain from Scripture. In John 17:3, Jesus teaches, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” In I Timothy 4:3 the Apostle

speaks of “believing and knowing the truth.” From Hebrews 11:3 we learn that faith “understands.”

**A faith that is uninformed,
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all.**

A faith that is uninformed, that is without knowledge is not merely a weak faith, but it is non-existent, no faith at all. Faith must have content. And when we make confession of faith we must be able to give expression to the content of our faith.

Here the responsibility of the eldership comes in. At the time young people present themselves to make confession of faith, the elders must determine that these young people know the faith they are confessing. An examination must be conducted; questions must be asked that it may be clearly ascertained that the truth is known and understood by the one making confession of faith. One who knows next to nothing of the Reformed faith, although he may be living an upright life and says that he loves Jesus, must not be permitted to make confession of faith, but must be encouraged to receive further instruction.

But more than just the responsibility of the elders, the responsibility of the whole church comes out here. If knowledge of the truth is required of our young people making confession of faith, we must be sure that in their childhood and youth these young men and women received thorough instruction in the truth. If our young

people are to grow up knowing the truth, not perishing in ignorance, we must see to it that they have the preaching of the truth in the church. We must see to it that they receive instruction in the truth in our homes. We must see to it that, as God makes that possible, they receive sound instruction in the truth in the Christian schools. And we must see to it that this sound instruction is given in the catechism room. In many instances today, the blame for the ignorance of the young people is not to be laid at the doorstep of the young people, but at the doorstep of the parents and the church. As in the days of the Judges, a generation grows up that knows not the Lord. But the fault today, as then, is that parents do not instruct their children.

The Doctrines Of The Old And New Testaments

The content of faith the first question describes as “the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments...”

This indicates that the knowledge of faith is doctrinal knowledge. Reformed churches have always emphasized the importance of doctrine. Reformed churches ought to be characterized by precise doctrinal formulations and doctrinal sensitivity. The indifference on the part of many churches and many church members today to doctrine is only an indication of the weakness of the churches.

It is striking that when the Apostle begins to list the profit for the church of the inspired Scriptures the very first thing that he mentions is doctrine: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...” When he exhorts the young pastor Timothy to be faithful in his ministry, Paul’s charge to him is, “Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine...” The outstanding sign of the end-time, according to II Timothy 4:3, is that people “...will not endure sound doctrine....”

The doctrines to be known, believed, and confessed are said to be the doctrines “contained in the Old and New Testaments.” This indicates that essential to all the other doctrines is the doctrine of Holy Scripture itself.

Faith in the divine inspiration, and therefore the infallibility of the Bible, is essential on the part of the young person making confession of faith. This must be determined with absolute certainty by the elders. Anyone who questions, has reservations about, or openly denies the inspiration of Scripture must not be permitted to make confession of faith.

Does the one confessing his faith believe that the Holy Spirit guided the human writers of the Bible so

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that what they wrote was the Word of God and only the Word of God? Does he believe that there are errors in the Bible? Is the account of the creation and fall of man to be received as literal, reliable history? And what about the flood, the passage through the Red Sea, the conquest of Jericho, the miracles of Christ and the apostles?

Not only the doctrine of Holy Scripture, but the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture are also to be known and believed. The person making confession of faith must believe the fundamental doctrines set forth in the Bible. Examples would be: the trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, creation, the covenant, the sacraments, the church, the place of the law in the Christian life, the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s second coming, etc. He ought to know and be able to defend the Five Points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election (predestination), limited atonement (particular redemption), irresistible grace, the perseverance and preservation of the saints.

Since faith is always personal, and the knowledge of faith is always spiritual knowledge (not mere intellectual knowledge), it ought to be ascertained how each of these doctrines applies personally to those making confession of faith. What does the truth of total depravity mean for you, personally? The death of Christ—was that a death for you? Of what significance for you is the truth of the church and the means of grace?

