
Beacon Lights

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He That Loveth Pleasure Shall Be a Poor Man (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended last time with a brief introduction of the topic we will take up in this editorial. Remember that we ended the last editorial with the understanding that the opposite of pleasure seeking is the way of self-denial, submission to the will of God, and growing in our knowledge of God. Pleasure seeking, on the other hand, is the way of self-gratification, self-exaltation, and the pursuit of our own will. According to the new man, we have a desire to deny ourselves and delight to do the will of God even though this may be the difficult and lowly way. From I John 2:15-17 we remember that when we are living out of the new man we “love not the world” and that the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father.”

It is with this in mind that we are going to look at an area of pleasure seeking which many in this world are consumed with. This area is the playing of games, specifically sports games. By a game we mean, “a way of amusing oneself.” A sports game would involve the amusement of oneself through physical activity.

Now we must understand that a game, and specifically a sports game, may be enjoyed by the Reformed young person. There is nothing wrong with a proper use of legitimate activities. There is, however, something gravely wrong when we fashion our use of sports games after the manner of the world. The world has taken sports and put it in the service of the devil and self. The men of this world use sports as a means of self-exaltation. The men of this world use sports in the pursuit of their own desires and to further their own will. They use sports as a means to publish their own name as far and wide as possible. They want as much recognition as they can draw to themselves.

The worldly athlete has desires from his youth to make a name for himself in a particular sport. He spends most of his spare time practicing and refining his skills. Many afternoons and evenings find him competing with other athletes at their games, each desiring superiority over the other. As he grows older, it may be his desire to make a name for himself in high school and college sports so that he might become a professional in his “adult” years. This of course means that the pursuit of excellence in his sport requires vast amounts of his time and energy. Nothing must get in his way. This is the way of the worldly pleasure seeker at his games.

We easily recognize this as a sinful and selfish pursuit on the part of the worldly. But how easily we can be found fashioning our own use of sports after the use of the world’s. Those in the world go about forming teams and leagues. Being a part of the team requires of you a great zeal to develop your athletic abilities to the fullest. Vast amounts of practice time are a requirement. And after much practice and planning, it is the desire of the team to be “number one” in the league, to have their

name in the sports headlines, and to make a name for themselves in the world. This, of course, we would immediately recognize as being completely contrary to what God's Word says. Everything that the Reformed believer confesses stands in opposition to this way of thinking. It is not the way of antithetical living. It is not the way of putting off the old man of sin and his lusts and desires. It is not the way of lowly submission to the will of God. It is not the way of using and developing our abilities in the service of His kingdom.

Even from youth it is the calling of young people to prepare themselves for the service of God in His kingdom. And it is the calling of parents to see to it that their own children are being instructed as they should and by the best possible means to attain this goal. It is interesting to note that the battle against pleasure seeking is won by instruction; godly doctrinal instruction in the home and churches. That this is the case is apparent from a study of II Timothy 3. The first portion of this chapter (which we quoted in the last article) gives a description of the pleasure seeking man which will abound in the perilous last days. The second half of this chapter instructs us as to how the child of God must live in this world and how he will be able to withstand the temptation to become a pleasure seeker. Paul says in verses 10 & 11 that "thou hast fully known my DOCTRINE, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecution, afflictions..." Later in verses 14 & 15 he admonishes "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The battle against pleasure seeking is also fought when we are exercising ourselves "unto godliness." In I Timothy 4:7, 8, Timothy is exhorted to "refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Throughout the whole of this chapter of I Timothy it is apparent that exercising oneself "unto godliness" involves the spiritual exercise of growing in the

The emphasis is not on the physical exercise upon which this world places a high value, but on the exercise of things spiritual which profit "unto all things."

knowledge of God (doctrine) and performing good works out of gratitude. The emphasis is not on the physical exercise upon which this world places a high value, but on the exercise of things spiritual which profit "unto all things."

Yet why is it that such a great emphasis placed on an activity which God's word says profits little? And why is spiritual exercise so quickly cast aside when God's Word says that it is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"? These questions ought to be seriously answered in the light of God's Word. What Scripture says is very sharp and clear.

The fact that Reformed young people are to be involved in preparation for service in the kingdom of God only underscores the necessity for the exercise of things spiritual and the relative unimportance of playing games. To what end does the Protestant Reformed high schooler spend hour upon hour, day after day, week after week, for months at a time, developing skills at a certain sports game? To what end is this "physical talent" developed? For a life of service in the kingdom of God? The church is not in need of talented game-players. The church is not in need of those who have highly developed recreational skills. The kingdom of God is in need of those who are spiritually exercised, future fathers, mothers, teachers, elders, deacons, ministers, in other words, soldiers, who are ready to take up their battle stations. And young people are prepared for these callings through spiritual study and preparation, in the catechism room,

at the dinner table (family devotions), by the godly instruction and example of fathers and mothers, and in the faithful execution of their other God-given responsibilities. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life” (II Tim. 2:4).

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Further, when an individual, family, or even a group places an emphasis on that which profits little, it is always to the neglect of that which truly is profitable. How many family devotions have been shortened, interrupted, or shamefully neglected because of the exercise (practice and playing of sports games) of that which profits little? How many young people are tempted to neglect the exercise of things spiritual (catechism, spiritual fellowship in the home, God-given callings) all for the pursuit of that which profits little? How many parents and adults have casually pushed aside Bible studies and other much more profitable activities (reading good books, family fellowship, godly instruction of their children) so that they might delight themselves in that which profits little?

God’s Word warns us. He that loves pleasure shall be a poor man, spiritually poor. God’s Word also exhorts and comforts us with the promised rewards of obedience. We read in Psalm 37:4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Now that is the exercise which we desire, the delighting of ourselves in the Lord! Likewise we are instructed to “set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:20,21). In other words, be found exercising in things spiritual, heap up spiritual treasures. Know the great value of spiritual exercise and the paltry, vanishing value of the activities this world pursues.

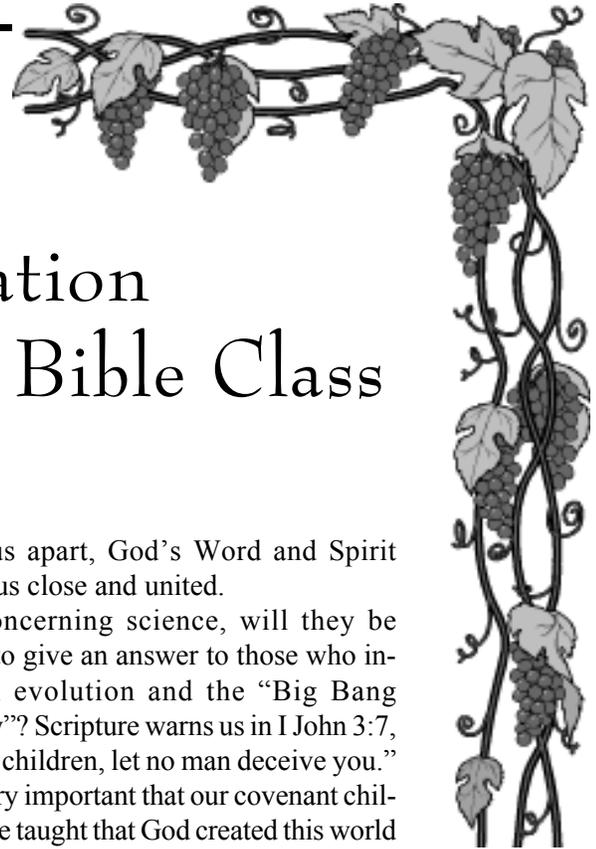
How many family devotions have been shortened, interrupted, or shamefully neglected because of the exercise (practice and playing of sports games) of that which profits little?

“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Proverbs 13:7). Perhaps more on this topic in future writing.

*O Lord, how shall a youth preserve his way, At every turn by vanity surrounded?
In truth, if he Thy statutes will obey, If on Thy Word his attitudes are founded.
Thou whom I’ve sought, O let me never stray From Thy commandments, lest I be confounded.*

*O teach me, Lord, the way that I should go; Then shall Thy servant walk therein forever.
Give understanding all Thy paths to know; Then shall I keep Thy law with zealous fervor.
Instruct me in Thy perfect way and, lo, I shall observe it with my whole endeavor.*

Psalter 428, verses 3 & 5 ❖



Christian Education Beyond Devotions and Bible Class

by Jodee Van Overloop

This article was written as a 1998 Scholarship essay.

If our Christian education is not Scripturally based in every aspect, would we want this kind of education for our covenant children? Isn't it true that Christian education is preparation for life for the covenant child? What, then, must be my duty as a future teacher in the Christian classroom?

It must be my primary duty and responsibility to instruct covenant children about God and His Word, not just in Bible class or through devotions, but in every subject that I teach my students. I must incorporate the infallible and inspired Word of God into every subject that I teach these children. Second, I must teach these children to be lights in the world and to live the antithetical life. Christ instructs me of this in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." And finally, it is only by the grace of God that I am able to teach these children. It is only through Christ that I am able to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6.

