

# *Beacon Lights*

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# The “I Don’t Care” Wall

By John Huizenga

**Y**our homework sits in your backpack. You know it is going to take a good deal of work. If it doesn’t get done you can expect to get a D-. But you say to yourself, “who cares if I get a D-, I don’t feel like doing it now.” Your parents say “don’t you have homework?” “Yeah, whatever,” you respond.

You’re stuck on a math problem. The teacher is there at the desk willing to answer any questions, but you stick in some numbers that you know are not right and daydream the rest of the class period away. You say to yourself, “I don’t care about math anyway, and these problems are stupid. What good will it do me in life?”

You are in the catechism room waiting for your turn for a question. You do not know it very well, but you hope you get an easy one and can somehow get the words out. You fumble around and the minister asks whether or not you’ve studied. You admit you haven’t and then assume a defiant attitude of “I don’t really care.” You look around the room with a sheepish grin for the support of your other “I don’t care” friends instead of deciding then and there that you will work hard to do better next time.

Your parents encourage you to participate in young peoples’ society and make confession of faith. “Yeah, whatever.” You have other interests, you find the church activities boring, and you don’t care much right now about church life. At society you let everyone know by your posture and expression that you don’t care about the discussion.

Is this language and attitude familiar to you? What I have described is the “I don’t care” attitude which flares up to a varying degree in all of us and eats away at the life of the church. Often the attitude makes its first glaring appearance during the teenage years. Sometimes the attitude is overcome by the grace of God, but sometimes it lingers or smolders surreptitiously in one’s heart years later. Whether it remains hidden in our heart or openly manifest, the attitude only brings misery to oneself and the church. It is a sin that we must diligently fight against.

What’s going on? Why does a once caring and eager child suddenly become dead to everything around? At bottom the problem is sin. Sin manifests itself differently at different stages of our lives, but it is all sin. Satan knows that the various poisons of sin work best at certain times of our lives and injects them at the time when they will do the most damage. The teenage years are one of those times when Satan is very busy. The teenager is faced with so many new responsibilities and things to know in life that it is impossible to take it all in. His or her self-consciousness has also developed to a point where this inability to appropriate all the new things becomes embarrassingly apparent. When threatened we often seek a quick and easy way to defend ourselves and maintain our dignity, and here lies an open door for sin. What should I do when my pride and self-satisfaction is threatened? A popular solution for the teenager is to build up a wall of “I don’t care.” Whether they really do care or

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not they talk the talk, and think to themselves, “When people know that I don’t care, they will think my life is too important to be bothered. People will think I am strong and secure. No one will see how weak I really am. I can shrug off all the pesterings of adult life and responsibilities and focus on myself. Pretty soon I even believe that I am what I think I appear to be.” Unfortunately the wall isolates one from the help one needs and hastens the rot of sinful pride. Soon the only thing left is the “I don’t care” shell, a shell that is unfit as a living stone for the construction of the glorious church of God.

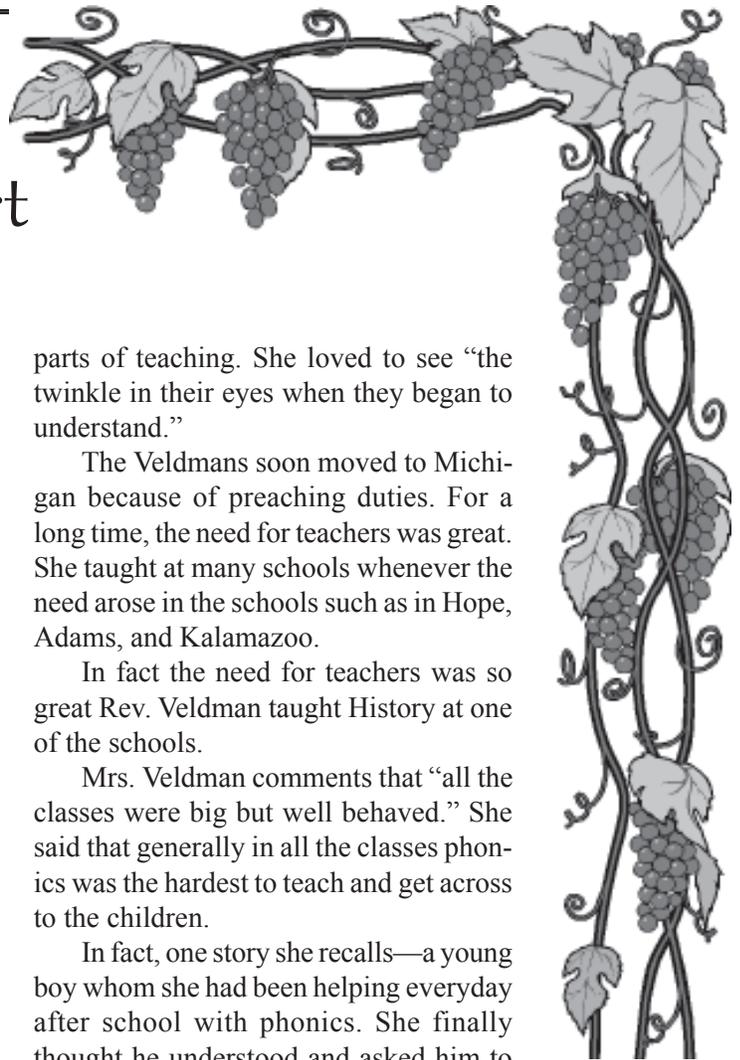
This “I don’t care” attitude may be part of the growing pains faced by young people, but that is no excuse to leave it be. This attitude is inappropriate for the believer young or old. This is a sinful way of life that threatens the whole church. We are a body of believers. God has given us our place in the church. He places us within the Body of Christ and therefore we MUST care. We read in I Corinthians 12:24-25 “God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacketh: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” Members of the body of Christ that do not care about the other members of the body, the interrelations of members within the church, and the overall life of the church really have no place in the church. They are foreign to the body and inevitably begin to interfere with the life of the body.

The “I don’t care—Whatever” attitude is promoted by the “rugged individualism” philosophy popular in America. We must not think of ourselves as rugged self-sufficient individuals. We must not shrink back into ourselves and be content to fend for ourselves and care only about what we want for ourselves. The rugged individualist may be the American way, but it is destructive to the church. We need to be aware of the presence of this philosophy and not be blind to the fact that television and other popular media promote it.

In opposition to the “rugged individualism” and “I don’t care” philosophy, the church, home, and school must actively teach and demonstrate care and responsibility in church life. We must pray to God for the strength and desire to care for other people as well as our responsibilities in the church. Each one of us needs to examine our own lives and confess that we all fall short of our calling to seek first the kingdom of God. A godly attitude and biblical conception of one’s place in the church must be developed out of our knowledge of God and His church. Parents should address the problem with their teenage children from God’s Word. Often fellow young people who are concerned for the spiritual well-being of the “I don’t care” classmate or friend can impart a powerful influence toward positive change. Don’t approve of the “I don’t care” language of your friends. Don’t be silent about it. Set a good example by not using the language yourself.

You can actively promote the “I care” attitude by asking for the care of others. Pray for the courage to admit your limitations and look to a friend, family, or your pastor for help. If everybody lives as a rugged individual, they do not admit they need others and eventually are unwilling to care for others. But, if everybody makes known their needs from the other members, they will receive help and also be willing to care for others.

Let’s cut out the “I don’t care” “whatever” language from our talk. Don’t be fooled by its deception. Don’t glorify the “rugged individual.” Don’t look up to the “I don’t care” individual who looks strong on the outside but hollow and insecure on the inside. Instead, demonstrate the Christian life in a walk of thankfulness and care one for another. We are members of a Body. God calls us to “have the same care one for another.” ❖



# A Teacher at Heart

by Melissa Van Baren

A straight column of children 2 by 2 march like army soldiers to one destination, Reed's Lake, for a field day. After their 2 to 2 ½ mile march from school, a lunch is greatly anticipated. This first grade class of 47 is all under the watchful eye of only one chaperon, Mrs. H. Veldman.

Teaching is what she, my great grandmother, Flora Veldman did best. It's what she enjoyed and excelled at, just as her mother did. She began her teaching in the 1930's at the age of 20 years. She taught at many different schools including Edgerton, Hope, Adams, Kalamazoo, and Baxter Christian, in Grand Rapids. She taught for a total of about 18 years.

Mrs. Veldman began her studies at Calvin College. After 2 years, she completed her studies, and received a "Life Certificate" to be a teacher after 3 years of teaching.

Baxter Christian, in Grand Rapids, MI was her first assignment. This first class contributes to her top memories of teaching. Why? Because "This was a first grade class of 47 students." She also recalls a "small cute girl with curly hair slapping a boy because he kissed her," from this first class.

After 3 years at Baxter Christian, she married Rev. H. Veldman and moved to Pella, his first call as minister.

At Pella, Mrs. Veldman received a few requests for her to be a teacher, but Rev. Veldman refused saying "She may not now that she's married."

Later that was proved wrong when there was a need for a teacher in Edgerton which she readily excepted. Mrs. Veldman explains "Rev. Veldman wasn't opposed to my teaching because there was a need in the Christian Schools."