Essentially, however, faith is not faith in doctrines, but faith is faith in a Person. The Scriptures emphasize that the object of faith is Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, exalted Jesus Christ. To believe is to believe in (or, as the New Testament frequently puts it: “into”) Jesus Christ. To the Philippian jailor Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” Acts 16:31. In II Timothy 1:12, Paul says, “For I know

WHOM (not “what” but “whom”) I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Confession of faith is essentially confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Does the young person believe in Jesus Christ? What does he believe about the Person of Jesus Christ? What does he believe about the work of Jesus Christ? Does he trust in Jesus Christ and in Him alone for all his salvation?

This is confession of faith! That is the teaching of Romans 10:9, 11: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.”

In This Christian Church

Not the least significant aspect of the first question for confession of faith is that we acknowledge the doctrines of the Scriptures as “taught here in this Christian Church.”

It is important that the young people know why they are making confession of faith in a Protestant Reformed Church, and not some other church, or even some other Reformed church. This implies several things.

This implies, first of all, an acquaintance with the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches. The young person ought to know the highlights of that history. He ought to be able to answer such questions as: What led to the organization of our churches? Are our churches justified in their separate existence? Were the issues surrounding the formation of our denomination crucial issues, issues that affected the very heart of the Reformed faith?

In the second place, confessing faith in THIS church carries with it the conviction that the Protestant Reformed Churches are faithful manifestations of the true Church of Jesus Christ in the world. The young person had better be able in good conscience to say that, or he ought not to make confession of faith in these churches. This does not mean that the Protestant Reformed Churches are THE true Church, while all other churches are THE false church. That is not correct, neither have the Protestant Reformed Churches ever said this, although some have slanderously affirmed this. Nor does this mean that only PR’s are going to heaven, or at least that all PR’s are going to heaven. But this does mean that before God and His Word we are convinced that we are a denomination of churches that manifests the marks of the true church in the world. We are not perfect—far from it!

But we can say, we had better be able to say, that the Word is preached in truth in our churches, the sacraments are rightly administered, and Christian discipline is faithfully exercised.

This is the church to which I am called to belong. And this is the church of which I must remain a member. This is the third thing implied in confession of faith in THIS church. Since this is a true church of Jesus Christ in which the young person confesses his faith, he must

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spouse.**

be determined to be a faithful member. He may not for any reason leave this church: a job, a boy friend or a girl friend, a spouse.

This is a serious matter. The seriousness of this is that this first question is answered affirmatively not just before the church, but before the very face of God. How is it possible that we solemnly affirm before God that we acknowledge the doctrine of the Scriptures as taught in THIS Christian church, and then shortly thereafter leave that church and even turn our back on the church altogether? Those who do shall one day give account before God!

The believing young person confesses his faith, acknowledging the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments as taught in this Christian church because he understands them to be “the true and complete doctrine of salvation.” Believing these truths, he is saved! Confessing these truths, he is saved! Being a faithful member of the church that teaches these truths, he is saved! ❖

Rev. Cammenga in pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

A New Attitude Toward Romance and Relationships

— A review of a book the book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*

reviewed by Scott Connerly

Author: Joshua Harris

Publisher: Multnomah Press, 1997

Cover: Paper

Pages: 232 pages

Price: \$9.99

Once in a great while I encounter a unique young man or woman who is mature beyond their years; who by their strength of faith and greater understanding humble me. There are far more of such yet in this world than I will ever encounter in this life. The author of this book is one. I will likely never meet Joshua Harris in the temporal age, but his book has made a great and positive impression.

Revolutionary

I Kissed Dating Goodbye is a book sometimes funny, but it's theme is very serious. It is about the struggles of a man and his generation and the discoveries he has made about God and his own sinful nature. It is a book about holiness, particularly in the area of romance and relationships. He has some very frank questions concerning an accepted practice. Rebecca St. James, another of these impressively mature young adults, wrote in her foreword to the book, "The ideas in these pages are really quite revolutionary." She is absolutely correct, but they are not new—just smothered, or buried; as much of the truth is these days.