What will my students see in geography, in science, in history, in mathematics, . . . in each and every subject? They will discover that God is in every course they take. How? That is where I, as a teacher, will incorporate those parallels and truths.

I will first consider geography. In geography, they will learn about the numerous and unique cultures in which God has placed His people. The Lord has His people in every nation, tongue, and tribe. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Question & Answer 54, I am reminded of this very truth. "What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ? That the Son of God . . . gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and Word, out of the *whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life* . . ." Even though distance may

keep us apart, God's Word and Spirit keeps us close and united.

Concerning science, will they be ready to give an answer to those who insist in evolution and the "Big Bang Theory"? Scripture warns us in I John 3:7, "Little children, let no man deceive you." It is very important that our covenant children are taught that God created this world and that I teach them about *His creation*. The Psalmist speaks of this in the 24th chapter, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Also, in the Belgic Confession, Article II, I read of two means by which God is made known unto us. "We know him by two means: first, by the *creation*, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, . . . and secondly, . . . by his holy and divine Word." I will show to them that science displays the glory of God through the magnificent creation.

I have just shown that God is in geography and in science. Is He in the study of history? "History is sooo boring! Why do we have to learn this? This all happened so long ago. Who cares?" As Christian teachers and students, we care!! History shows God's revelation through time. God has been, is, and will forever be with His people until the end of this world. "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matthew 28:20. Until that time of Christ's second coming, I must equip my students with the armor of God. They will study numerous battles throughout the course of history but they must realize that they are also called to fight in this world as well. They face the greatest battle!! Will they be ready?

Finally, I will look at the study of mathematics. In mathematics, God's ever present order is revealed. There is order and precision in the numbers that God created.

Mathematics is evident in the days of creation, the length of each day, the rising and setting of the sun. During the time of the flood, God's servant Noah built the ark using measurements given to him by God. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits," Genesis 6:15. Although we use different means to measure, the principle of mathematics is still the same. Mathematics is an orderly subject.

Now that I have shown that God's Word is found in geography, science and all the rest, I must teach my students to use this knowledge and authority. They must learn to apply their education to their everyday lives. As a teacher, it will be my calling to build a foundation for my students to stand on.

What should this foundation consist of? It must contain the infallible Word of God as their Guide so that they learn what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes. They must follow the antithesis found only in the Word of God. We read of this in II Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" We are to keep ourselves separate from the world. I must instruct my students that we are only pilgrims passing through to our eternal home. "Wherefore come out from among them, and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord...and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you," II Corinthians 6:17,18.

God instructs His people to be lights in the world. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid," Matthew 5:14. I must teach my students this truth. They must learn to shine their lights brightly in the world but also in the classroom. As Christians, we

are to demonstrate that we belong to Christ and to show this in our thoughts, words and actions. I must instruct my students to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," Galatians 5:25.

Not only should my students display the love of Christ in the classroom but they should also see it in me! That is my responsibility and calling as an upcoming Christian school teacher! On my own, I cannot do this! It's only through Christ that I will be given the strength to perform this awesome task! Scripture reminds me of this in Philippians 4:13, where I read, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." My Lord is the only one who can help me carry out my calling. I should always be mindful of this as I continue my education so that I do not become discouraged. I must go to Him in prayer for all my needs; "...by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God," Philippians 4:6b. The Heidelberg Catechism, Questions and Answers 116 & 117, remind me that prayer is necessary for Christians. Why? "Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us:" and also, "that we are fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as he has promised us in his word." May I continue to remember this each and every day! All things are possible with Christ who is always with me!

"If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore." Psalm 132:12. ❖

Jodee is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Alluvial Plains Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

It has been two months now since many of our readers boarded the airlines and flew across the Great Plains and over the Rocky Mountains to

attend the convention in Redlands, California. If the skies were clear, God gave you a grand view of the mountains and also a clear manifestation of the flood He sent dur-

ing the days of Noah. If you flew over the mid-western part of the country, you would be able to see parts of the Grand Canyon, and if you took a more southerly route through Phoenix, Arizona, you would see clearly the evidence of the flood through the deserts.

Bring back the pictures in your mind of the mountains as seen from above. Now imagine the Great Plains entirely covered with water with only the Rocky Mountains thrusting upward like a long toothy island chain. Let us go back to the time of the Flood when the waters began to decrease as we read in Genesis 8:5 "And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." As the waters continue to decrease, flowing toward the oceans, enormous rivers sweep through the mountain canyons and waterfalls thunder over the foothills of California. Water also rushes southward and begins to erode the many layers of silt from the flood that have compacted into soft stone. Enormous boulders and tons of rock are swept into piles further on as the raging waters carve out the Grand Canyon.

Eventually, the floodwaters drain from the continents. New weather patterns develop and the plants begin to grow. Some areas receive rain sufficient for heavy vegetation that forms layers of soil and slowly erases the effects of the Flood. Other areas like those of Arizona and parts of California received less rain and certain effects of the Flood remain more prominent. One such geological feature left over from the Flood is called an "alluvial fan." The word "alluvial" comes from a Latin word that means "an overflowing." "Alluvium" is mud, sand, and rock that is carried by swiftly flowing water and deposited in a gradually sloping fan formation when the water slows down.

The city of Redlands, California, is built upon an alluvial fan. As the floodwaters poured through the mountain valleys and burst through the west side, they slowed down and paved the area of Redlands with its load of boulders and rocks from the mountains to form the alluvial fan. While walking or driving around in Redlands, you really can't see that you are on such a geological feature. You do notice, however, all the rocks in the Redlands area; and if you pay attention to the land, you would also notice the general flatness and gradual sloping of the land. From the perspective of an airplane, the alluvial plain is more obvious.

A small stream continues to trickle out of the mountains through this area in what looks like a nearly dry

riverbed (called a "wash" by locals, and an "arroyo" by scientists). Periodically the wash is filled with raging floodwaters laden with tumbling boulders and rocks as heavy rains pelt the mountain slopes. An enormous dam that shuts off the valley testifies to the fear of possible floods that would destroy property from Redlands to Los Angeles. Though there may be big floods here in the future, God assures us that there will never be another flood like in the days of Noah.

For most, a first hand aerial view of alluvial fans is a rare opportunity to witness the awesome power of the Flood. The landscape viewed while flying from the Redlands area to Phoenix, Arizona, shouts out to everyone "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered" (Genesis 7:19). It is clear from an aerial view that what is now rock-strewn desert, was obviously engulfed in flowing water. Alluvial fans and dry river beds blanket the area. Geologists can not deny the fact that floodwaters sculpted the landscape, yet they go to the Grand Canyon and explain it in terms of millions of years of gradual erosion. They say the Colorado River has been flowing as it is now for millions of years ignoring the clear evidence of the flood that formed the landscape downstream of the Grand Canyon. How can they be so blind? God reveals the answer to this question in His Word. We read in Romans 1:18-21 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." More specifically God speaks concerning those who scoff at the truth of the Flood. We read in II Peter 3:5-7 "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

In antithetical contrast to the ungodly, the godly grow in their knowledge of God. While at the convention, the

young people heard the truths of God’s Word expounded by faithful shepherds of God’s Word. They had an excellent opportunity to learn from one another. They were also surrounded by geological features formed by the hand of God to teach us and testify of the very truths found in His Word. We may not stop, however, at the mere grandeur of the sights. The child of God seeks to know more. When we see the mountains and evidence of the flood in this creation, we turn to the Word of God. In His Word, God tells us that his faithfulness is like the unmovable mountains. He also reveals that by His power He makes the mountains and also removes them.

When God tells us about the flood, He directs our attention to the beautiful truth of the covenant. He says, “And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:15). The covenant is the beautiful relationship of friendship that God establishes with His people. Just when it seemed that the wicked world would swallow up God’s people and destroy His promise, God

used the Flood to save Noah and preserve His people. We read in Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” And in I Peter 3:20b we read “few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

God will not send another flood. The Flood was but a picture of salvation in Christ. It is a picture of the second coming of Christ in which the filth of this world will be destroyed by fire and the righteous will be saved not in a dark and crowded ark, but free to live forever in the new heavens and new earth. There we will fully enjoy covenant friendship with our God. May the Word of God in creation always bring us to the full revelation of God found in the Scriptures. ❖

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Children’s Bible School—75th Anniversary

The Christian Soldier

by Emily Zandstra

During the 75th Anniversary celebration the Children’s Bible School will be studying Ephesians 6:10-20. Starting this month until the celebration there will be articles about the armor of God. We hope those articles will pique your interest and help you prepare for the celebration in 2000.

— The 75th Anniversary Committee

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Ephesians 6:10-11

In this chapter of Ephesians, Paul compares a Christian to a soldier preparing to enter a dangerous battle. He will not be able to walk up to the front lines as if he was taking a stroll for fun! This

verse is a call to battle; and the soldier must be prepared. He should know who and what he is fighting for to be able to stand against the enemy lined up against him.