"In Edgerton," Mrs. Veldman recalls, "I helped a young girl, that had been held in the first grade for 3 years, every day after school in the library to help her read." Still today, she says that girl hasn't forgotten her because the girl sends money and gifts to her on her birthdays and on Christmas.

Helping students with problems and helping those who didn't understand things was one of her favorite

parts of teaching. She loved to see "the twinkle in their eyes when they began to understand."

The Veldmans soon moved to Michigan because of preaching duties. For a long time, the need for teachers was great. She taught at many schools whenever the need arose in the schools such as in Hope, Adams, and Kalamazoo.

In fact the need for teachers was so great Rev. Veldman taught History at one of the schools.

Mrs. Veldman comments that "all the classes were big but well behaved." She said that generally in all the classes phonics was the hardest to teach and get across to the children.

In fact, one story she recalls—a young boy whom she had been helping everyday after school with phonics. She finally thought he understood and asked him to say a word that started with "m" (and sounded it out). He said "m...m...m...garbage can." She proclaims "I'm not sure what I did. I probably threw my hands up."

When asked what was her favorite part of her day she replied laughingly "recess" and then later responded "Actually it was Bible class." She explained she loved to see the whole circle of children listening so intently and quietly.

Mrs. Veldman reminisces one incident that erupted from Bible class. A small girl had gone home after school and told her parents the Bible story. "Moses and the Israelites were lead by a clown out of Egypt." (Clown was supposed to be cloud).

Mrs. Veldman has many wonderful memories from teaching and enjoys talking about them. ❖

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*Melissa is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her interview of Mrs. Veldman was part of her course work.*

## The Doctrine of Creation (3)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

In addition to the doctrinal denials already mentioned in our discussion of theistic evolution, it is impossible for the theistic evolutionist to have a proper understanding of the antithesis, of marriage and the family, and of work and rest.

This truth of the antithesis is found already in the second chapter of Genesis, in verses 16 and 17. Here Adam is instructed that he may eat of every tree in the garden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree God says, "Thou shalt not eat of it." Later, after Adam broke this commandment of God, we read in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the women, and between thy seed and her seed." In these two verses, we have a clear understanding of the antithesis.

The antithesis is a part of creation. God willed the antithesis. It was not an accident resulting from the sin of Adam. Antithesis is a part of God's divine plan. This is not to say that there is antithesis within God Himself. There is no opposition within God Himself. However, there is antithesis in creation and it is the work of God. Isaiah 45:7 explains this clearly, where we read, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."

A belief in theistic evolution necessitates a denial of this antithesis in the world. As far as the theistic evolutionist is concerned, light and darkness are not distinct. Good and evil cannot be distinguished one from another. The theistic evolutionist cannot say that God has willed and created darkness in this world to be His servant. Darkness and evil are not the servants of God against which the bright glory of God is shown, but are powers outside of the control of God.

Because God is pure thesis, and because God has created darkness so that He might forever hate it, He has also by His grace put the thesis in His people. God requires of us that we live thetically in all spheres of life. Just as God hates sin and evil, so must we. By God's grace, we fight against them and seek no cooperation

with them. One cannot hold to the doctrine of the antithesis and theistic evolution at the same time.

Another problem that the theistic evolutionist faces is that he cannot have a proper view of marriage and the family. This is because a proper understanding of the two can only be found within God's work of creation. In Genesis 2:21-24 we read of the forming of woman by God out of a rib of Adam. In verse 24 we read, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." This institution of marriage, performed by God in paradise, sets the example for all marriages. It is the joining of two into one. To deny this truth in the second chapter of Genesis, or to belittle it as myth, is to deny it as it is found in Ephesians 5:31, I Corinthians 6:16, and everywhere it is found in Scripture.

Along with this comes a proper view of the family. In Genesis 3:20 we read, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." This verse is related to the promise in verse 15 where we read that the seed of the women would bruise the head of the serpent. This seed of the women is Christ, whose death redeems all the "living" seed of the women. Adam and Eve were the very first parents to bring forth covenant children. Abel was the first covenant seed. God was beginning to save His children in the line of continued generations. This is plain to see in chapters 4 and 5. The children of Seth walked in the ways of the Lord, whereas the children of Cain walked in the ways of unbelief.

Theistic evolutionists, by virtue of their non-literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, necessarily have a wrong view of work and rest. In Genesis 1, we read that God created everything and formed man in six days. On the seventh day He ended His work and rested (Gen 2:2). According to the theistic evolutionist, these six days referred to in Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour days. Each of these "days" must be understood as long periods of time, probably millions, or billions of years.

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Genesis 1 simply serves as an easy-to-understand summary of the long evolutionary process, says this brand of evolutionist.

This is a dangerous error. For to deny a literal six-day creation and the Lord's rest on the seventh day, is to open the door to desecration of the Lord's Day. In Exodus 20: 8-11, we read the fourth commandment. Six days we are to labor, and the seventh day we are to keep holy. This command is grounded in the very work of God in creation as explained in verse 11 of Exodus 20 where we read, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." We are to labor six days and keep holy the seventh day because the Lord created in six days and rested the seventh. Theistic evolutionists have no use for this command of God. It is not a wonder then that sabbath observance means very little in denominations where theistic evolutionism has taken hold. This is just one instance of people who have gone wrong in the area of practical living because they do not have a proper understanding; in this instance, of the doctrine of creation.

Finally, those who embrace theistic evolution deny the miracle of creation. A denial of the miracle of creation leads to a denial of all other miracles found in Scripture. Among these miracles are the virgin birth of our Savior, His atoning death, and His resurrection and ascension into heaven. One who denies these miraculous works, denies the miracle of salvation, and is an unbeliever. This is where theistic evolution leads. Those who champion this false doctrine really have no use for God and His Son.

Those who still would say that it is possible to believe in theistic evolution and not deny the work of God in salvation ought to read Article 12 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine in the Canons. When speaking of the work of regeneration, the Canons compares this work of God to that of creation with the following words:

but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the author of this work declares.

There is no doubt that theistic evolution is anti-Confessional and unbiblical. There is hardly a book in the Bible that does not mention the miracle of creation. In Psalm 19:1 we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork." In Romans 4:17 we read of God who "callet those things which be not as though they were." In Nehemiah 9:6 we read, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; the host of heaven worshippeth thee." There is no doubt as to what the whole of Scripture says about the work of creation.

With this, we end our discussion of theistic evolution. In next month's issue, Lord willing, we will discuss the proper view of the doctrine of creation; the belief of which begins with faith. ❖

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Guest Article

## A Traitor Within

by Jay Martz

Let us suppose that the government forced you to live with a known traitor. Not just any villain, but someone who sought your ill. A person so consumed with self gratification that he would not only have you condemned to death if only he could fill his hearts lust, but would not give a second thought

if you were cast into Hell. What a grievous situation this would be? Would anyone feel comfortable in such an environment? Would you not always be on your guard, praying to God for strength and protection? Only a fool would be careless, knowing that such an evil lurked about his abode. The truth of the matter is that we all, every

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one of us, live with such a foul person. This malcontent is called the old man, and you shall dwell with him all the days of this earthly life. How does the knowledge of this fact affect you?

To my mind, this is an important element in why we as Christians are to live a life of separation from the wicked. Yes, the antithesis is so important in this day and age. We must never forget our need to be separated in service to the Holy One of Israel. We as God's people are called to be Holy as God is Holy. Practically this is impossible of ourselves. The old man is with us unto the end. We must rely upon the righteousness of another not only for our salvation, but also for our sanctification. Even if we are unable in this present life to hate sin as we ought, we are responsible nonetheless to keep far from it. The truth of our inability to remain unspotted from the world, apart from the grace of God is a strong motivator to flee from the appearance of evil.

Not only does scripture warn us to not trust in our own strength in fighting against our sinful inclinations, but it gives us examples of great men of faith who, for a time, did trust in the arm of flesh. We have the example of righteous Noah who became drunk, and that after so great a deliverance. How about the example of Moses who was lifted up in self-righteousness at the waters of Meribah? What about the man after God's own heart, king David, who not only committed adultery, but murder? How about the rock, Peter, who denied his Lord, and also fell pray to the opinions of the Jews. Who of us can say, "I am stronger than they? These may deny thee, Lord, but I will never deny thee?" Take heed that ye stand lest ye fall!

How may we learn from our fathers? What do their errors teach us? Noah rather than walking humbly before his God overindulged in wine and thereby encouraged the transgression of his son Ham. Moses the meekest man left his goodly course and lifted up with pride, smote the rock twice. Thus he manifested his sinful nature by being disobedient to his God and Redeemer. King David was cast down at his own home, by looking upon a woman other than his wife. He did not turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, but with lust in his heart he committed adultery, and then completed the course that

ended in murder. Peter also lifted up with pride and feeling that he could stand, was cast down quickly by his adversary.

The common factor in the falling of these men was they left the straight and narrow, by trusting in themselves; being unmindful of the old man within. They took their eyes off God, and did what was right in their own eyes. Any time we walk in a way contrary to God's Word, we then leave the narrow path that leads to life. Surely God will protect and preserve us no doubt, but to be so

bold as to disregard his precepts is to invite a great fall accompanied by the heavy chastening hand of LORD. Just because we are on the path does not guarantee that it will be smooth and easy. We often find difficulties on the road that leads to life, which we must overcome. We may be doing our Christian duty when along comes a great temptation. Sometimes we are called to fight, at other times to flee.