It was not Harris's intent to approach this topic from the aspect of God's covenant of grace with His people as we understand it, and it may be he is unaware of our understanding of the covenant. Yet there are many among us (including myself) who can learn from him regarding how to reflect God's covenant in our relationships. We often talk about the unbreakableness of the marriage bond. Dating, he asserts, is a defective means of getting there. By dating we are actually trying to get there by a

practice which teaches us to break up. We go from one "steady" to another, and from one heartbreak to another. To have kept the same boy or girlfriend for more than a year seems a long time. Perhaps we make it through our high school graduation having our sexual purity intact, yet the heart damage which results is no small thing (as any teen can tell you). Yes, we are the ones who do the damage to one another in this pattern of dating, but there is something horribly defective with the method. As Josh points out, dating prepares us more for divorce than marriage.

dating prepares us more
for divorce than marriage

"Smart Love"

Dating does not help us in our goals of holiness and marriage, contends the author. Rather, it teaches us to behave with the intimacy of those who are committed to another when we haven't really committed yet (marriage). If we recognize that the object is the life-long commitment of marriage, not intimacy for the moment, then we must see dating as a faulty means of reaching the goal. The author points out that what is missing in dating is what he calls, "Smart Love." This is the kind of love which is of God and is God Himself, and should be found in his people. It is a love built on sincerity, selflessness and commitment. Love is the opposite of lust in that love looks out for the best interests of the other at the sacrifice of personal pleasure and comfort. Lust looks out for what gives pleasure to me at the expense of what is good for the other. "Beyond what feels good—back to what is good," says Harris. What is good, he points out

throughout the book, is putting emotional and physical intimacy on the back burner until a commitment to marriage has been made.

Someone somewhere said, "It is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all." Whatever the intentions behind such a thought, I agree with Josh that this kind of attitude is carnal at best, and it has had ruinous results among God's people. How often have many of us pursued a relationship and promised the moon and our love forever, only to break up months later and find ourselves holding the hand of another? What happened to love? Josh is all for romance. He thinks, though, it is disastrous to indulge in romance for the sake of romance. Basically he says romance is for a couple on the threshold of becoming married. And thus he shall be labeled a kill-joy. But as we have "advanced" from a backporch to a backseat philosophy in our courtship habits, we have set aside wisdom which could make for much better marriages.

The Physical Side

Josh also has some "revolutionary" views toward the physical side of a relationship. He advises we save it all until the commitment of marriage is made, including such "harmless" things as hand-holding and kissing. He also has some things to say about modesty and some needed admonitions to guys as to how they view their sisters in Christ.

Patience And The Purpose Of Singleness

Harris not only talks about love, but also about having God-like patience and our attitudes toward singleness. Often we seem to think and act as if God is against us in leaving us as singles for a time. And we are all single for a while. The dating mentality wastes that precious time, says Harris. "While we're single, dating not only keeps us from preparing for marriage, it can quite possibly rob us of the gift of singleness.... God wants us to maximize our freedom and flexibility to serve Him." What a strange notion to most of us. Aren't we only to give ourselves to God's service when it becomes clear that God isn't going to give us a spouse? This attitude is contrary to Harris's thinking. His view of singleness is to grab onto it and to use it for God while we have it. "...A string of uncommitted relationships is not the gift! God gives us singleness—a season of our lives unmatched in its opportunity for boundless growth, learning and service—and we view it [instead] as a chance to get bogged down in finding and keeping boyfriends and girlfriends. But we don't find the real beauty of single-

ness in pursuing romance with as many people as we want. We find the real beauty in using our freedom to serve God with abandon."

Harris also shows that the dating couple may well learn to become a very good boyfriend or girlfriend to one another, but be totally unprepared to be good spouses. The teen years are a good time to learn financial responsibility and the household tasks which accompany marriage and family. It is time to evaluate ourselves. We might watch how we interact with others and ask, "What kind of friend am I to others and how can I improve?" He explains that if I am not a good friend to those whom I consider friends, how will I be a true friend to a spouse? "Marriage won't transform us into new people;" he warns, "it will only act as a mirror, showing what we already are." Perhaps we so often rush toward marriage without the preparation of heart which the trials of marriage will surely test. The season of singleness is built for shoring ourselves up spiritually, and for building a deeper devotion to, and friendship with, God.