The next few verses of this chapter use the picture of a soldier to illustrate the things God gives to His people to get them through the Christian life. Think of Paul, sitting in prison. Roman soldiers walked past him again and again. Although the only enemy of these particular fighting men was a few chained up prisoners, they were still ready. There was no sleeping on the job! They wore their armor and carried their weapons as if the prison could be invaded at any time. They were ready and trained to fight. And, as loyal Romans, they knew what they would be fighting for; their home, the Roman Empire. They believed that theirs was the Eternal City, and worth the protection they could give through their swords and spears.

As he sat there, his imagination began to work. He could see the parallels to the battle of a Christian life. Yes, Christians could not become lazy! They had to be prepared at every instant to face an attacking enemy. And they had to know what and Whom they were fighting for. That could make all the difference between a halfhearted shout or a fight-to-the-death defense of their principles and of their faith.

This verse in particular is a command to fight, and a statement of the cause to fight. It also holds the comforting promise that the Christian soldier is not going out to face the devil alone. He will be strong, because he is strong in the Lord. The armor alone would not be enough.

This verse is also a call to be prepared. You can't be a soldier if you've never gone through any training. The training of a Christian is just as rigorous as any boot camp of an earthly army! You can't fight without knowing why. Your Christian homes and parents, Christian education, and catechism lessons, and most importantly, the Word of God in the Bible are God's instructions and encouragement for this difficult preparation.

Most of us have probably memorized or at least been taught about the armor of God in Sunday School or catechism. These "weapons" are a great help to us, but without the power and might of God they would be useless. And this verse points that out. If we had to stand on our own might, how long would a Christian last? Facing the devil and his wiles is not something possible for any human. If we did not have God with His love and care and awesome might behind us, we would soon be giving up and surrendering.



God knows that. And all through His Word, He gives assurance that this is not going to happen to His people. In Romans: "Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in John: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

And so, God's people will stand. The devil and all his evil will try everything to break the ranks of the Christian soldiers. They are masters of all the tricks of war. They understand deception and are famous for surprise attacks. But this will not be enough to destroy the trained soldiers, God's faithful people. He is with us, making us able to do as this verse says, to stand against the wiles of the devil. This army will stand through all of time, until the battle is over and God brings His army home to heaven. ❖

Emily Zandstra is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan, and is attending Calvin College.

A Child of the Reformation

by Rev. Richard Smit

*I am a child of the 16th century Reformation.
I make known that fact with the least hesitation.
My spiritual fathers had an inheritance so grand
Now given to me wherein by grace alone I stand.*

*Blessed is that heritage, a great wealth untold,
Incomparable even to all of the creation's gold.
The Scriptures have taught me ever so clearly
"This treasure never sell; but buy and cherish dearly!"*

*"What is that inheritance which is wealth without
measure
Which alone affords you every holy and spiritual
pleasure?"*

*That heritage comes from those days of old
When Apostles proclaimed the Truth in faith so bold.*

*On that foundation so immovable, unshakeably sure,
They preached Christ crucified, that Gospel pure.
Preaching salvation by His purpose and grace alone
In Christ, before God had created even one little stone.*

*That principally is the truth which our fathers have
taught,
And also by the Holy Spirit to us this day is brought
By faithful pastors and teachers of God's infallible
Word*

*So that every week, this too is the Truth we have
heard.*

*To us is returned that glorious Truth of salvation by
grace **alone**,
Which grace is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ **alone**;
To us is returned that glorious Truth of justification
by faith **alone**,
And, that this Truth is found in the inspired Scriptures
alone;*

*That's what the Lord did to His Church as He said
When He surely promised, "Into the truth, ye shall be
led."*

*So, since a little monk by providence to Wittenburg
came
The history of God's church since has never been the
same.*

*On that memorable day, the sound of the Hammer
was heard,
And soon around that church door a little crowd
murmured,
As they read the long paper with that honest monk's
request
To put his ninety-five theses to the Holy Scriptures'
test.*

*That German monk to the Pope was a great big bother,
But, to me he is my dear spiritual forefather;
Who with blood, sweat, and tears, diligently fought
Against what the Church in apostasy had taught.*

*He fought Pope, priests, Tetzl, and Eck,
Would not even consider sparing his own neck,
For the Truth to God's saints to be returned
Which Truth the Pope and Church evilly spurned.*

*At the Diet of Worms, the worth of the Truth he
reckoned*

*While before the Diet by the Emperor he was beckoned
To recant all that he had ever written and taught
Which in the church great reformation had brought.*

*Being charged, like Hus, with being a heretic no less,
And demanded his many alleged errors to confess,
Luther before the great Emperor made his firm reply
That the Truth of the Scripture he would **never** deny.*

Luther, although the prelates him did threaten,
Uttered, "**Here I stand! God help me! Amen!**"
The Hammer again was heard that day in 1521
As Rome's stronghold crumbled: the saints' bondage
done.

Since then, the Reformation did spread
And, by other men, such as John Calvin, was led
To greater depths of God's infallibly inspired Truth
Making it known as fathers to their spiritual youth.

That development of the Truth under the Spirit's
guiding Hand
Has continued even in recent history in our own land.
Our Heavenly Father has led His saints ever nearer
To a fuller knowledge of the truth, which is now
clearer.

This fuller knowledge of the Scriptures we do possess
In the Reformed Faith, which I undauntedly confess.
The **Three Forms of Unity** sum those truths best
In which I with many saints have found comfort and
rest.

From these have taught my spiritual forefathers now
and past

Many truths like: God's Covenant of Grace always
to last,

Double Predestination and Divine Providence, too;
Particular Grace; these are only just a very few.

With these truths through Luther, Calvin, and many
fathers more,

I stand in a true confession with the Church of the
ages before.

Thus, I a child of the Reformation learn from
history's light:

God by sovereign grace alone saves us from our
terrible plight.

Then how greatly thankful I must be
That God by His Holy Spirit has begotten me,
And for leading me in a life of sanctification
So that today I may be a child of the Reformation.

Dear young reader, is it your own humble plea,
That God the Reformed Faith will make you see?
A child of the Reformation do you desire to be?
May God grant such blessedness, just like me. ❖

From the Pastor's Study

Too Many!

by Rev. Richard J. Smit

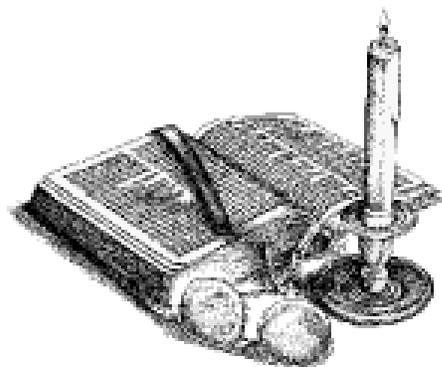
This article was inadvertently missed for the September issue and belongs before the article which appeared in September. We apologize for the confusion.

That was the problem with Gideon's army. Gideon did not see the numbers he had as a problem. Obviously, the men did not see the problem either. Though Gideon and his men did not think

it a problem, the LORD did. In Judges 7:2a we read that "the LORD said unto Gideon, "The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands...."

Gideon's army was too large. Not according to man's standards, but according the LORD's standard this was a big problem. There were simply too many!

What?! Too many?! We would have objected to the LORD's evaluation. We would size up the situation much



differently. On the one hand, Gideon's army numbered 32,000 men. On the other hand, the Midianites had a huge host which "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude" (Judges 7:12). Even if the army of the Midianites numbered as little as 200,000 men, still that was huge in comparison to Gideon's army. The Midianites would have greatly outnumbered the Israelites. In other words, 6 well fed and confident Midianites would have easily defeated 1 oppressed and miserable Israelite. We would cry out, "Much too few! Not enough!"

Having too many is not regarded often as a problem today in the church world at large. Often the church has too many because churches aim at regular numerical growth like investments in a stock fund. They aim for at least a 10% increase in numerical growth every year.

However, in order to buy that kind of numerical success, too many sell the truth. Differences are softened. Doctrine is compromised. Doctrinal differences are dismissed simply as only mere misunderstandings of stubborn theologians of the past. Unions are made on the basis of the idea that the more numbers we have, the greater power we will have against the real enemies out there on the battlefield. But, too often off to the side has fallen bloodied, battered, and trampled, the sorry victim of the truth. Too many times that has happened.

This evaluation is often hard sometimes for the believer to understand. Too many is bad? Few is best? Why are the laborers in the harvest always few? Why is not the enrollment to overflowing at our Seminary? Why do our Covenant schools lack teachers so that our school boards sometimes must resort to unsavory emergency plans "B" and sometimes "C" to get instruction for the children?

Too many? Who would ever think of that? We would cry out, "Never enough!" The LORD teaches us that the laborers are always few, the church in the world always is a remnant, and the faithful church militant a small, feeble band.

Why was Gideon's band too large even though it was already puny? Some may have joined for the wrong reasons. Some may have joined because of "peer pressure." They did not want to look bad sitting at home while the rest of the men in the town went to war. So, to save face, they went along with their neighbor men, but their heart was really not consumed with zeal for fighting under the LORD's banner.

Others failed at first to count the cost of what this battle would require for them personally and spiritually. They were filled with tremendous enthusiasm at first, but at the sight of the vast multitude of Midianites, their flame of enthusiasm sputtered and was soon extinguished in a puff of smoke.