How we react to these situations

on the path also determine whether we stand or fall. In some situations we are to fight such as against the sinful inclinations that war against our soul. Other times we are commanded to flee, such as when overtaken by the temptation of fornication, or idolatry. In general, we are to avoid all that would tend toward sin. If a situation does not look God honoring, it is best to stay far from it.

We must with all of our might strive to live a life of purity and chastity. We must do all within our power to abide by God's Word, with strong prayers and supplications that God would defend his name by keeping us from sin. As we are doing so it should be with great earnestness, as we each with all of our hearts desire Christ's honor and glory. We must be bold to admit our weaknesses, not trusting in our own ability, or holiness, but beckoning God to fill us with his Holy Spirit that we might stand against all of our foes. If we think we can stand strong when Noah, Moses, David, and Peter could not, we deceive ourselves. Our Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 127, expresses our duty in this area very beautifully:

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" that is since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own

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**Do not trust in your own strength to fend off the traitor within, but trust in the Almighty, knowing that he will make you more than a conqueror in this battle.**

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## God's Cleansing Work

**T**his morning I woke to a freshly washed world;  
 I pondered—just what does this mean?  
 It pictured to me how God takes sinners' hearts  
 And renews, makes them perfectly clean.  
 How great a Redeemer is needed for this—  
 Each day there's a mountain of guilt!  
 Each day there is mercy abundant in scope;  
 On this promise my faith has been built.

**T**hank Thee, dear Father, that Thou in Thy grace  
 Looked down upon sinners and saw  
 Not our sins, but the blood of the sacrificed Lamb;  
 The fulfillment complete of the law.  
 Give me eyes, Lord, to see, and a heart to rejoice  
 In the beauty surrounding this earth,  
 Knowing this merely is a portrayal of all  
 That Thy work of salvation brings forth.

Thelma Westra

***Wanted:** Poetry from the pens of poets young or old.  
 Please send us those flashes of inspiration. If you do  
 not want your name published just let me know. Send  
 your poetry to the editor via e-mail or regular mail.*

flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory.

Stand on your guard knowing that not only do you face great and powerful enemies, in the world and devil, but that you also have one within you. And this fiend is a relentless enemy that never sleeps, but tirelessly conceives of new ways to satisfy himself while causing you misery. Cling dear fellow saint to the Word of God; seek to be obedient always, for we know that it is better than sacrifice. Keep in the heavenly path, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather

reprove them. Do not trust in your own strength to fend off the traitor within, but trust in the Almighty, knowing that he will make you more than a conqueror in this battle. Forget not the importance of those of like precious faith. As our father David had his Jonathan, we ought to turn to our brothers in Christ to help and encourage us in this struggle. Let us fight the good fight of faith under the banner of the Captain of our salvation. May we stand upon the watchtower of our souls by abstaining from all appearance of evil, so that we shall not be cast down by the traitor within. May God give us grace. ❖

*Jay is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.*

# Living in the Computer Age: A Reason for Christian Concern?

by Susann Huizinga

Computers are the wave of the future, and now, with the emerging popularity of the Internet, the computer industry is growing and expanding by leaps and bounds. Everyone, it seems, is investing in computer equipment and software in order to be online or to benefit from the other conveniences that computers provide.

Computers have a tremendous impact on almost everyone, and our schools are no exception. Many of our schools are building up their computer labs and teaching their students how to use them. This is a good practice, the children and young people in our schools have to be familiar and proficient with computers and how to use them. In order to survive in today's and tomorrow's world, students must be computer literate. Computers have many good qualities and tremendous capabilities to make tedious or humanly impossible tasks easier to complete.

However, despite their ability to make life easier for all of us, I believe that computers also give Christians reasons for concern. One of these concerns lies with the development of the Internet, and this concern is mainly for two reasons. First, many families and schools are now online, and the Internet can be a dangerous and volatile source of information. Young people can easily stumble onto things that no one should ever read or be so easily presented with. Should we make something so volatile and dangerous so easily accessible to our young people? Possibly, with appropriate supervision. Secondly, I believe that the Internet should also be viewed as one of the signs of the times. Through the Internet the world is becoming more and more connected and has become much smaller. Communication with anyone anywhere or in any country is entirely possible. The gathering of the nations through the swift communications through

the Internet and other computer technology makes the teachings of Christ possible in Matthew 25: 32-33: "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

I also feel that the Internet, although it gives our churches opportunity to spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ, can and is, also an outlet for the many false teachings and prophets whom Jesus warns about in Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

As teachers in our Protestant Reformed schools, I believe that we must be aware of those things which seem to point to the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must make these things known to our students. However, we must not teach these essential truths in fear, but rather with the attitude of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer:

"Thy kingdom come," that is, rule us so by thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee, preserve and increase thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all." Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 48, Question and Answer 123.

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# The Song of Zion

by Skip Hunter

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

### March 1 Read Psalm 46

**Psalm 46:1** People of God, have you been in trouble lately? This trouble may be caused by our sin, it may be caused by a particular circumstance in our lives, or it may be caused by the enemy around us. Are you in trouble? What did you do about it? Did you wring your hands and cry, “Woe is me.”? Did you do nothing? If we did either of these things we need to stop and consider this verse. God is a present help in trouble. He is present which means that He is always there in our times of troubles. We do not have to wait for Him to return from a trip, to wake up, or to finish another’s troubles. He is there for us all the time. He is like no other friend we can have in this earth. He is also a help. His advice or guidance as given through His word will work. Oh, it may not be the answer we want. It may not be easy. But God’s answer is a help and the only help. Remember that and go to your refuge and strength in times of trouble. Sing Psalters 126:1 and 127:1.

### March 2 Read Judges 5:1-11

**Psalm 46:2-3** In writing about the first verse of this Psalm, I spoke of personal troubles. I want to examine ecclesiastical or church troubles this time. We often forget about the church of which we are a member. Classis, Synod, Presbytery, or General Assembly meets, and we may mention it once in a while in our prayers but that is about it. We have a corporate responsibility to our churches as the manifestation of the body of Christ. We can learn much about this responsibility by examining the history of Old Testament Israel. In the Scripture reading for today we see that they are returning from battle. They have fought against a formidable foe. They have won because God was with them. He fought for them by using various parts of His creation. Do we see that He is fighting for us as an earthquake rocks our homes? Do we see His victorious march in the aftermath of a hurricane or tornado? Have this winter’s storms shown us His hand on our side in our fight against Satan and his hosts? We should and must see these things. We will not fear if we confess that our God is fighting for us against sin and Satan using His creation. Sing Psalters 127:2 and 128:1.

### March 3 Read Genesis 2:8-14

**Psalm 46:4** There is a spring which provided much of the water for Jerusalem during David’s time. This water source enabled them to live in this strongly fortified city. This river is used as a picture of the grace which blesses God’s city or His church. It blesses them in such a way that they are glad. Do you acknowledge that you drink daily from that river of grace, people of God? Are you glad of that grace and what it means for you? We are the dwelling place of God. This is confessed in the New Testament when our bodies are spo-

ken of as “temples of the Holy Spirit.” This gladness that we receive from this river of grace must be evident in our daily lives. We must show our happiness to be a member of the city of God. We must never attend church grudgingly. Our service of thanksgiving must be evident in all we do. Let us be glad, people of God! Sing Psalters 126:2 and 127:3.

### March 4 Read Revelation 7:9-17

**Psalm 46:5** The Psalmist continues with his confession that God is in the midst of His church. We can see this by examining and learning about the history of Old Testament Israel. We can see this if we examine the history of the church of all ages including our own churches. And we can see that this is true of the church triumphant in heaven as we read in Revelation. Because God is in the midst of her the church will not be moved. Oh, a particular congregation may cease because of the will of God, but the church will not vanish ever. Of that there can be no doubt. In times of trouble God will help His church. He will help them because it is His church. This church is the bride of the second person of the Trinity. This church is the body of Christ. Why would He not help her? Why would He not come to her aid in times of trouble? He helps her and will bring her to glory in heaven. Pray for this help and pray in the confidence that it will come in a timely matter. Christ Himself has said, Behold, I come quickly.” Let this be our confidence today and forever. Sing Psalters 127:4 and 128:2.

### March 5 Read Judges 5:12-23

**Psalm 46:6-7** We return to the words of Deborah and Barak’s song to look at this part of Psalm 46. Israel won a battle by the strength of Jehovah. Wicked armies fought against God’s covenant people; He spoke and those wicked were routed. This is true today. Oh, we may not see such dramatic victories with our physical eyes, but if we look with the spiritual eyes given to us by God, we can see just as dramatic victories. Read the history of the church and the reformers. Look at what they have done through God. Once we examine those histories and examine our lives and experiences, we should be quick to confess that Jehovah of hosts is with us and is our refuge. People of God, do not fall into the trap of trying to win these victories by your own power. Do not be deluded that the strength of man is anything. Only by the grace of Jehovah of Hosts will we conquer Satan and the forces of sin. Sing Psalters 126:3 and 127:5.