"But if I don't date," you may protest, "how will I ever get married?" He points out that our problem often times is that we have a marriage focus, rather than a "God focus." Josh works hard at trying to avoid the dating scenario, but he doesn't lock himself in his bedroom with twinkies and a Sega. He goes out, but only in groups. Josh's attitude is that it may very well be that God has no intention that he marry at all. But if so, it will become abundantly clear to him when and to whom. Then there will be time to consider "coupleness," and he will have many counselors to advise him who know him and his potential spouse because of his pre-marriage practices. He will especially lean on his parents and the parents of the girl he courts. Meanwhile, though he confesses it is no cakewalk, he is concentrating on being the best Christian he can be.

Recommended Reading

Throughout the book, the author draws from experiences of his own and others as examples to illustrate his points. He also uses many effective analogies. He quotes from respected writers and from the Bible itself; though the quotes from the modern translations took some of the thunder away for me. That was the only significant negative, and it can be alleviated by having a KJV at hand.

I recommend this book for teens and singles of all ages. I recommend it especially for parents, whether their children are infants or just beyond the teen years. It may take some humility to let a 22-year-old tell you how God

would have you lead the children he gave you. If so, pray for it.

Elizabeth Elliot said that the message of this book “is desperately needed.” I concur. We need to review our system of courtship. The “dating game” has become a dating trap. The call is to a higher plane, far higher than I and many of my peers have known until now. This book has been at the top of the Christian Booksellers Association’s “trade paper non-fiction best-seller list” all summer, and God is using it to help many start the climb.

There is much more in this book than I could cover in such a short review. “Revolutionary,” said St. James of the book. Yes, but to me it is chock-full of plain ol’ biblical, sanctified common

it is chock-full of plain ol’ biblical, sanctified common sense—the kind we know to be true, but need someone to slap us with in order to bring us to our senses.

sense—the kind we know to be true, but need someone to slap us with in order to bring us to our senses. Read the book. Engage in a discussion with others about it.

Harris claims himself a kindergartner in God’s school of love, but in my eyes he is a graduate in Christ’s school of humility. And humility is what it will take if we are to choose God’s way—and kiss dating goodbye. ❖

Scott is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

Bequest of Penitence

by Shari R. Vaalburg

*It seemed unusual when I first thought of
sorrow and repentance...*

As a gift.

We know we ought

To bow.

To pray.

To lift our souls in petition to the LORD.

Often.

We pray for

grace.

peace.

mercy.

contentment.

help.

forgiveness.

In these, sorrow and repentance are

vaguely comprised.

Depend on the Creator;

Being dependent, we are made strong.

Presuming that we can be sorry,

Presuming that we can repent ourselves:

We

Presume.

That we can save ourselves.

Depend on God the Father,

His

Spirit,

Jesus Christ,

The Messiah.

For sorrow and repentance.

Shari is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Enemy (2)

by Rev. Gise Van Baren

This article was first presented as a speech by Rev. Gise Van Baren at the 1998 Young Adult's Spring Retreat in Loveland, Colorado. The retreat occurs in March of every year. Young adults of high school age and older are encouraged to attend.

The second battle plan of Satan can be found in connection with the temptation of Christ. It is rather striking that the two major temptations in Scripture are the temptation of Adam and Eve, and then the temptation of Christ Himself. Satan is directly involved in tempting our first head, Adam, and then our second Head, Christ.

When Satan came to Christ, what was his plan of attack? He didn't ask the question, "Yea, hath God said." But now he posited alternatives to the *cross*. In effect, Satan said to Christ, "You don't have to go to the cross! You don't have to die there to establish a kingdom with people who serve God." Satan presents alternatives: "Turn these stones into bread. People will follow after an individual who can change stones into bread! You can establish a kingdom on that basis." (That's how politicians are elected—those who can promise prosperity to the nation are the people's choice. Then it doesn't matter what he does as long as he makes us prosperous.) Satan says that to Christ. "Change stones into bread and the nations will honor you." There need be no cross, no death, no suffering, no pain. Christ can receive His honor

and glory in a kingdom on this earth. Along the same line, Satan says, "Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple." Satan even quotes Scripture: "He will give his angels charge over thee lest thou dash thy foot against the stone." Christ can throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and just before He is dashed to pieces on the stones beneath, while the people stand watching, God's angel would come and snatch Christ from death! (Didn't God say that in the Psalms?) Why, the people will accept him as the promised Messiah! They will place Him on the throne of David so that He can reign in Jerusalem. Thus He would fulfill all of the promises of Old Testament Scripture. There need be no death on the cross but Satan provides another way, apparently a better way.