Some may not have had the proper skills and stamina for the approaching battle. As the later history shows, stamina was exactly what was needed. The men would need great physical and spiritual stamina in this battle against the innumerable horde.

Though there were such problems among the army, yet the LORD declares the reason. If Gideon would have gone with even the army he had, Israel would yet have been tempted to boast in themselves. The LORD points that out to Gideon when He said,

"The people are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, 'Mine own hand hath saved Me.'"(Judges 7:2)

The LORD will show by a wonder that His Hand alone saves.

The LORD reminds Gideon that Israel by nature were boasters. They were proud and stiff-necked. Not only they, but we, too! We are prone to boast about ourselves. We are prone to overemphasize the abilities of men whom God gave to the church. We are prone to boast in ourselves as if we saved ourselves by our genius or skill. We are not immune to such sinful thoughts. As young people, we must be very careful how we remember 75 years of the LORD's goodness to our churches. If we boast in men, the LORD declares to us: "There are *too many men* in your thoughts!"

Such is also true personally. We are prone to boast in ourselves as though we have attained to our measure of godliness and holiness through our efforts. The LORD thunders unto us: "There is *too much man* in your thoughts!"

You understand, that even when we give ourselves just a little speck of credit, then there is *too much man* in our thoughts. When there is too much man in our thoughts, there is no room for the LORD!

Only the LORD must be in all our thoughts because only His hand saves! Only the LORD brings us peace and prosperity by the wonder of grace in Jesus Christ.

To reveal that glorious truth through Gideon and his army, the size of Gideon's army must be the right size. This history must show that our redemption is only by the Hand of the LORD. He alone saves His people. Only

He saves us who are lost and dead in sin by nature. Only He saves us unto the life of faith and repentance. Even that life, The LORD alone works. He works our faith and obedience to fight the good fight of faith.

That truth which the LORD will show in type and shadow in this history, was revealed perfectly in our Lord Jesus Christ. He perfectly reveals the sovereign and almighty Hand of the LORD. He went to the cross of Calvary and destroyed the evil horde of our enemies. He conquered the dominion of darkness. He as the Captain of our salvation also conquers our pride and boasting so that by faith we learn that the battle is the LORD's, the victory is His, and we fight in that war only as chosen and sanctified instruments unto His glory, not ours.

That salvation by grace alone which God has wrought in Christ leaves absolutely no room for man to boast in himself. Before the cross of Christ, God makes crystal clear the truth that it is absolutely impossible for man to save himself. However, what is absolutely impossible for man God did. He has delivered us by the wonder of grace.

With a zeal to prevent spiritual Israel and us from missing that truth, the LORD took special measures to teach Israel that truth clearly in this history. By sifting Gideon's band down to the right size, Gideon and his band would go to the battlefield perfectly displaying the banner of truth that the LORD alone saves us from our sin by the wonder of grace in Christ alone unto everlasting peace.

We learn in Judges 7:3-6 that the LORD reduced the size of Gideon's army in two steps. In the first step, Gideon was reminded to announce what Moses commanded in Deuteronomy 20:8.

And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

Gideon may have assumed that since there were so few, it was not possible that any would be fearful or fainthearted. On that assumption, he may have judged Deuteronomy 20:8 as unnecessary.

However, great must have been Gideon's surprise as he watched 22,000 men step out of the ranks and go home. Over half his army was gone! Only 12,000 remaining.

Surely, Gideon thought that this was quite enough sifting! We also would heartily agree that the LORD had sufficiently made His point, and very clearly we

would now know that deliverance is by the LORD's hand alone.

But, the Righteous LORD knows our sinful nature much better than we. No occasion will the LORD give to sinful nature to boast. The LORD is jealous for His Name and glory. Therefore, Gideon's band still had much too many! (Judges 7:4)

Under the LORD's direction, Gideon brought the remaining men to a brook near the battlefield and signaled to them to refresh themselves at the brook. Gideon watched the men as they one by one refreshed themselves. Gideon was commanded to watch for those men who only scooped some water with one hand out of the brook and lapped the water out of that hand as a dog laps up water. These were set aside in one group. All the others who bent down on both knees or laid on their stomachs to drink the water, or even perhaps dunked their heads under water, these were set aside in another group.

After this test was finished, the army was divided into two groups: a large group of 11,700 men and a very small group of only 300. The 300 had lapped water out of their hand as a dog laps up water. Gideon had to answer: "Do I fight with 11,700 or 300?" Which group would you have picked?

For the glory of His Name, the LORD had chosen the 300.

The 300 showed they were by the grace of the LORD ready for battle. With an eye on the battlefield, their right hand on their sword, and their left hand only to scoop up a little water, these men had passed the test. They had their eye of faith on the Banner, their hand of faith on the sword of the LORD, and their heart consumed with zeal for the glory of the Name of the LORD of hosts. They were ready for battle of faith.

The LORD sent Gideon and 300 men to fight the Midianites. Indeed, the LORD would fulfill His earlier word to Gideon that he would "smite the Midianites as one man" (Judges 6:16). That was virtually the situation. The LORD had not exaggerated at all.

By this history, the LORD reminds us very clearly that His Hand alone saves us by the wonder of His sovereign and particular grace in Christ alone.

Then unto Him *alone*, let us give praise, honor, and glory.

Never will they be "too many!" ❖

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The Song of Zion

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

by Cornelius Jonker

October 1 Read Psalm 108

Psalm 108:1-2 Did you know that this psalm in its entirety is parts of two other psalms? Verses 1 through 5 are found in Psalm 57 and we read verses 6 through 13 in Psalm 60. They are nearly identical, but we must not say “we’ve read this before, so let’s skip this one.” The Holy Spirit undoubtedly saw fit to present these utterances in a new connection. In Psalm 57, these verses of praise are preceded by the Psalmist’s prayer. In this psalm he at once begins to sing and give praise, and then follows with prayer. Even as he arises early so that his mind is fresh, may we also emulate his desire to praise God with our glory, that is, with our intellect and all talents which God has been pleased to give us. Then, with a fixed, or steadfast heart, use our voices and instruments of music solely to His glory. Sing Psalter 298:1 and 299:1.

October 2 Read Isaiah 42:10-12

Psalm 108:3 What does it mean to give praise? And how do we go about doing this? Some would define it as flattery, others, perhaps, would consider a favorable compliment as praise, whether it was sincere or not. Scripture is replete with God deserving praise from everything and everyone. For we read in Psalm 76:10, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.” And the whole creation, even dragons and creeping things, are exhorted to praise God in Psalm 148. But as God’s children we must praise, or give honor to Jehovah from a regenerated heart, not only among our fellow saints, but also speak and sing about His greatness and goodness unashamedly among the nations. Wherever we go, we are called upon, not to leave our religion at home, but to testify freely that God is God, and worthy of all adoration. Sing Psalter 299:2.

October 3 Read Lamentations 3:22-25

Psalm 108:4 Two attributes of God are set forth in this verse, mercy and truth. God’s mercy may be considered as an aspect of His holiness and is a divine affection of God. When this affection is directed to an object in misery (as all of us are), it reveals itself as compassion and power to deliver from deepest woe. That mercy is so great that it is far above and out of our sight. Likewise, His truth, His veracity, and integrity is so far-reaching that it is endless. And He has revealed that truth to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, Who proclaimed in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” May you hear Him speak those words to you today as you attend divine worship. What a blessed comfort that is for us to know that our faithful God keeps covenant and mercy to those who love Him, because it is the fruit of His love in us. Sing Psalter 298:2 and 299:2.

October 4 Read Isaiah 12

Psalm 108:5 Have you ever been so excited and filled with enthusiasm over something that you could hardly contain yourself

and tell others about it? It appears that the Psalmist in this praise-filled morning song reaches a peak of fervor and breaks forth in a beautiful expression of praise. In this verse he declares that God is to be exalted even above the heavens. Not that we make God exalted, but in our praise we emphasize how high He is as our merciful and true God. And when we do that, we glorify God. In I Cor. 10:31 we read: “whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Think of this verse today and every day, young people, and we trust that by God’s grace you will hide this word in your heart, and walk as children of the light. Sing Psalter 299:3.

October 5 Read Psalm 73:23-24

Psalm 108:6 After the preceding expressions of praise, the psalmist follows with prayer for God’s help, and not only for himself, but for the beloved of God. As you worship in God’s house from week to week, remember that. What are the first words we hear as the worship service commences? We hear Christ, Who addresses us through the minister with these words, “Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ.” We also, in our prayers, bring the needs of all God’s people before the Throne of Grace. Notice that the psalmist implores God to use His right hand, a symbol of sovereign power, to save His beloved. Deliverance, then, is assured. What a blessed comfort! Sing Psalter 299:4.