### March 6 Read Judges 5:24-31

**Psalm 46:8-9** How do we know that God will give to us the victory? How do we know that He will be there when we need Him? How can we be certain that placing all of our trust in Him is the

right thing to do? David tells us what to do. He commands us to come and see the works of God. Look around you, people of God, what do you see? As I type these words the Northeast part of the United States has utter desolation caused by God's winter voice. Other parts of the world have also seen the works of God whether they acknowledge them or not. As we examine history (Young people, that is why you study history in school.) we cannot help but see God's sovereignty and power. Do you see these things? Are you ready to confess that the Lord, He is God? If not, than go look again. If so, bow your head and pray for the grace to see that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Sing Psalters 126:4 and 127:6-7.

### **March 7 Read Psalm 46**

**Psalm 46:10-11** In the end of this Psalm the Psalmist continues to tell us how to find confidence in God's doings. He tells us to be still and know that He is God. We must put away our busyness and know that God is God. This is particularly applicable to this day of the week. How many of us either work or play till we fall into bed on Saturday night exhausted with no thought for Sunday? We need to put away our weekly activities and be still a while on Saturday evening so that we can be ready for the Lord's Day. By doing this we will truly see that God is our refuge and strength. We will be able to experience the mercies of God which are new every morning. Best of all, we will be able to be glad in the Lord's Day and be able to obtain all the benefits that God has given to us in the Sabbath. Be still and know, people of God. Sing Psalters 126:5, 127:8 and 128:3.

### **March 8 Read Psalm 47**

**Psalm 47:1-2** Psalm 47 is a song of praise. We see that its title states that it was written for the sons of Korah who took part in the temple worship. We, too, can use it for our worship of Jehovah whether privately, at home, or at church. The first verse tells us to be excited in worship. Oh, not the superficial excitement that many in the church world exhibit today. But rather the excitement of those who realize that they are part of a peculiar people. Are we excited as we worship God? Do we show it in church? Or is it easily seen that we are there either grudgingly or out of custom or habit? The second verse tells us to be excited in worship because Jehovah is a great king. We must be excited because of what He has done for us. Be excited people of God in the presence of the terrible and awesome King. Sing Psalters 129:1 and 130:1.

### **March 9 Read Hebrews 4:1-11**

**Psalm 47:3-4** We were introduced to our King in verse 2. In these verses we have some of the things He will do for us. First of all He "subdues the people under us." This refers to the wicked who oppress us daily. This should give to us the comfort needed to live with oppression and persecution now and in the future. As a King, God is also revealed as our Father because He chooses the inheritance that He will give to us. That inheritance is to sit at His feet in heaven. As our King, He loves us and cares for us. He wishes nothing but the best for us. Did we praise Him for that in church yesterday? Are we praising Him for it today? We must praise God from whom all blessings flow because He is our king. Sing Psalters 129:2 and 130:2.

### **March 10 Read Joshua 6:1-11**

**Psalm 47:5-6** The passage we read for today shows one of the manners in which God fought battles for Israel. Both Israel and Jericho had to be mystified by what happened during that long week. And then when the sounds of the trumpet rang out and the shouts of victory? What a glorious noise to God! This was a signal victory for

Israel as they began to claim the land of Caanan for itself. It is also a signal victory for us as we believe the power of God and His ways. What must our response be? We must sing praises to God! We must sing praises to our King. These are not the wishy-washy songs of much of what calls itself church. These are the solidly Reformed God-centered songs. We must sing them and sing them daily. Sing Psalters 129:3 and 130:3.

### **March 11 Read Isaiah 30:27-33**

**Psalm 47:7-8** The Psalmist comes back to the reason for singing songs to God. That main reason is that He is our King. It is not that we make Him King; He is King! We must realize this daily. These praises that we sing must be praises with understanding. They may not be simply platitudes with which the world praises its monarchs. God commands us that we praise Him with understanding. This means as was written yesterday that our songs of praise must have substance to them. Secondly it means that we must sing Jehovah's praises with our hearts. How many choirs have sung the "Hallelujah Chorus?" How many of them sang it with their hearts and with understanding? We must sing our praises in this manner because our God is a Holy God. He tolerates nothing but holiness before Him. Through Christ Jesus our songs can appear holy before Him. Let us sing His praises and let us sing them with understanding. Sing Psalters 129:4 and 130:4.

### **March 12 Read Psalm 47**

**Psalm 47:9** We come to the end of this Psalm of praise. One more truth is explained to us. We see that our King is a covenant King. We see this in the words "people of the God of Abraham." The fact that God is a covenant king has great implications for our lives. Our whole life needs to be shaped by this realization. Our marriages must be founded on this fact. We teach our children using the best possible covenant schools based on this fact. We worship based on this fact. That our God is a covenant God means that He is friends within Himself and with us. If this concept is hard, study it. Immerse yourself in it and find out its meaning for your lives. Its truths are our salvation. For by the covenant of grace, God sent His only begotten son to this earth for us. God is King; God is a covenant King, and He deserves our praise. Sing Psalters 129:5 and 130:5.

### **March 13 Read Psalm 48**

**Psalm 48:1** This is a favorite Psalm of many of God's people. From the opening verse of praise until the closing verse of trust, God's people can gain much from this Psalm. In the first verse we are reminded of the greatness of our covenant God. Secondly we are reminded that He is to be greatly praise by us. We are told where to praise Him. We are to praise Him in the church. The idea of church is further given as the "mountain of His holiness. Is God great? Do you confess this daily? Do you confess it in church weekly? We must do this because of who God is. This is not a choice but a command by our sovereign creator. Sing Psalter 131:1.

### **March 14 Read II Samuel 5:1-10**

**Psalm 48:2-3** Verses two and three continue to describe the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We found first of all that the church is a holy church. Now we find that it is beautiful. Jerusalem was known not only for its physical beauty but also for its strategic location on Mount Zion. God uses that for a picture of the church throughout Scripture. We find that the church is the place of dwelling for the great king of Psalm 47. It is the place where God is pleased to dwell among His chosen people. We also find that He is the refuge for His church. Here the figure changes. The refuge of the city is the King. When she falls into troubles, she is to look to Him for help. She can

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run to Him in times of trouble and find a place of refuge. This is another reason why Jehovah is greatly to be praised by the church. Sing Psalter 131:2.

### **March 15 Read II Chronicles 17:1-10**

**Psalm 48:4-7** In verse three we read that “God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” We find in today’s verses that He is known by nations other than the church. How is He known? He is known by His doings. Kings had often gone against Jerusalem; most of the time without much success. That God was the God of Israel caused some to leave Israel alone. Others became afraid and quickly went away. Others tried to fight and were painfully destroyed. Even ships on the sea would feel the power of Israel’s God. This is a comfort to the people of God. When it looks like the wicked are gaining an upper hand, God will protect His people. But it must be because the wicked know that God is our God. We cannot live like the world and expect the world to fear us. When Israel’s people forsook Jehovah, they were conquered by the wicked. When we forsake our covenant God, our sins will rise up against us. It is only by God’s mercy that we are not consumed. Sing Psalter 131:3.

### **March 16 Read Philippians 4:1-9**

**Psalm 48:8** Did you hear the voice of Christ yesterday? Did He speak to you through the sermon? Consider what you heard; have you seen in the church’s history the truths of what you heard? God’s people throughout history have been given accounts of His wonderful works. But they do not just get the history of these works, God’s people experience His wonderful works in their lives. Daily we know that God is on our side, and we need not fear what man may do to us. What we hear and see only happens in one place. That place is the church of God. People of God, you will not experience the goodness of Jehovah anywhere else but in His church. Do not try to find peace and rest in another place. God has spoken and His word never changes. Sing Psalter 131:4.

### **March 17 Read Lamentations 3:22-32**

**Psalm 48:9** We hear men speak of how good God is, and we agree readily. We can say this after a birth of a covenant child, or after some “good” thing that happens in the church. Sometimes we are very quick to acknowledge the mercies and lovingkindnesses of Jehovah. But can we do it in a situation like Jeremiah’s? Jerusalem had been destroyed. He had seen God’s people brutally killed and taken off to slavery. He had seen the king and the priest deny that God was God. It seemed at times that no one wanted to hear the voice of Jehovah. In the midst of that suffering, Jeremiah penned the words of today’s reading. He confessed that God’s mercies were new every morning. Is this your confession, people of God, no matter what the circumstance is? Are you able to say that truly God is good? Notice one other little part of this verse. The confession of God’s lovingkindnesses is done in God’s temple. Does that sound familiar? Sing Psalters 132:1 and 133:1.

### **March 18 Read Revelation 19:11-21**

**Psalm 48:10** This verse is completely God-centered. First of all we see that God’s praise is based in His name. He is God-almighty. Any praise we bestow on Him must be with that realization in mind. When we pray, when we sing, the contents of those prayers and songs must be God-centered. To do anything else would be to blaspheme the holy name of God. Secondly God is a God of all the earth. There is nowhere where His name is not heard. Even though God’s national blessings were confined to Israel of old, His name was worldwide. Do we confess this today? Do we really confess an holy *catholic* church? Finally we see that these things are so because in God’s right hand of power is righteousness. He is right-

eous as He judges the nations. He is righteous as He weighs our every action in His scales of justice. Are we found wanting in those scales? We must pray for the grace of Christ so that we be not found wanting in God’s righteous scales. Sing Psalters 132:2 and 134:1.