Satan does not tell us to *deny* Christ. He seeks to influence the theologians and the preachers of our day, and the people within the church, into thinking that the historical cross has nothing to do with atonement.

Then Satan comes with the final temptation: "Bow down to me and I will give you all of the kingdoms of the earth." What a promise! Neither suffering nor death are necessary to receive the kingdoms of the earth.

That's the second line of attack by Satan. It has proved very effective in our day and age. Satan does not tell us to *deny* Christ. He seeks to influence the theologians and the preachers of our day, and the people within the church, into thinking that the historical cross has nothing to do with atonement. It was not necessary in order to deliver a people from sin and death. Perhaps the cross represents the death of one for principle's sake. Christ merely

serves as a good example. Many today present Christ precisely in that way.

So Satan has two clear means of attack. First: he would have us question the Word; secondly, he would have us question the power of cross for salvation. This is the history of heresy within the church. Arminianism questions the Word—and questions the efficacious cross. Roman Catholicism would add to the Word—and presents the cross as an incomplete work unto our salvation. Satan uses these very clever means of attack against the church of Jesus Christ. It would seem as though that church can not possibly survive the viciousness of such an attack.

All of this is recorded in Scripture. Satan's battle plans have been clearly revealed there. It isn't so that we are an ignorant people who wonder what Satan has done in the past or will do in the future. It's all laid out in the Bible! One might say that it is rather stupid on the part of Satan and his followers to follow a course of attack that's written out so clearly and plainly in Scripture. Why continue to attack in that same method today as he did already in Paradise?

The answer is two-fold. In the first place, Satan's attacks seem to have proved very successful through the ages. When an enemy has devised successful methods of attack, why change strategy? Any army that has successfully used a specific strategy, will continue to use that in future battles. Satan understands that well. Why change strategy when it has apparently been so successful in the past?

And the second factor is that few bother reading Scripture anymore. Who knows the Word of God? Satan's strategy is all outlined in the Bible, but who has time to read or study the Word, which is the "armor of salvation?" Many do not know even what it teaches.

So Satan's deceptions seem very successful especially when children of God simply close that Word and put it somewhere on the shelf. These may speak religiously and piously, but do not know what the Word of God reveals.

There are many people today who don't know what their Bible says—and that is even true with us to a certain extent. I have known people who don't know where Matthew 1 is found in the Bible. Obviously, they must

not have used the Bible very often. We admit that we must read the Bible regularly. We are told from the pulpit to read and study Scripture. We agree wholeheartedly—yet we hardly find time adequately to search out Scripture or read it regularly. Satan rejoices in that sort of thing. Why should he be concerned with the fact that Scripture details the method of his attack if "Christians" are not going to read it anyway?

Finally, we must note the dangers we confront with respect to this enemy. These dangers oftentimes are minimized. That's the emphasis of the apostle in this chapter. We talk about "flesh and blood;" we talk about people persecuted in China by the leadership of that country—

and they are. We can talk about that. Flesh and blood are persecuting those that serve God. That can soon happen here too. And sometimes rather boldly we insist that we dare face "flesh and blood" for Jesus' sake. After all, these are mere men—flesh and blood. We are not that afraid of flesh and blood are we?

But you understand, the enemy is not *just* flesh and

blood. We face Satan and his hordes of fallen angels. They are all around us. I know that we can't see them. But they are all around us. How many are here? I don't know. But they must be here (as well as the angels of God too). The fallen angels are *here*. These try to fool, to deceive and mislead.