October 6 Read I Chronicles 17:7-10

Psalm 108:7 David was a warrior with many battles to fight. If we pay attention to the news of the world at present, we find that unrest abounds, wars come and go, and many battles are fought. The generals of these armies don’t really know beforehand who will be victorious. David, however, had received great promises from God in I Chron. 17 that he would overcome his enemies. He exults and rejoices in the fact that God as the Holy One has spoken these promises which were infallible guarantees of their fulfillment. He would conquer and divide Shechem and Succoth, one on each side of Jordan, and the land would be secure. So we too, in the battle of faith, can already claim the victory, because God has spoken in His holiness before the foundation of the world, that although the devil, the world, and our own flesh will constantly assail us, the outcome is sure. May we rejoice in that assurance today and always. Sing Psalter 299:5.

October 7 Read Psalm 27:1-6

Psalm 108:8-9 In these verses we read that Gilead and Manasse were already in David’s possession. They were on the east side of Jordan. Ephraim, a strong and warlike tribe who furnished David with twenty thousand “mighty men of valour,” was his defense, and Judah, the seat of government, were both geographically situated on the west side of Jordan, so the entire land was under Israel’s

subjection. David refers contemptuously to Moab and Edom, both bitter enemies from early times. They were to be reduced to the stature of the lowest of slaves, and the Philistines, who were formidable opponents of Israel, were also to be subdued. What must we say to all this? Could David gain all these victories without God? Of course not. Neither can we overcome our enemies from within and without, unless God intervenes in His great mercy. Pray for His guidance today and echo the words of the psalmist, "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1 Sing Psalter 298:3.

October 8 Read Psalm 94:12-15

Psalm 108:10-11 Even though David had the assurance of victory over his enemies, he perceives the difficulties involved in conquering them. Edom especially was strategically located in an almost impregnable area. And so by faith he asks the question, "Who will bring me into the strong city?" And by faith he quickly answers, "Wilt not Thou, O God?" Even though God had hidden His face from His people at times, yet His promises are sure, they cannot fail. Let us make this our prayer too, each day, and say, "Lord, as we make our pilgrimage today and each day through this earthly Canaan, go with us, so that we may enter that heavenly Canaan and enjoy perfect rest." Sing Psalter 299:6.

October 9 Read Psalm 146:1-5

Psalm 108:12,13 Have you ever been disappointed when a friend let you down? Have you ever felt crushed when someone broke their promise to you? Have you been enticed to change jobs with the glowing assurance of promotions and raises, only to discover that this never happened? This passage teaches us that man's help is vain. We do not mean to imply that all men engage in these tactics, but mankind in general is filled with greed and pride, and thinks only about himself. How must we face this? In prayer. Pray that God will help us each day when troubles come, and they will come, for Jesus Himself said in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." God will fight for us. He will do valiantly. He will tread down our enemies. Pray then, that your faith may be strengthened, for it is His work, all of grace, and therefore victorious. Sing Psalter 299:7.

October 10 Read Psalm 109

Psalm 109: Introduction. As we begin our meditations on this psalm we do well to ask the question, how could David, a man of music and tender heart, who frequently forgave those who treated him shamefully, call on God to bring such terrible and dire calamities on his enemies? There are other psalms which are imprecatory in part (which means to call down or invoke curses upon a person), but this is the most imprecatory of all. From verses 6-20, he seems to be overflowing, asking God to inflict upon his adversaries the most horrible afflictions imaginable. But before we pass hasty judgment, let's remember that the Holy Spirit inspired him to pen these verses and therefore it must be to our profit to meditate also on this psalm. May we in all our devotions ask God to open our eyes and hearts to His infallible truths, and especially today as we have the privilege to sit under the preaching of the Word. Sing Psalter 301:1.

October 11 Read Psalm 70

Psalm 109:1-3 How do you react when someone treats you wrongfully and unfairly? Our natural reaction or instinct would be to lash back and repay in kind, saying that under the circumstances it is perfectly justifiable. But what did David do? He pleaded with God to deliver him from his remorseless enemies, and addresses Him, "O God of my praise." Even when he is filled with complaints against his enemies, he praises God. What a lesson for us. Even

when we are down and out, so to speak, God is not only our Comforter and Deliverer, He is also our praise. David then states that he is the victim of a lying tongue, that he is the object of hatred, and attacked for no cause. He brings his case to God for justice. He does not resort to revenge. Instead he prays that God will not hold His peace, but bring divine retribution. Sing Psalter 300:2.

October 12 Read Matthew 5:43-44

Psalm 109:4-5 David continues in these two verses to pour out his complaint to God. It seems to reach a peak when he exclaims that for his love that he showed them, they have become his enemies and hated him. For the good he bestowed upon them they rewarded him with evil. This, in my estimation, is the highest form of cruelty and injustice imaginable. David is a type of Christ in this instance, for our Lord Himself said in John 15:25, "...they hated me without a cause." We may expect the same treatment really, for in the same chapter Jesus states that because He has chosen us out of the world, therefore the world hateth us. This is a scary prediction, isn't it? What did David do? What must we do? Exactly what David did. Give ourselves unto prayer. Pray for God's help and for His mercy, remembering His words in Romans 12:19. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Sing Psalter 300:3.

October 13 Read Psalm 34:12-17

Psalm 109:6-20 Although we could certainly comment on each of these verses, we believe it best to make a few general remarks and then proceed to the last section of this psalm. We insist that David was not seeking personal revenge, but asking that justice be administered by God. These were not only David's enemies, but God's enemies principally, and divine retribution was their just reward. Many commentators have speculated as to whom these imprecations were directed. Some say Shimei, others, Doeg, or Ahithophel, or Judas Iscariot. Verse 8 seems to indicate Judas, when Peter in Acts 1:20 refers to this Psalm at the choosing of Matthias in his place. We shudder, not only at the horrible sins which David describes, but also the terrible punishments he asks God to inflict. May we, by God's grace, walk with renewed faith and hope, not only today, but each day of our lives. Sing Psalter 300:4-8.

October 14 Read Psalm 103:8-10

Psalm 109:21 After David in the preceding fifteen verses calls on God to inflict justice on his enemies, he now in contrast turns from his enemies to his God. He exclaims, "But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake." This is a prayer that is most fitting for each of us. David expressed no specific desires or needs from the Lord. No, he said simply, "do thou for me, O God." He leaves himself in the Lord's hands to deal with him as He sees fit, and contents himself in the assurance that God will give him exactly what he needs. We are tempted each day to pray for our own carnal desires, no one is exempt from that. But let's pray "O Lord, give unto me that which Thou knowest I must have, and which is good for me today." Because we base this prayer on the Lord's mercy and on the basis of Christ's merits, we will most assuredly be heard. Sing Psalter 301:1.

October 15 Read Psalm 40:16-17

Psalm 109:22 Do you think it is a disgrace to be needy and poor? Many do, of course, and they do everything possible to avoid this stigma and attempt to acquire worldly goods and treasures. When David calls on God, he does not plead his case on his merits or riches, but rather on his necessities and poverty. He knows that he is a poor sinner in great need of mercy and forgiveness. We must confess this too. We may have many possessions and much money in the bank, but before God we stand empty-handed and full of sin.

The power of sin must be broken in our hearts by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Then, as a fruit of that work, we stand before Him, pleading the merits of our Savior, and exclaim as the hymn writer penned the words: “Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.” Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 300:9.

October 16 Read Psalm 22:4-8

Psalm 109:23-26 The Psalmist in these verses, in rather picturesque words, describes his condition which was a result of the attacks of his enemies. His body was wasted as a shadow ready to disappear as the sun sets. He felt as powerless in his distress as a locust caught in the wind. By either deliberate fasting or loss of appetite, he became emaciated and thin, and then, to add insult to injury, he was the object of ridicule and contemptuous shaking of their heads. But again, he implores God to help him and appeals to His mercy. And since God’s mercy knows no bounds, so also is salvation without limit. It is so comforting to know that David’s God is also our God, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Cling to Him by faith, and experience the peace which passeth understanding. Sing Psalter 300:10 and 301:2.

October 17 Read Isaiah 45:23-25

Psalm 109:27 This verse is a continuation of the preceding one in which the psalmist pleads for help according to God’s mercy. Now he asks that the mercy be so conspicuous that his enemies shall be forced to see that he is vindicated, and that in spite of themselves, they must admit that the Lord’s hand has done it. I’m sure that we, too, if wronged unjustly, especially publicly, would like our name cleared. But I’m afraid our motive would be for our own sake or for our own honor. David wants his enemies to see that it is the hand of God, the righteous Judge, and then must recognize Him as the sovereign One. We are thankful that through the eye of faith, we can see that God’s hand sovereignly directs all things for our salvation and for His glory. Sing Psalter 300:11.

October 18 Read James 3:8-10

Psalm 109:28-29 Is there any sin more prevalent today than cursing? Profanity abounds everywhere—in the workplace, in the streets, in the media, in the printed page and sometimes, alas, even in our own circles. Remember what you read in the epistle of James: “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” The psalmist in our passage contrasts the cursing of the wicked over against the blessings from God. What a difference. What a shame for those who curse! In fact, they are so clothed with shame and confusion that nothing else can be seen about them. Young people, don’t succumb to this wicked practice. Parents, be fit examples to your children with all your words. Then, as the psalmist states, we will not be ashamed, but rejoice in the Lord. Sing Psalter 300:12.