### **March 19 Read Romans 2:1-11**

**Psalm 48:11** This verse is a continuation of the thought found in the last part of verse 10. God is the righteous judge. The church can be happy about that fact. Israel of old had to wait for God to judge the heathen in a physical way. They, because of the covenant, knew that their God was powerful. This fact gave them great feelings of joy. We, too, must have such feelings. We must know that God’s judgments are just and righteous. We may be impatient at times. Or we may forget that every act of our lives is weighed in His scales. But we must be patient. We must live lives in holiness to our God, the judge of all men and all things. Be glad in that fact, people of God. Rejoice with the rest of the church and teach your children to rejoice even when it appears that Satan is gaining the upper hand. Sing Psalters 132:3 and 134:2.

### **March 20 Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

**Psalm 48:12-13** The goal and purpose of catechism instruction is outlined in these two verses. Israel was instructed to walk around Jerusalem and see her strength against attackers. Why? So that it could boast in its power? So that they could claim greatness in the world? Of course not. Israel was only strong because God made them strong. We must never say that the strength of our churches lies within ourselves. To do so would be utter folly. As we walk around the church, we must see in its confessions and teachings nothing but the hand of God. We must see that it is only by grace that the church is what she is. Those confessions which serve as our defense and bulwark in times of trouble have been given to us by God. We may not just admire them. No, like Israel of old, we must teach them to our children. Catechism instruction must be precious in our lives. We must not let the church become slack in such instruction, and we must not become slack in such instruction. Our covenant children must know of God, about God, and how great God is. Only in that way will He bless our churches in generations to come. Sing Psalters 132:4 and 133:2.

### **March 21 Read Psalm 48**

**Psalm 48:14** We now come to the verse of trust. After confessions of praise to God in all our lives, we must trust that He will be with us until He takes us from this world. The verse starts with the word *for*. This word indicates that we can have confidence that all we have read before will come to pass. Our God is eternal. He is before time and He will be after this world is destroyed. We can trust the everlasting God to preserve us in whatever situation we find ourselves. Not only can we trust that we will get through such situations, but we also know that He will guide us through them. Just as a guide through unfamiliar territory on this earth, having a guide through unfamiliar spiritual territory is a good thing. God is our guide; what more do we need? God is our guide; He will be faithful even unto and through death. Sing Psalters 132:5, 133:3, and 134:4.

### **March 22 Read Psalm 49**

**Psalm 49:1-2** People of God, do you hear God speaking to you? Are you listening daily for His voice? Are we, like Samuel, willing to replay, “Speak Lord for thy servant heareth”? This Psalm begins with the command for people of all kinds to listen to the words of Jehovah. God’s speech is for all kinds of people. It is for the office bearers and for the member in the pew. It is for adults, children, and young people. Where does He speak? First of all He speaks through

His Word. We must read that Word daily and listen to what He says. He speaks through that primary means of grace—the sermon. Are we eager to hear it and believe it? He speaks through His creation. Do we listen to the signs in nature? Do we hear His voice? Let us listen because He speaks volumes. Sing Psalter 135:1.

### **March 23 Read I Timothy 4:12-16**

**Psalm 49:3-4** The fact that you are reading this probably indicates that you participate in some kind of meditation. It is my hope and prayer that this is daily in nature. I wish this not because of my writings, but rather I wish for you to daily meditate upon the Word of God. The only way that we can speak of God's wisdom is to know God's wisdom. Our heart's meditation will be full of understanding when they are guided by God's Word. By meditating on God's Word, we can hope to understand some of its depths. It is only by study that the Word will be opened to us. This passage also speaks of the value of singing the songs of Zion as part of our meditation. Are we profiting? We will when our meditation is based on Jehovah's word. Sing Psalter 135:2.

### **March 24 Read Job 5:17-27**

**Psalm 49:5** Job went through many trials and afflictions in this life. This afflictions were for his profit and our instruction. Job had to be taught what the profit was, and how that affliction was profiting. He had to learn that God was God. His experiences are recorded for us. When we are tempted to say, "Why me, Lord," we need to turn to that record and learn from it. Psalm 49:5 sums up Job's lesson. That lesson is that the child of God need not fear oppression. We need not fear what the forces of evil may do to us. God is on our side. Evil's forces can never harm us. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 135:3.

### **March 25 Read Zephaniah 1:12-18**

**Psalm 49:6-7** As this passage has instructed us to listen to God's word, we need to see what these verses are telling us. It is tempting for us to look around and covet the riches of those in the world. We fall into the trap of "trying to keep up with the Joneses." We want the same material goods that others have. We fall hard to the sin of materialism. The Psalmist brings us up short with this message of reality. Not one penny of earthly wealth can buy salvation for ourselves or even if we felt magnanimous for our brothers. Money cannot buy salvation. Talent cannot buy salvation. Salvation is merited only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. God does not even look at our earthly goods or abilities. He only looks at us through Christ our Savior. Let us learn to be content with what God chooses to give us. Sing Psalter 135:4.

### **March 26 Read Exodus 15:11-18**

**Psalm 49:8-9** What does it mean that we are redeemed? Oh, I am not looking for the theological definition of redemption. That has merit and needs to be understood. But what does it mean for us in this life. Is there any profit in being bought by the blood of the lamb? The answer is yes. Israel experienced this truth as they passed through the Red Sea and watched Egypt's army being drowned. That is a picture for us. Our redemption means that we will live forever. Not in this life, of course, but in the life to come. We will not see the corruption that spiritual death brings. God will protect and bring us safe to the promised land of heaven. This should provide for us the confidence that we need as we travel through this valley of the shadow of death. In today's vernacular; this makes it worthwhile. This makes life worth living. Sing Psalter 135:5.

### **March 27 Read Ecclesiastes 3:17-22**

**Psalm 49:10-11** As men prepare to die many wish to be remembered after they are gone. They wish a son to continue their name.

Some even go to great lengths to make this happen. Others make sure that some material structure has their name on it so that they are remembered by man. The testimony of Scripture is that all die and go to the grave. What is the attitude of the child of God to death? Does pride cause him to make sure that his name remains? Or does he realize that death is but a passageway to glory? Is death to be dreaded by us? Wisdom looks to the life hereafter which is not spent on this earth. Folly dreads death because its pride is squelched forever. Be wise, people of God, and see that in death is life. Sing Psalter 136:1.

### **March 28 Read Proverbs 14:1-12**

**Psalm 49:12-14** Today's verses are a continuation of yesterday's. The Psalmist continues to explore the idea of death and its consequences. Here we see that a man of foolish pride dies and is buried just like an animal. After he dies, he is gone forever. This is true spiritually as well as physically for the reprobate. Death is the end for them. In fact they will be judged by the righteous in the last days. Scripture testifies of this here and in other places. We must remember these things as we live in this earth. There is a heaven and hell. Real people will inhabit both places. Are you wise or foolish? Sing Psalter 136:2.

### **March 29 Read I Corinthians 15:12-23**

**Psalm 49:15** But! Just a three letter word. But what a three letter word! After hearing about the end of the wicked the Psalmist tells the righteous what he can expect. What a difference! We have the confidence that we are redeemed. Even though this earthly body will see destruction, our soul will be redeemed by God through Christ. We need not fear as we face death. There is no uncertainty about our final reward. God will receive us. He will not turn us away because we have been redeemed. The grave has no victory over us. The grave is not our enemy! We are redeemed! Sing Psalter 136:3.

### **March 30 Read Isaiah 5:11-17**

**Psalm 49:16-17** From the confidence given in verse 15, we now have practical advice given to us. We are not to be afraid because of the wicked who is made rich. We might be tempted to worry about what they have and what they might do with their riches. We also must not worry that his riches will affect our salvation. Our salvation is not dependent on what another has. Our salvation is only dependent upon the grace of God in Christ. Many times we compare ourselves to our neighbors for what they have or what they do. We must not do this. God has given to every individual his calling, his talents, and his salvation. The wicked have their reward, and the righteous have theirs. What a confidence! What a blessing! Rejoice and be happy. Sing Psalter 136:3.

### **March 31 Read Psalm 49**

**Psalm 49:18-20** These verses finish the thought began in yesterday's meditation. The plight of the wicked is gloomy. They have no hope! Their end is destruction. They are destined for Hell! Yes, Hell is a real place with real torment. It is for those who have boasted of their greatness throughout their lives. It is for those whose pride rules their lives. The end of the wicked has no hope just like the animals. But for the humble, diligent child of God, he has much in which to hope. His end is heaven. His final condition is eternal life. These facts should afford us great comfort. They should also direct our lives on this earth. Take heed, people of God, and listen to the voice of God. We have a calling on this earth, and we have a reward in heaven. Let us humbly bow in prayer and thank God for His precious gifts to us, and also ask Him to help us live lives that are pleasing to Him. Sing Psalter 136:4.

# Psalter 345— Our Unsleping Guardian

by Beth DeVries

**I** look to the hills for my help. What a great comfort this Psalter number is to the child of God in time of trials and difficulties. When I stand at

the foot of the mountains and lift my eyes to them, I am amazed at how great and unmoving they are. The mountains are rugged, yet there is a peaceful solace found in them. This is similar in our experience as Christians as we look to God for our help. He too is unchangeable in His dealings with us. I am ever grateful that this is true, for I must put my trust in God to uphold me in His way. The Lord provides the help we need even when we do not know how great our need is. The Lord made the heavens and earth, and it seems that the mountains are there for us to see and realize how stable our God is. He is able to move the mountains with only His spoken word, and yet He cares for us.