Perhaps the greatest danger which we face is that Satan seeks to generate, in-so-far as that is possible, complacency within us. If you can see the enemy in front of you, flesh and blood, then you would be ready to fight. But we can't see Satan. We can't see the hordes of angels which he controls. We can read of and see evidences of persecution elsewhere, but we have religious freedom. No one interferes with our worship. We can listen to the preaching of the Word of God and learn of that each Sabbath. No one puts us in prison. We also live in an age and a country of affluence. We have all of the material things we need. We have far more than is necessary for our physical existence. We have our homes; we have bank accounts; we have our insurance policies. We will be provided for in our old age. We have protection against sickness. We have an easy life on this earth. We can enjoy many kinds of entertainment: some proper, much of

Satan rejoices in that sort of thing. Why should he be concerned with the fact that Scripture details the method of his attack if "Christians" are not going to read it anyway?

it sinful. It's not wrong to have "fun." Yet we are living in an age in which we place too much emphasis on these kinds of activities: sports, television, movies (which we commonly condemn), and similar things. We have so very much available.

The result can so easily be complacency. No one stands at our door and says, "Are you a Christian?" No

Satan wants us to let down
our guard by making us
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attack.

one tells you, "You may not go to church today. You may not worship God anymore." So with all that we have, and with all of the available entertainment, we soon become complacent. The church may be attacked, and many Christians may suffer for Jesus' sake, but in some far-away place. Satan wants us to let down our guard by making us think that we are *not* under attack.

Then, when we least expect it, Satan strikes. He does this in many different ways. That attack comes with devastating effect upon those who are not ready, who are complacent. These ignore the dangers. These know that Satan would have the rulers of the world to persecute the church. But we tell ourselves, "*We* are not under attack." For us, Satan uses prosperity, entertainment, lives of leisure to draw us away from the Word. When we fail to read and study the Word (we are too busy doing so many other things), then Satan can more easily cause us to doubt the Word of God and begin to doubt the atonement of the cross.

That's the battle you face today. In the years remaining until Christ's return, you will face that spiritual battle increasingly. That's not merely "flesh and blood" against which we fight. We fight against spiritual wickedness in high places. Are you ready to fight such a warfare? Are you ready? Is your sword burnished? Your armament, I trust, is not put in some closet, out of the way, but it is *worn*. ❖

Rev. Van Baren is pastor of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

Church History

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 9

What Did the 1924 Synod Decide?

by Rev. C. Hanko

The question remains: What did the Synod of 1924 actually decide in regard to the issue of common grace?

First of all, one significant decision was made by adopting the now well-known "Three Points of Common Grace." They express the following:

1. Regarding the first point, touching the favorable attitude of God toward mankind in general, and not only toward the elect, synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession it is established, that besides the saving grace of God shown only to the elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in gen-

eral. This is evident from the Scripture passages that were quoted and from the Canons of Dordt, II, 5 and III, IV 8, 9, where the general offer of the gospel is set forth, while it also is evident from the citations made from Reformed writers belonging to the most flourishing period of Reformed theology that our fathers from of old maintained this view.

2. Regarding the second point, touching the restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and of society in general, synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession there is such a restraint of sin. This is evident from the Scripture passages that were quoted and from the Netherlands Confession, Art. 13 and 36, which teach that God by a general



Rev. H. Hoeksema: The Accused

operation of His Spirit, without renewing the heart, restrains the unbridled manifestation of sin, so that life in human society remains possible; while the citations from Reformed authors of the most flourishing period of Reformed theology prove, moreover, that our fathers from of old maintained this view.

3. Regarding the third point, touching the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate, synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confession, the unregenerate, though incapable of doing any spiritual good (Canons of Dordt, III, IV, 3) are able to perform such civic good. This is evident from the Scripture passages that were quoted and from the Canons of Dordt, Art. 36, which teach that God, without renewing the heart, exercise such an influence upon man that he is enabled to do civic good; while it is, moreover, evident from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed theology that our fathers from of old maintained this view.

The synod also passed judgment on the views of the two ministers, declaring:

Synod expresses that several statements in the writings of the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema cannot very well be harmonized with what Scripture and the Confession teach us regarding the above men-

tioned three points. Synod also judges that the pastors referred to, in their writings use some strong expressions, from which it is evident that in their presentation of the truth they do not sufficiently adhere to the way in which our Confessions express themselves, especially Point 1 of the Utrecht Conclusions.