October 19 Read Psalm 16:7-9

Psalm 109:30 Picture yourself in a court of law. You are the defendant and are accused of a crime you did not commit. Your situation seems hopeless. Suddenly a powerful defender appears at your right hand (this was the place of a lawyer in a Jewish tribunal), and convinces the court that you are innocent. Wouldn’t you be overwhelmed with gratitude? David certainly was, and he greatly praised the Lord for his deliverance. Every day anew we should likewise praise and thank God for our deliverance. For we really are guilty sinners before God’s tribunal. But God beholds His people in Christ. His justice is satisfied in the cross of the perfect Sin-Bearer. Live your life today then in His service. Sing Psalter 300:13 and 301:3,4.

October 20 Read Psalm 110

Psalm 110:1-2 This gem of a psalm is more frequently quoted from in the New Testament than any others. Jesus Himself referred to it when disputing with the Pharisees. It describes Christ, Who is not only David’s son but also his Lord, as a Kingly Priest, sitting in power at the right hand of God. By divine inspiration, David reveals to us the voice of Jehovah speaking to His Son, proclaiming that while He sits there by divine appointment, His enemies will be completely subdued. What a comfort this is for us that the risen Messiah, as our representative, is given the victory over His and our enemies. Think of this, and by faith say as did David, “my Lord,” and as Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” Sing Psalter 302:1 and 303:1.

October 21 Read Judges 5:1-3

Psalm 110:3 How willing would you be, if you were drafted as a soldier today, to engage in battle? It may sound exciting to some, but war is actually revolting and dreadful, a fact to which this writer can personally attest. However, in this verse, we read that in God’s army, the warriors are most willing to fight. Who are thy? They are the militant Church, by nature not willing, but made willing in Christ, redeemed from all eternity, set apart in holiness from their very beginning, and consecrated to God. Every soldier retains the strength of his youth, for that is renewed every moment. They are equipped by their Priest-King Captain with the armour of faith and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. The victory is certain. Fight that battle today, young people. Don’t succumb to the enticement of the evil one, but cling by faith to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our salvation. Sing Psalter 302:2.

October 22 Read Hebrews 7:21-28

Psalm 110:4 This verse is the very heart and central revelation of the psalm. It depicts the absolute and positive certainty of the salvation of every elect, and I cannot find words to emphasize this more strongly. God swore an oath, not only, but will not repent, meaning that it cannot possibly be revoked. And what was that oath? It was this, that Christ, Who is our glorious King, is also ordained to be our Priest. A Priest Who atones for our sins. A Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek. Melchisedek’s appearance on the pages of Holy Writ is interesting. He was the only priest-king in sacred history. And his priesthood was before the law, a Gentile priesthood, without known beginning or ending, and so he stands as a type of Christ. When you have time, read Hebrews chapters 5, 7, and 8 which reveals Christ as the perfect Priest, and give thanks to God that our sins are removed by that perfect and precious atonement. Sing Psalter 303:2.

October 23 Read Psalm 2:1-6

Psalm 110:5-6 Once again our attention is drawn to the scene of battle. Christ Who sits in the seat of power at the right hand of God goes forth to meet the enemy. Psalm 2 tells us that earthly kings and rulers band together with the purpose and confidence that they can rebel against God and throw off His yoke. But what is God’s reaction to that? He laughs at them. He holds them in derision. In His holy anger He slays them. Sometimes when we look about us, we can’t always see that the battle is going our way and we get discouraged as Asaph in Psalm 73. But take heart, people of God! The wicked are set in slippery places and we see God’s judgments upon them every day. “For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide, even unto death.” Psalm 48:14. Sing Psalter 302:3.

October 24 Read Isaiah 44:1-3

Psalm 110:7 In this last verse of our psalm we have pictured for us the victorious King marching with His army and stopping for a refreshing drink of water. We can readily understand how thirsty they must have been, for who of us, after strenuous physical exertion on a hot day, does not crave a drink of life-giving water? This is also a picture of spiritual thirst. Are you spiritually thirsty? As God's child, you should be. Jesus is the Living Water, and every Sunday we have the privilege of drinking from that fountain. Never neglect that! Drink deeply in order to be refreshed for the days ahead. As the psalm closes with the words, "Therefore shall he lift up the head," let us also hear our Saviour say, "Look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:28b. Sing Psalter 303:3.

October 25 Read Psalm 111

Psalm 111:1 This psalm and the next one are both alphabetical psalms, and identical in their structure. This one sets forth God, His works and attributes; the next tells us the work and character of those who fear and love God. Our verse for today begins with an exclamation, "Praise ye the Lord," or Hallelujah! The psalmist begins by setting an example: "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart." Is that the kind of example you will set today? Will your and my life today show unmistakably that we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and do our actions match our words? God is not pleased with a divided or half a heart, but with a complete and sincere willingness to live unto him. Pray for grace so that we may daily grow in sanctification. Sing Psalter 304:1.

October 26 Read Psalm 77:11-13

Psalm 111:2-3 Have you ever really studied the works of God? Every day we look at God's creation of the universe, and almost take it for granted, even though one of our confessions so fitly describes it "as a most elegant book." But in actuality, we know very little of all the intricacies in the world about us. Think of the tiniest microbe, the plant life, the animal world, the human body, and we could go on and on But far surpassing that is God's glorious work of redeeming and saving lost sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, but made alive in Christ. It will take all eternity to search out and understand the wonderful works of the Lord, which the psalmist describes as honourable and glorious, and then declares that this forever righteous God imputes righteousness to us, elect sinners, for the sake of Christ. May you walk today in God's creation with a renewed sense of awe and appreciation for His wonderful works. Sing Psalter 304:2.

October 27 Read Joshua 4:4-7

Psalm 111:4 Another reading of the first half of this verse could be, "He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works." The world makes a lot of monuments and memorials to keep their names and fame to be remembered. Streets, airports, buildings and statues are named after people for the purpose of honoring them for their worldly accomplishments. This is basically vanity and pride. In contrast to this, God causeth His wondrous works to be remembered for they are gracious works, filled with tender compassion for His elect. Especially in the Old Testament, the Lord instructed His people by special events and signs that they were to be memorials to their generations. Now we have the Scriptures to remind us of His wonderful works. May that remembrance cause you to live a Godly life today, young people. And parents, pass on to your children the wonderful works of their gracious Creator. Sing Psalter 304:3.

October 28 Read Psalm 89:1-4

Psalm 111:5-6 Our God is a covenant God. This is a simple statement, but it is so rich with meaning and comfort. We have been blessed as churches and individual saints with the development of this important doctrine. Because our sovereign God establishes this relation of friendship between Himself and His elect people in Christ, He blesses them and saves them. Therefore we read in these verses that He provided them with their daily sustenance, showed them His power by driving out the heathen nations, and gave them their land and possessions. This God is our God. He unconditionally saves us and makes us ready and willing to serve Him. Thank Him for His covenant faithfulness and appreciate your Godly heritage. Sing Psalter 304:4.

October 29 Read Psalm 40:4-5

Psalm 111:7-8 The psalmist continues to extol God for His works which are the very essence of truth and justice. How different are many of the laws of the land today. Legislators and courts enact laws which are based on human philosophy, which cater to special interests, and are contrary to God's laws. And they are subject to change from one generation to the next. Satan is well aware of the power of the laws of the land and will do all in his power to influence passage of laws that will result in the persecution of the Church. God's statutes stand forever because they are done in truth and uprightness. May God give us grace to obey His commandments even to the point where we must say to the magistrates as Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:29 "We ought to obey God rather than men." Sing Psalter 304:5.

October 30 Read Luke 1:67-72

Psalm 111:9 Try to imagine yourself captured by a loathsome enemy, placed in a foul and dark dungeon with no hope of escape. The price placed by your captor for your release is so exorbitant that your situation is hopeless. That describes our position when we fell into sin and death through Adam's transgression. But God in His great mercy and electing love provided a priceless ransom in the person of His Son, Jesus. This great Redeemer took on Himself our sins and satisfied the justice of God at Calvary. Our verse today not only pictured Israel's deliverance from Egypt but also our redemption of which that is a picture. He did this because He is faithful to His eternal covenant. No wonder the psalmist exclaims that His name is worthy of the most profound awe, for it is perfect and holy. May we by His grace follow the dictates of Heid. Cat. Q. & A. 99 "that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence." Sing Psalter 304:6.

October 31 Read Proverbs 1:7-9

Psalm 111:10 The writer concludes this psalm by declaring that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And we would not hesitate to add, as did one commentator, that it is also the middle and the end of wisdom. Men may have ever so much knowledge, but if they do not fear God, we read in Prov. 28:26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Knowledge, of course, is an essential part of wisdom. And to gain knowledge one must have understanding. And what must we understand? We must understand God's commandments and do them. Even though we have only a small beginning of new obedience, we must strive daily to grow in wisdom and sanctification. That means study God's Word. Use all the means God gives us to learn more about Him. Don't neglect the means of grace, Bible society attendance, catechism, or any other spiritually edifying functions. Then you can from the heart say as did Job, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28. Sing Psalter 304:7.