God will be our guide through all of life's journey, as the second part of the first stanza states. He will not allow anything to happen to us apart from His good council and providence. We are unable to fall away from Him, which is comforting because on our own we would turn our backs to God. He protects us from the onslaughts of the devil, and though we may be tempted to sin, God has

blotted out those sins through Christ's blood shed on the cross. God watches over us every day and even in the night, as He does not tire or require rest. While we rest

or are on beds of affliction and know not what goes on around us, God is there to protect and care for us.

We are comforted when we see saints of God grow old and become unable to go to church; yet He is caring for them. Day by day we are cared for by the Lord, our creator. God protects us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We require this protection, yet no human could ever provide it. We constantly give in to sin and to the lusts of our flesh, and though we are responsible for our actions, they are in God's plan and providence. Our omnipresent and omniscient God has a purpose

in all of our life, and He will keep us whether we be at home or away from home. Day by day and night by night, we find strength in this truth and put our trust in God alone. ❖

345 Our Unsleping Guardian

PSALM 121 79 GUEDE Marcus M. Wells



1. To the hills I lift my eyes; Whence shall help for me arise?  
From the Lord shall come my aid. Who the heaven and earth has made.

2. Thy protector is the Lord. Shade for thee He will afford;  
Neither sun nor moon shall smite, God shall guard by day and night.

He will guide thro' dangers all, Will not suffer thee to fall;  
He will ever keep thy soul, What would harm He will control;

He Who safe His people keeps Slumbers not and never sleeps.  
In the home and by the way He will keep thee day by day.

*Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

# It Is All By Grace

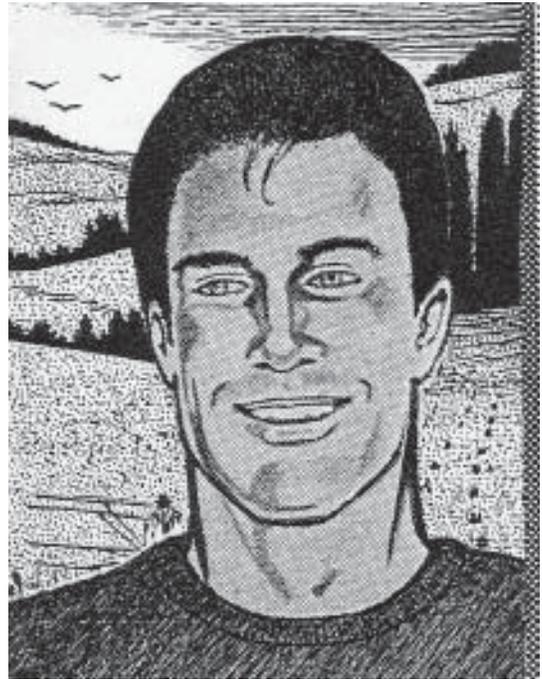
by J.P. de Klerk

John Dobson was a medical student. He had yet one year to go before his final examination. Everybody liked him. They called him a jolly good fellow. He was jovial, willing to help others, generous, and he did not hide the fact that he was a Christian. It made him especially attractive for his fellow student, Rose Brookner, who often sought the company of the square-built farmer's son. Soon they fell in love with each other.

Rose was a girl who had lost her parents when she was five years old and she grew up in an orphanage. She enjoyed visiting the Dobson family on their farm, and John told her everything about all the things that were going on there. One day, they had a long talk with the minister of the Church, who had a friendly relationship with the Dobsons since many years and they made known their wish to marry. They wanted to keep it simple, but that was not what father Dobson wanted. His only son had to have a colorful marriage with all the relatives and friends they could find. He would take care of the organization. So it was done, and the Church was full till the last seat.

Temporarily they went to live in a flat close to the university buildings. There they were very happy. In the living room they had the text from 2 Corinthians 12: "My grace is sufficient for you." This was a handmade gift from a friend of the high school where John had been, painted on black velvet, and framed by himself. Rose often put a vase with flowers next to it. They always saw it when they had dinner. Every day was their own little feast. They didn't know that something would happen that would be a real trial for them.

It all started with an ordinary cold and a headache John had after a very tiring day, working as a young doctor in the hospital, running up and down in the drafty corridors, looking after emergencies, complications, sudden problems, misunderstandings, et cetera. The cold passed off in a week, but the headache was still there. John did not worry about it, because he did not have it every day, but he made a habit of it to have aspirin tablets with him.



With difficulty, he passed his final exams. Rose, who had terminated her studies when she noticed that she was expecting a baby, had helped John as much as she could. She noticed that often his mind was not on his work. Suddenly, one morning, John had difficulty reading a laboratory report about a patient. It was like something was blocking his view. It was not a busy day, so John concluded that it would have something to do with his headaches.

He spoke about the incident with an older colleague, who brought him to a specialist who had a very good reputation. He researched John and decided that X-ray photos had to be made of his head straight away. He would hear the outcome the following day. John could not hide the fact for Rose that he was worried, and they prayed to God, asking for wisdom and strength.

Then came the news: He had a tumor. The specialist explained that it was on a spot where it can cause all kinds of illnesses, and some of these could be fatal, but it was the kind of cancer that seldom moves further, and it would not be too difficult to remove it, but as soon as possible.

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John and Rose talked long about the whole matter and they made a phone call to the minister of the church, who said he would pray for them in the church on Sunday.

The following morning it was a strange sensation for John to go to the hospital and write his name down as a patient. The girl at the reception desk was lost in wonder, because he appeared to be in good health. With a smile he looked at his white coat hanging on a peg with his name on it.

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It was afternoon, some days later. The sun shone at the windows of his room, but the curtains were drawn. John was in intensive care. He was watched by a nurse and above him there were machines who made ticking sounds. He opened his eyes and looked around, while his memories came slowly back and he realized where he was.... There had been the moment he was brought into the operating room, strange, well-known instruments and faces, but he in a reverse position. Not standing behind the table under the big lamps, not looking down on a patient....

The nurse next to him said: "Everything went well."

He blinked while these words sank in his consciousness. The nurse took a piece of cotton wool, dipped it in a cistern with water and moistened his lips. He relaxed a bit and whispered "Thanks...Fine...All right...Thank God."

The nurse wrote something down on a list in front of her.

Half an hour later, John suddenly asked, "How is my blood pressure?"

"As good as normal," answered the nurse.

"How was...the operation?"

"Well, the surgeon discovered something very rare. The tumor had destroyed itself already. He cleaned up."

"Nurse...it is *all...by grace...God* did it." There came tears in his eyes.

"Please, remain calm," said the nurse, a bit startled.

"Are you...a Christian?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"So, you...understand...God is here...His grace...forever." He felt a pleasant, wonderful peace coming over him and closed his eyes. Oh, he knew, God used people, but He could do things without them. He was the Almighty, the Sovereign. John felt too happy for words.

Later he woke up again, because he had heard footsteps. Then he saw Rose. She kissed him and they looked

in the eyes of each other with all the love they had. Gently she stroked his hands, laying on the blanket. Her face was radiant of joy and thankfulness. She knew what he knew. They were safe in the Lord's hands.

"Darling, how do you feel now?"

"Wonderful...happy...God is with us."

"Yes, He answered our prayers before we said them."

They experienced golden moments together.

The nurse opened one of the curtains. "John, the surgeon told me that you will have to wait three months before you work again in the hospital. I have spoken with your parents and with the minister. They send their best wishes for a speedy recovery."

"Thank you very much," John said.

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His recovery went one step at a time. After he had left the hospital he was yet a bit unsteady on his feet. He had done some light work in the garden, but he was quickly tired. Rose enjoyed the fact, that he was home every day. He did some paperwork, and he noticed that the coming baby became central to his thinking. He had to do something for the future of the three of them, the Lord willing. He looked at two posies of chrysanthemums one of the neighbors had brought.

He made some phone calls and told Rose, "Listen, there is a Doctor Sanders, who is an elderly man who wants to retire. He lives in a village not far from here and I would like to take over from him as a general practitioner, some time after the baby has arrived. My father is willing to lend me some money for buying the practice. We do not need to move. It is only fifteen minutes to drive.... What do you think of that?"

For a moment she was speechless. Then she threw her arms round his neck. "Oh John, that would be wonderful."

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That was how it all happened. The baby was born and received the name Theodore. John and Rose felt that God had enriched their lives. One day Dr. John rose early, went to the room where the baby was sleeping and looked out of the window. He saw how the morning crawled out from under a blanket of fog. He folded his hands and said, "Thank Thee, O Lord, for everything." ❖

*P.S. This story has really happened. I only changed the names, as usual.*

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

# Baptism: A Sign and Seal to Believers

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

**H**oly Baptism is one of the two sacraments which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted in the church at the end of his earthly ministry. After his resurrection and just prior to his ascension he gave commandment to his disciples, saying, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19, 20). Ever since that day the church of Jesus Christ has baptized both believers and their seed.