On the other hand, synod declares that these ministers in their writings, according to their own repeated declarations, do not intend or purpose anything else than to teach and maintain our Reformed doctrine, the doctrine of the Scripture and the Confessions; and it cannot be denied that they are Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions, even though it be with an inclination to one-sidedness.

The contradiction here is quite apparent. If it was true that "several statements in the writings of the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema cannot very well be harmonized with what the Scriptures and the Confessions teach us regarding the above mentioned points," then these men certainly could not be considered to be "*Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions,*" even though it be with an inclination toward one-sidedness. It is also apparent that the synod had no intention of disciplining Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksma. Though the committee of pre-advice recommended that these ministers first, be seriously admonished, second, that they be instructed to refrain from making propaganda, and third, that the matter be made pending with the consistories if the decision of the synod was not adhered to, the motion to this effect was defeated.

Synod also must have realized that the theory of common grace is in conflict with the truth of the antithesis. This assembly virtually spoke a word of prophecy when it issued the following warning to the churches of the danger of worldlimindedness.

Now that synod expressed itself on the three points that were at stake in the denial of Common Grace and thereby condemned the entire disregard for this doctrine, she feels constrained at the same time to warn our churches and especially our leaders earnestly against all one-sided emphasis on and misuse of the doctrine of Common Grace. It cannot be denied that there exists a real danger in this respect. When Dr. Kuyper wrote his monumental work on this subject he revealed that he was not unconscious of the danger that some would be seduced by it to lose themselves in the world. And even now history shows that this danger is more than imaginary. And also Dr.

Bavinck reminded us of this danger in his Dogmatics.

“When we consider the direction in which the spirit of the time develops round about us, it cannot be denied that our present danger lies more in the direction of worldli-mindedness than in false seclusion. Liberal theology of the present time really obliterates the distinction between the Church and the world. It is more and more emphasized by many that the great significance of the Church lies in her influence upon social life. The consciousness of a spiritual-ethical antithesis becomes increasingly vague in the minds of many, to make room for an indefinite notion of a general brotherhood. The preaching of the Word concerns itself largely with the periphery of life and does not penetrate into its spiritual center. The doctrine of particular grace in Christ is more and more pushed to the background. There is a strong tendency to bring theology into harmony with a science that stands in the service of infidelity. Through the agency of the press and various inventions and discoveries, which as such are, undoubtedly, to be regarded as good gifts of God, the sinful world is to a great extent carried into our Christian homes.”

Because of all these and similar influences exerted upon us from every side, it is pre-emptorily neces-

sary that the church keep watch over the fundamentals; and that, though she also maintains the above mentioned three points, she vindicates the spiritual-ethical antithesis tooth and nail. May she never permit her preaching to degenerate into mere social treatises or literary productions. Let her be vigilant that Christ and He crucified and risen always remain the heart of the preaching. Constantly she must maintain the principle that the people of God are a peculiar people, living from their proper root, the root of faith. With holy zeal she must constantly send forth the call to our people, especially to our youth: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” With the blessing of the Lord this will keep our churches from worldlimindedness, that extinguishes the flame of spiritual ardor and deprives the church of her power and beauty.

A grim prognosis indeed, for the generation following. ❖

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



Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives

Infamous CRC Synod of 1924.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Hear and Do

Wet sand oozed between Jessica's toes as she approached the shore. Water wrapped around her ankles in gentle rhythm as each wave seemed to boldly invade the beach and then quickly scurry back into the sea. "How curious," thought Jessica.

The water was too cold to swim in at this time of year, but Jessica still enjoyed getting her feet wet and playing in the sand. She settled down just out of the water's reach and began to build a castle. The sand was moist enough to stay in whatever shape her hands molded it, so with time and patience she was able to construct a very large dwelling. She poked only a few doors and windows into it, though, when—

"Hey, that's cold!" she shouted as a runaway wave surprised her with a splash. She jumped up just in time to watch another wave surround her castle and dissolve its foundation. As the water hurried back, the castle toppled over and slid into the sea.