Psalter 249— The Reward of Perfect Trust

by Beth DeVries

This month we continue to look at Psalm 91 using the versification of the second part of the Psalm, Psalter 249. This Psalter versification is entitled “The Reward of Perfect Trust.” We are reminded of the importance of putting our trust in God and believing that He will always care for us. We looked last month at the many enemies which attack us and God’s protection from those enemies. This month we turn to the truth of the providence of God and our duty related to this truth. God calls us to trust in Him alone and then many benefits will be given to us.

This Psalter versification begins by speaking of our putting our trust in God alone and knowing that He will be our refuge. David in this Psalm makes clear that by trusting in God we find the confidence of refuge from evil. Already we see the benefits of trusting in God to be a safe abode from our troubles.

We are next led to see that God commands the host of angels to watch over and care for us. We do not have just one guardian angel as some would like to propose but rather the host of angels cares for us. What a comfort to know that as God’s chosen people we are protected on all sides from harm! We know that this does not necessarily mean protection from physical harm but rather protection from the devil so that he can not overcome us or take us from God’s hand. The angels not only watch out for us but also they bear us up lest we dash a foot against a stone (Psalm 91:12). This assures us that no matter how fierce

the enemy is we shall not be overcome. God will preserve us as His own.

In Psalm 91:14 and Psalter 249 stanza 4 we see a change of person in the writing so that God Himself is speaking to us. God declares that He will be a deliverer. This is a result of our having loved God. We know from other passages of Scripture that we love God only because He first loved us (I John 4:16, I John 4:19, II Thes-salonians 2:16). God continues with the benefits of our loving Him in that we are exalted as one of His own, He answers us in distress and blesses us in trouble. We see here that God will always hear us when we call on Him in prayer, and we know that from our own experience also. When we sincerely pray to God, He grants us the strength and confidence that we need to continue on in the battles of life.

This Psalm closes speaking about the benefit of complete deliverance from the enemy. He then gives us the complete victory over sin and the devil when we are brought into His Kingdom. God also speaks of honoring His elect people. It is hard to believe that God would desire to give honor to us, a sinful and rebellious people. When He has chosen us lowly people and exalted us, how can we doubt but that His way is best for us? This emphasizes the truth of God’s providential care over us in this life. God gives to us abundant life. Our time on this earth may be short but it is to be filled with heavenly things for that is our eternal hope. Our

249 The Reward of Perfect Trust

PSALM 91 L. M. MARTINA J. Christopher Marks

1. Be - cause thy trust is God a - lone, Thy ref - uge
2. An - gel - ic guards at His com - mands will bear thee
3. Though foes and treach - erous foes as - sail, Their pow'r and
4. Be - cause on Me he set his love, I will be

in the high - est One, No e - vil shall op - press - te in their hands, - will keep thee, lest, if
wrath shall not be - wail; Their en - emies at strength, their con - stant fear - our groan, And since to him My

as - sure - ance, Nor plague ap - proach thy guard - ed home, left a - lone, Thou shalt thy feet a - gainst a stone,
ven - omed spits, Thou shalt a - void with con - qu'ring might. None is known, I will ex - alt him as My own.

time on this earth is to be spent glorifying and praising our God for the benefits which He has bestowed on us.

May we always remember this as we go through this earthly pilgrimage and ever praise our God. We were given the Psalms for the purpose of praising God. We

continue to reflect on them and see that God's truths are always bringing us to praise Him. May we see God's truths, especially God's providential hand in our lives, as we sing this and all the Psalms. ❖

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

Where We Stand

HOW to Let Our Light Shine

(Matthew 5:16)

by Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

This article was given as a speech at the New Jersey retreat.

It falls to me in this series of retreat speeches to address the "How" of letting our light shine. Our focus is actually quite narrow, because we want to look at that little word "so" in our theme text: "Let your light SO shine before men..." That word points us to the "how," for it means "thus, i.e., in this manner or way." That "so" points back to verse 15, where Jesus said that we are not to hide our light under a bushel but are to put it on a candlestick, i.e., to let it shine prominently, publicly, and promiscuously. And that "so" also looks forward to the rest of v.16, where Jesus instructs us to let our light shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. This, then, is how we let our light shine.

As we consider more carefully this "how" of letting our light shine, we have to look at some of the sins and weaknesses that we manifest with regard to this calling. There's the negative of the "how," which is our first point. Then, secondly, we need to look at the "how" positively. How (in what way) exactly do we go about being the light of the world and letting our light shine? And thirdly, we must consider the "how" of possibility. How CAN (is it possible that) we fulfill this calling?

I. How, Negatively—Dealing with Our Sins/Weaknesses

Letting our light shine has to do with our Christian witness before the world. The point of Jesus' admonition is clear to all of us. As believers by God's grace in Christ, we ARE the light of the world. And light exists to shine, to give off its light, to radiate in the midst of darkness. That is evident from any instrument of light we find and use, for example, a lighthouse here on the Atlantic Ocean shore. It is the purpose and meaning and value of light that it shine. Therefore, as the light of the world, that's what we are in the world for as Christians, to shine in the midst of the darkness.

By our walk ("your good works") and by our words we are to reveal our Christian identity, showing forth God's grace in Jesus Christ, the kingdom life we have been given and brought into (the broader context of our passage). In reality, that is simply letting CHRIST Himself shine through us, because He is THE Light of the world (Jn. 8:12) and He is in us by faith. HE is the Light that must be seen in this dark world. HE is the One Who must be evident as we go about our callings in the world.

When we consider the contrast between ourselves and the world (light vs. darkness), it should be an easy thing to let our light shine. The world of unbelieving people is darkness. They live in the realm of sin and under Satan. They are full of spiritual ignorance and im-

morality, decay and death. They are lost, not knowing the way. They wander about, stumbling and falling down in their willing darkness. And here *we are the light of that world. The ONLY light in this darkness that surrounds us.* The only people with the truth—concerning God and concerning all things. The only ones who really know who we are, what life is about, and where we are going. The only ones with moral purity and holiness, knowing how to live rightly in every sphere and relation of life. The only people with real life, fellowship with God, eternal life now and the hope of it for the future!

To shine out as Christians, therefore, should be a cinch. Not to be seen and noticed as God's light in the world should be as absurd as someone not seeing the sun when it rises on the creation! The shining of our light should be as brilliant as the sun in the heavens, so that no one is unclear about who and what we are.

And yet, reality is, that our light is not so bright; our witness is not so clear and sharp, so powerful and bold. The world of darkness cannot always see us; they often do not know we are God's light. So if we ask ourselves, "HOW are we shining as the light of the world?", we have to answer honestly, "Not very well!"

To some degree and in many ways we are shining. We do not want to be so negative that we take away from that. I believe that, in general, we are known as Christians. But still, blatant weaknesses and sins are evident in our lives in terms of letting our light shine. We are far too often a city on a hill that is hid, verse 14. We DO hide our light, putting the candle of Christ's light in us under a bushel, verse 15. Sadly, many people at work and school and in our neighborhoods do not know who we are. They do not know that we are different, how we are different, why we are different!

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and school and in our
neighborhoods do not
know who we are.**

Why is this? Because we are not letting our light shine, obviously! That is why Christ has to admonish us as He does here. But we need to look at this closer and go deeper into the causes of this sin and weakness. There are many reasons why we do not let our light shine as we ought. We will focus on the major ones.

First, let's face the fact that we are simply not behaving as we should. We are not being distinctively Christian before the world in thought and word and deed. We have become spiritually complacent and careless, spiritually lethargic and lazy. We have through negligence forgotten who we are—the light of the world! We are not maintaining our Christian worldview and expressing it boldly. We are not exposing the folly and wickedness of the world's viewpoints and lifestyle. Too often we keep our minds and mouths shut to the blatant darkness about us. Which is to say, we are not living antithetically as we should. We want to blend in, not stand out, so that is how we act—like the world! We dress like the world; we talk like unbelievers; we adopt their work-ethic; we entertain ourselves like they do. Instead of walking in good works, we walk in bad works. We know it, but we must also know this is wrong! In humble honesty, we must confess and repent of these sins.

In the second place, what we have just mentioned is also rooted in certain things, such as FEAR. We are afraid of what people will think of us; we fear rejection and reproach; we are afraid of losing position and favors in the world, maybe even our jobs. And, we are ASHAMED of who we are, ashamed of our beliefs and teachings and practices. Ultimately, we are ashamed of our Lord Himself. These things too are wrong, and must be confessed and repented of.

In the third place, we are also good at making excuses as we try to justify our weak witness. For example, we argue, "I'm naturally shy and reserved; I can't open up to people." Or, "My witness is a quiet one," when we are really hiding behind hiding our light. Or, "I'm living antithetically, and that means I must not talk to people; so I just ignore them." Or, "I don't want to cast my pearls before swine." Do these excuses sound familiar? These too are wrong! We need to quit making excuses! Are we going to shine or not?!