However, as with almost all of the doctrines of Holy Writ much controversy has surrounded not only the truth of the sacraments in general, but of baptism in particular. In this short article we will not go into all the different controversies, but will deal with one in particular, that concerning the false, superstitious view that baptism literally washes away sin. This doctrine was held very early in the history of the church when it was said that the sacrament of baptism was effective *ex opere operato*. This is a way of saying in Latin that grace is conferred upon him that is baptized through the act performed, that is, through the rite of baptism administered in the church. One of the early church fathers, Augustine, held to this view for he believed that baptism was absolutely necessary unto salvation because it removed the guilt of original sin. This was later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church.

As a result of this false theory there arose yet another evil idea and practice. Since it was believed that the water of baptism literally washed away original sin as well as all actual sins committed prior to the administration of the sacrament of baptism it was a common practice in the third and fourth century for men to put off their baptism until they thought that death was at hand. In doing so they would guarantee to themselves the washing away of all sins committed before they were

baptized. In this way they were prepared for death and heaven. We can immediately see that this doctrine is a denial of Christ’s satisfaction for all of our sins by his death on the cross.

Because of this view the Roman Catholic Church insists that an infant be baptized as soon as possible, especially so if there is a danger that the infant might die. An infant not baptized will not experience the anguish of hell, but only natural happiness. However, the joy and happiness of heaven it will not experience. Therefore, because the rite of baptism has within itself the power to regenerate the infant must be baptized in order to be saved and enter heaven.

What we have just stated leads us to see another error, that of baptismal regeneration. According to this view baptism has within it the power to confer the grace of regeneration after which one can believe. One does not have to be a believer to receive what is signified in baptism, but one only has to receive the physical element, in this case, the water of baptism. Neither is there a need for the operation of the Holy Spirit because the water has power in itself apart from the Spirit.

All of this makes the Roman Catholic Church an easy church to be a member of. One need not faith, one need not daily struggle to put off the old man of sin. No, one only needs to partake of the sacraments by means of which in a physical way he will receive forgiveness of sins and entrance into heaven. This physical relationship applies to all the sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church, seven in number.

The Reformed churches have always condemned this false doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, insisting that the relationship between the water in baptism and the grace signified by that water is a spiritual relationship rather than a physical relationship. This is in the very nature of sacraments. Sacraments are signs and seals. Therefore, if, according to Roman Catholicism, the effect is present in the water, then the water is no

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longer a sign or a seal. Herman Hoeksema in his *Reformed Dogmatics* gave this definition.

Sacraments therefore are holy, visible signs and seals, instituted by God, through Christ, administered by the church, received by believers and their seed, whereby God in Christ obsignates visibly the invisible grace of His covenant and seals it unto the believers, and whereby He gives unto His church ensigns and banners of His covenant, to separate them and distinguish them from the world.

The water in baptism, then, is first of all a sign. It is a physical, visible reality in our everyday life. In our daily life water washes away the filth of the body. Water as such can only wash away physical dirt and filth. On the other hand, there is the blood of Christ. By the grace of God this blood of our crucified Savior has cleansed us from our spiritual filth, namely, our sin and guilt. We can not see the blood of Christ nor God's grace. Christ is in heaven in his new heavenly body. God in His grace teaches us what He by His grace has done in the blood of Christ as it was shed on the cross. He uses a picture from daily life. He instructs us that just as physical, visible, earthly water washes away physical, visible, earthly filth, so also does the blood of Christ wash away our sin and guilt. The water, then, as a sign points to the invisible grace of God whereby He saves us through the blood of the cross. Roman Catholicism would have us believe that the water has the power to confer the grace by which our sins are taken away. A sign is meant to point to something which you can not see, but Roman Catholicism says that the sign is that something, thereby confusing grace with things.

Secondly, the water in baptism is a seal, a sign of the authority of its author, a sign that can not be violated or broken. Just what is it that is sealed in baptism? That the believer by faith is righteous before God in Christ. That is also one of the Reformation principles, justification by faith only.

By now we should be able to see the whole picture concerning baptism. Christ died on the cross and shed his blood, which he did in order that he might pay for all the sins of his people. When all his suffering was over, and his blood shed, he had taken all the sins of all his people away. Then he went into the grave in order to rise again by overcoming death so that he might go to glory where he is highly exalted. To be baptized is to be immersed in his blood, to die with him, to be buried with him, and to be raised with him again. All, that we may

follow him to heaven where we shall live with him forever.

Thus all the blessings of the cross are signified in baptism. On one side of the blood of Christ is the world with all its lusts. We are part of that world by nature, born into it, corrupt and depraved, under the wrath of God and condemned for all our unrighteousness. All the sins and transgressions which belong to us by nature stain and blot our souls.

But baptism is a sign of how God takes us through the bath of blood, the blood of Christ. By baptism we pass through the bath of the blood which Christ shed on the cross. We follow him into his grave that we may be raised with him. The result is that we stand on the other side of his grave, with his blood having cleansed us from all our sin, perfectly redeemed and glorified. We are cleansed from all the filth of our souls, purged by the Spirit of Christ, sanctified and renewed, enabled to walk more and more according to all the demands of God's covenant and law. Moreover, we are separated from the world so that we can fight the good fight of faith and persevere to the end and fasten our attention upon our home above where Christ has gone before us. All this is implied in baptism which is rich in spiritual significance.

The sovereign God is the author of this salvation, the blessings of which He applies to our hearts by faith. Therefore, our partaking of the sacrament of baptism is by faith. Literally we are not dipped into the blood of Christ. No, faith alone is the power whereby we are buried with Christ into his death and raised again with him to heaven. Faith is that power which God implants within our hearts and the hearts of those for whom Christ died. Therefore, by faith the elect people of God are planted into Christ as a tree planted into soil. By that same faith all the elect become members of the body of Christ and live in Christ to receive all the blessings of salvation from him. And by faith they are baptized into the name of the triune God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, by faith, as a gift of God, the elect receive all the blessings of the cross of Christ and are saved by the power of God and the grace of the cross.

Seen this way baptism, then, has rich practical significance. Not so for everyone, but only for those whom God has chosen to be His people. The sign is clear to them. When the sign of baptism is given in the church of Christ, then the believers by faith lay hold on all the blessings of the cross. They see with their eyes the sign which God has instituted and ordained. They lay hold on the cross of Christ by faith as the only rock of salva-

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tion in the midst of all the turmoil and unrest of sin in the world in which they live and which still is in their own flesh. They appropriate the blessings of that cross for their own as they are signified and sealed in baptism. And they believe the forgiveness of all their sin, and look beyond this life and see their heavenly home which lies at the end of their life's journey.

And finally, while on earth they assume their obligations which are given them by God's grace as privileges that they may have as covenant people. They bear

the mark of the cross, the ensign of their faith, the banner of God's party, the standard of soldiers of the cross of Jesus Christ. Thus they live in this life, daily striving with the weaknesses of their flesh, fighting the good fight of faith against sin and the world, clinging to their God in Christ, and confidently expecting the final victory over death and the grave. ❖

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*Rev. Miersma is the pastor of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.*

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## Church History

# How Heresy Creeps In

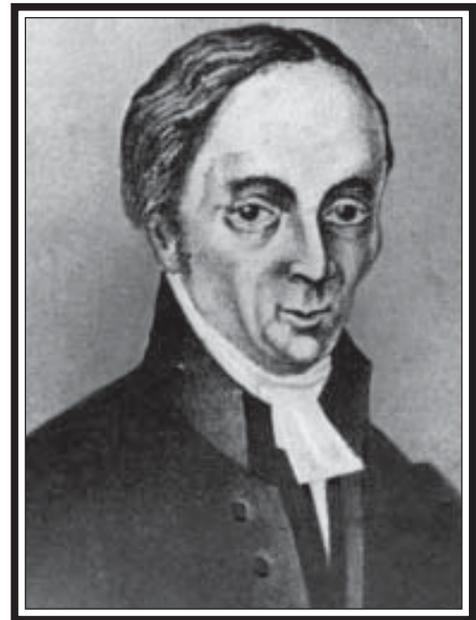
## Chapter 2

by Rev. C. Hanko

**I**t is important to understand the factors which led to the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The PR Churches were constrained to come out of the Christian Reformed Churches in America in 1924. In order to acquire a picture of the spiritual condition of the CR Churches in the 1920's it is evident that we must go to our roots, the Netherlands.

The CR Church was made up of two groups of immigrants from the Netherlands. First were the sons of the Afscheiding of 1834, the second were the sons of the Doleantie of 1886. Both groups had left the State Church of the Netherlands because of modernism and worldliness in 1892.

Even though the members of the Afscheiding had shed the modernism that had crept into the Hervormde (The State Church), it could not be said that they were without error or had accomplished complete reformation. Soon after the Afscheiding, in fact, only three years later, a Rev. Brummelkamp preached a general, well-meant offer of salvation. This disturbed the leader of the Afscheiding, Rev. De Cock, and others very much. In fact, the matter was brought to the Synod, but the Synod, evidently not wanting trouble so soon in their history, did nothing about it. Not long after, the son of Rev. De Cock also preached a general, well-meant offer of salvation. Again the matter was brought to the attention of the Synod, but again, evidently to avoid trouble,



*Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives*

*Rev. De Cock, leader of the Afscheiding (1834)*

nothing was done about it. The history that followed shows how important it is not to allow error to develop like a cancer, but to nip it in the bud. I have sermons in my library of "Reformed" ministers of the Netherlands who ended their sermons with a general, well-meant offer

of salvation, inviting all to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. That painting of Jesus knocking at the vine-covered door with its knob on the inside is very deceptive.



*Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives*

*Dr. Abraham Kuyper, leader of the Doleantie (1886)*

Also the Doleantie was not free of its errors. It was Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the father of the Doleantie, who involved himself in politics and soon developed the theory of common grace. Although Kuyper strongly opposed the idea that there was any relationship whatever between his common grace and salvation, yet it must be admitted that common grace can never actually be dissociated from the general, well-meant offer of salvation.

The Christian Reformed Churches in America were made up of these two groups of people who immigrated from the Netherlands; these two groups who already had the seed of the well-meant offer of salvation to all men and the seed of a certain “common” grace of God to all men well established. These errors which came along with the immigrants obviously effected the spiritual condition of the Christian Reformed Churches in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

On the basis of Dr. Abraham Kuyper’s common grace theory the churches saw much good in the world round about us. As a result of God’s favor upon all mankind, so they said, the church and the world have much

in common. They spoke of the wisdom of the Greek philosophers, who by their searching had come close to discovering God. Idolatry, so it was said, is the striving of the blind pagan in his search to find God. Often God’s revelation in nature and the scientific conclusions of the unbeliever were considered one and the same. By the natural light of God’s common grace fallen man was considered as being still capable of reading aright the hand writing of God in nature. Common grace was considered to be a bridge between Jerusalem and Athens, between the church and the world. The only conclusion to such a favor of God was the resulting belief that is restrained in the hearts of all mankind, and the sinner, without being regenerated, can do much that is good in the sight of God.

I have before me a sermon of J. Hiemenga, a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, published in 1909, on Isaiah 1:18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” In this sermon you will recognize the conditional theology and the offer of salvation which is so very prevalent in our day. He writes:

Well now, hear the Word of the Lord: Come then and let us reason together, and I assure you, I will take away all your sins, and set you before Me pure and holy.

*Do you comply with the condition?* There is oh so much religion. But also oh so much religion is mere form. Our time is crippled by it. Even as in Israel. Obligations, customs are regarded, but the heart is not in it. The intimate life with Christ is lacking; as a result, the service of the Lord and the service of sin go hand in hand...

The Lord despises that. Therefore: Repent. Forsake sin, break away from it, fight against it and walk according to God’s commandments.

Come then, *that is God’s offer*. Then, not earlier. If you want to live in sin there is no forgiveness. *God invites you to come*. Reason together. Discuss it with the Lord. Be honest and see who is to blame. (Translation and emphasis—mine C.H.)

Already then this general, well-meant offer of salvation was interpreted to mean that God loves all men. At that time a minister in the CRC in Grand Rapids preached on the text in I John 2:15, 16: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” The points of his sermon were:

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“I. God does love the world. II. We may not love the world. III. Why not.” Apart from the fact that the first point is not even in the text, he preached a universal love for all mankind. Was this the fruit of the theory of common grace?

Heresy, as all sin, has its consequences. Unless a church repents and returns to the truth of the Word of God, this evil grows. Error develops into more serious error. Under the righteous judgment of God these apostate churches become the false church. Today there are men in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands who

maintain that one can be saved even though they do not believe in Jesus Christ. They maintain that a sincere Jew, Moslem, or the like can be saved.

Through all this God preserves His church. Zion is redeemed through judgment. ❖

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*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.*

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## The Church of Invercargil

by J.P. de Klerk

**A**lthough less in number than in The Netherlands, New Zealand also has many church buildings, and the majority are of the Protestant faith. For example, the city of Invercargil, which has now 60,000 inhabitants, was founded by the “Free Church of Scotland” who brought there shiploads of immigrants, well prepared and well-organized. This city was built at the river Waihopai, at the South Island, 224 kilometers south of the earlier founded city of Dunedin. Invercargil is well-known because of the enormous amounts of meat it delivers (the soil is excellent for cows). There is also much trade in wood and coal. The photo is of the entrance of the Presbyterian “First Church,” built in 1899 with beautiful brickwork and very artistic leaded windows.

The doctrines of this church are close to the Reformed faith (founded by Thomas Cartwright in Cambridge).

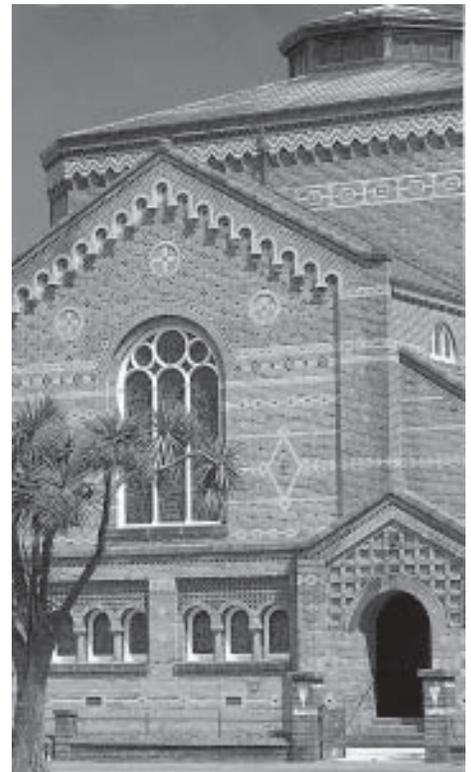
## Historic Church of Puhoi



**M**ore than a century ago many immigrants came to New Zealand. Usually one of the first things they did was build of church. This church in Puhoi (North of the harbor city of Auckland) is a good example. Made of hard emu-wood (like oak), covered with steel plates. The drawing is a restored reproduction of a sketch made in 1880. ❖

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



# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## A Valuable Lesson

Proverbs 1:10-19

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

Joshua's heart raced as his sweating palms clutched the wall he was hiding behind. "It's just a little game," they had said. But it was no longer just a game. How he wished he had not gone along with them!

"There! He's got to be over there!" he overheard one of the security officers shout. The moments seemed like hours.

Suddenly someone grabbed Joshua by the collar and he heard a loud voice boom into his ear, "Here's one of the little thieves!" Several more shouts were heard and several more boys were rounded up. Joshua saw all of his friends. Not one had escaped. He wasn't surprised. But he was surprised at something else. Right now Joshua was so miserable that he wanted nothing more than to disappear into the ground, yet his friends were glaring at their captors in defiance! It chilled him to the bone. He shivered.

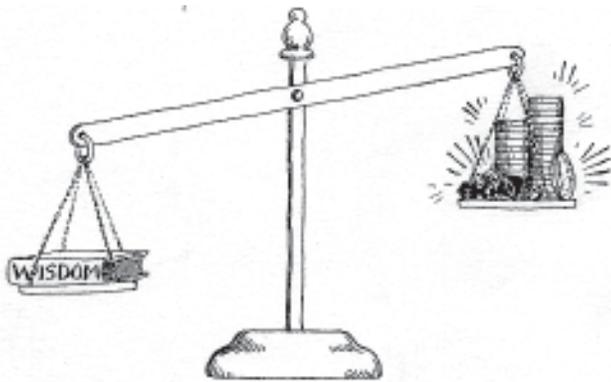
with them; refrain thy foot from their path...they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives...

Joshua's eyes were wide. Solomon had been there! *Christ* had been there...watching...knowing. And now His Spirit was here...teaching...showing. Yes, he had learned a valuable lesson, a lesson worth more than even rubies and gold, a lesson worth happiness, peace, and life. ❖

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

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Joshua unconsciously shivered once more as he remembered that awful day. Thankfully he himself had stolen nothing from the store and had been allowed to go home shortly after the incident. His friends (well, *former* friends), however, had had to endure other consequences. Joshua was usually quite successful at chasing away the unpleasant memory, but now it loomed up before him in full, living color as he began to read the book of Proverbs:

...My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause...We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way

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**Unscramble the following phrases. You'll find the solutions in Proverbs 3:13-18.**

PHAYP SI HET NAM AHHT DIHNEFT MSOIWD

-----

HES SI ROME SOIPURCE NTAH IBSURE

-----

LAL REH SHAPT RAE ACEEP

-----

EHS SI A ERET FO FILE

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*Understanding, wisdom brings  
Life and peace and happy things.*

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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:**

Makenzie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Engelsma—Georgetown,  
MI

Zachary Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Del Roetscisoender—Lynden, WA

Derek Timothy, son of Mr & Mrs. Rick Span—Lynden, WA

Katelyn Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Van Overloop—Hudsonville,  
MI

Jeremy James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Zolen—Hudsonville, MI

Isaac, son of Mr. & Mrs. Phil VanBaren—South Holland, IL

Jacob James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Terry Fennema—South Holland, IL

Madeline Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Terpstra—South Holland,  
IL

### **CONFESSIONS OF FAITH**

*"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

*Romans 10:10*

#### **Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made**

**by:**

Kate Engelsma—Hope, MI

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

*Matthew 19:5*

#### **United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:**

Mr. Dave Moelker and Miss Pamela Kuiper—Hope, MI