"Humph, what a waste of time," Jessica said as she put her hands on her hips and watched the grains of sand wash away.

"What's the matter?" asked Mother as she came to see what Jessica was up to.

"I feel like a fool. I put all that time into making a castle, and in one wave it's gone."

"You're not a fool, Jessica," she smiled. "In fact, if you remember the lesson of the sand, you are very wise—'...every one that heareth these sayings of mine'," Mother paused for emphasis, "'and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand...and it fell.'"

Jessica knew the passage well. "Yeah," she sighed, "better to build upon a rock."

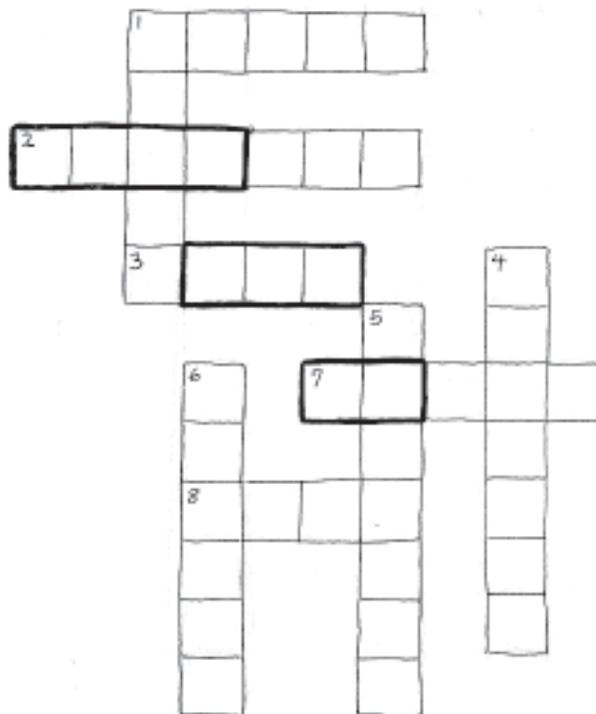
Mother nodded. "Hear and do." ❖

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



Read Matthew 7:24-25 and answer the questions for the words that are across. Read James 1:22-25 and answer the questions for the words that are down. What do both of these passages teach? (The answer is in bold outline.)

- 1 ACROSS: What kind of fall did the house on the sand have?
- 2 ACROSS: What do both types of people do with Jesus' words?
- 3 ACROSS: What did the foolish man build his house upon?
- 7 ACROSS: What does a wise man do with Jesus' words?
- 8 ACROSS: What did the wise man build his house upon?
- 1 DOWN: What does a man behold his face in?
- 4 DOWN: What kind of face is seen in a glass?
- 5 DOWN: "But whoso _____ into the perfect law of liberty..."
- 6 DOWN: What can be another word for "glass"?



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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:

Noah Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rex Waldner—Doon, IA
Kara Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Kaptein, Faith, MI
Kennedy Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Kaptein—Georgetown, MI
Grant Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Flikkema—Georgetown, MI
Austin Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Don VanDenTop—Grace, MI
Robin Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Roger Compagner—Grandville, MI
Lydia Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Kamps—Hope, MI
Kara Rachelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Minderhoud—Hope, MI
Erin Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Van Baren—Hudsonville, MI

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:

Cathie Kaptein—Faith, MI
Susan Adams—First, MI
Paul DeJong—Peace, IL
Lorianne Van Voorthuysen—Redlands, CA
Renaë Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA
Sheri Hendriks—Redlands, CA
Timothy den Hartog—Redlands, CA

MARRIAGES *"...and they twain shall be one flesh."*

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Paul Linker and Miss Melonie Wierenga—Edmonton, Alberta
Mr. Patrick Lenting and Miss Jennifer Overway—Holland, MI
Mr. Brad Duistermars and Miss Dorothy Kalsbeek—Hope, MI
Mr. Josh Visser and Miss Shawn Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Mr. Timothy Joostens and Miss Heidi Blok—Lynden, WA
Mr. Brent Snippe and Miss Alisa Ophoff—Southeast, MI
Mr. Calvin den Hartog and Miss Bethany Kuiper—Southeast, MI