In the fourth place, sometimes we simply do not take advantage of opportunities. We miss out on occasions to witness through sheer negligence. Or we do not feel confident about speaking up to and before people; we are unprepared to witness to unbelievers, so we say nothing. Perhaps we have been sheltered from the real world and do not know how to talk to them where they are at. We need to learn from and correct these weaknesses and strive to do better!

Still more, in the fifth place, the reason why we do not let our light shine is that we are not THANKFUL enough for what we have been made in Jesus Christ. We

are not sufficiently grateful for our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light and life. We are not properly motivated by glory for God because of His amazing grace to us, verse 16; I Peter 2:9. We need to increase in gratitude and in the desire to show forth the praise of our heavenly Father. More and more we need to ponder our salvation and the great mercy of God to us in His Son.

Finally, the main reason we are not shining as we should in this world is that we are not living close to THE Light, Christ? Is our light weak and dim because we have not been abiding in Christ and drawing from the Source the strength we need to shine? Do we live close to our Savior? Are we into His Word? Do we pray faithfully? Are we diligent in all the means of grace? We know what the answers are to these questions, and they too put the finger on the problem with our faint lights.

II. How, Positively—Looking at the Way to Fulfil This Calling

Next we must look at the positive of this “how.” And we should remember that Matthew 5:16 is an admonition from our Lord. It is not an option for us, to do or not to do. It is His command to us. The Light charges us as light to shine. Christ leads the “charge of the light brigade!” For as the Light of the world He let His light shine perfectly and publicly when He came into the world. Therefore, we too must let our light shine. This is a matter of being and living in the kingdom of God and heaven. Not to do this is to disobey the King of His kingdom and to expose ourselves as unfit for the kingdom. So we must put away our sins, our weaknesses, our excuses, and let our light shine (Rom. 13:12ff.).

Let’s keep before us what this calling means. It means to be a Christian—everywhere, in every way, and toward every one! No matter where we are, what we are doing, whom we are relating to, show Christ! Be yourself! That is, act in harmony with what you are—LIGHT! Manifest the traits of the kingdom as Christ sets them before us in the opening of this chapter! Live thankfully and obediently!

This is where that “SO” in the text is so important. As we already pointed out, that looks back to verses 14 and 15 first of all. There the emphasis falls on fulfilling the purpose of your existence as a Christian. Be a city that cannot be hid! (Like the great city of New York that we toured.) Be a candle set on a candlestick!

We can be more specific. That light in us consists of three things: true knowledge (II Cor. 6:4), holiness (I

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new life.**

Jn. 1:5), and new life (Jn. 8:12). If this is what the light in us is, then this is what has to come out in our walk and in our talk. True knowledge of God, holiness, and life in Christ must shine forth at home and work, in school and church, in recreation and leisure. That word “SO” also relates here. It also looks ahead to the rest of verse 16. Here the emphasis is on our good works done before men. That does not exclude the witness of our mouth to people. But Jesus wants to bring out especially our deeds done to and before the people of this world. What deeds? How we go about our work; what language we use when we are around Christians and unbelievers; how we use Sunday; what music we listen to; how we use our leisure time, etc. Every deed we do, every task we perform.

In this connection, we also want to treat the ‘how’ of what MEANS we must be using to let our light shine, the things we must use to have a faithful and strong witness before men. For we must remember that we are not independent lights shining by ourselves. We are not like the sun but like the moon in this respect. Christ is the Sun, THE Light. He is the Source and power of our shining. Therefore, we have to be abiding in Him and walking in Him in order to shine. The Scriptures bring that out in John 12:35, 36 and I John 1:7.

That involves using the means of grace diligently. We must be busy in the Word, preached and read, studied alone and with others. From that Word we gain the knowledge of the way of light; we receive admonitions, promises, and warnings (Ps. 119:105, 130). And through the Word we are truly put in touch with the Light, Jesus Christ. Along with the Word, we must be diligent in prayer. Daily we must call upon our Father in Christ, seeking His help and grace to shine powerfully and publicly. And, we need to be fervent in Christian fellowship, seeking the blessing and strength of Christian friends. That’s why a retreat such as this is such a blessing to us who attend and make good use of it. In this way, using these means, we will grow brighter and brighter, even unto the perfect day, Proverbs 4:18.

III. How, Actually—Considering the Possibility

Finally, we also need to consider the other meaning of the word “how.” How is it possible for us to carry out this calling? Together, we concede that this is a difficult calling. We are well aware of our sins and weaknesses. We know that our Lord holds us to a high standard, even Himself and His perfect life of shining in darkness. We must even confess that this is IMPOSSIBLE for us to fulfill in and of ourselves. We can talk about all we must do and ought to do, but all of this is impossible without God’s GRACE, without the saving help of Jesus Christ, THE Light of the world, without the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives.

It is important to remember that it is in the realm of GRACE that Jesus’ teaching puts us here in Matthew 5. He is speaking about life in the kingdom of God. He is describing those who are in that kingdom, how they look and behave, what they believe and practice. But how did these people become such? How did they get into the kingdom of heaven? How did we enter it? Only by God’s GRACE! Not by what we willed and did, but by

what God willed and did! In Christ His Son and through His Holy Spirit.

If that is true (and it is!), then how are we going to live in that kingdom and fulfil its responsibilities? How are we going to obey this command to let our light shine? By our own willing and working? By our human grit and determination? There is no question that we must will to do this, and must put forth every effort to shine. But if we do not rely on God and His grace, we may be ever so busy, yet all our laboring will all be in vain.

So, it comes down to this: striving by grace to be faithful to this calling (Phil. 2:12, 13). Seek that grace in prayer daily; ask God for the help you need, the specific help and strength. Continue to follow Christ as your Light. Then we will shine, brightly and boldly in this dark world. Then men will see our good works, and God will be glorified in and through us. ❖

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Church History

Early Church History— The Apostolic Fathers (3)

by Rev. John A. Heys

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There is one more thing in regard to the Apostolic Fathers that we would have you consider with us. It is the matter of the persecution which the early church endured and which was therefore not at all strange to the Apostolic Fathers. For this purpose we have singled out the martyrdom of Polycarp for our present consideration.

It can be inferred already from what we wrote last month about Ignatius that this period was one of persecution. Ignatius also lost his life through this persecu-

tion, being fed to wild beasts for the entertainment of the ungodly. That it was such a period of persecution need not surprise us at all. Jesus Himself declared in John 15:20, “The servant is not greater than his lord? If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying; they will keep yours also.” We can see this carried out in literal, historical fulfillment. Christ they crucified, and it did not take the ungodly very long before they detected the life of Christ in the lives of His Apostles. Soon enough they say again, “Away with Him”. To achieve their end and attempt to stop the reappearance of Christ through the proclama-

tion of the truth concerning Him, they killed His Apostles. Soon enough they also persecuted those who were His disciples in a broader sense. Was it not in Thessalonica that they laid hold on one Jason by name who had given Paul lodging? Surely then when these Apostolic Fathers, who were no ordinary disciples but rather leaders in the church, began to preach Christ, we can expect that they too would be subjected to persecution.

This persecution came from two quarters both of which were godless, but each in its own way. Even as with Christ and the Apostles, they were opposed by the false church, the ungodly Jews, and by the world, the Gentiles, The Apostles suffered especially at the hands of their own nation, yet not exclusively. In Ephesus Paul was attacked not by the Jews who professed to believe in Jehovah, but by the worshippers of Diana the goddess of the Ephesians. The Apostolic Fathers were opposed by both of these factions but especially by the Gentiles.

Polycarp was put to death by these Gentiles who opposed him because he preached Christ. At that time the world was filled with superstition and the worship of false gods, idols and images. Christianity was growing rapidly, and these false gods were being discounted and branded by the preaching of the church as being nothing but the work of man's hands and of having no power whatsoever. Those who preached this truth in-

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curred the wrath of the worshippers of these gods. So it was with Polycarp. The Christians were blamed for every calamity that came the way of the nation. It was explained that the gods were displeased because these Christians denied their power and divinity. Especially then were the leaders who preached Christ singled out to be tormented and killed to satisfy these gods. And so Polycarp is killed.

Let me give you a few facts about his martyr's death. He was ninety years old when it took place. Hearing the people shouting for his death, he first intended to wait quietly in the city to be captured. Persuaded by the church he took refuge instead in a neighboring villa. He was betrayed by so-called friends and fled to another villa. A servant who was left behind was tortured until he revealed the new hiding place. When the soldiers came to capture him, Polycarp gave himself up. Having been hiding on the top story of a high building, he came down to meet those coming up after him. He asked these captors to indulge with him for one hour of prayer. The prayer lasted two hours. Taken before the ruler he was asked to denounce Christianity and confess the emperor to be lord. He refused. Then he was asked to repent and show his penitence by joining in with the shout of the people, "Away with the godless". The inference was that the Christians were godless, having nothing to do with these heathen gods. Instead of doing as he was asked Polycarp pointed his finger at these unbelievers and lifting his eyes to heaven cried out, "Away with the godless". Even here he dared to condemn those who had condemned him to death. Now the proconsul urged him to "Swear, curse Christ" with the promise that then he would be released. To this Polycarp gave answer in those memorable words, "Sixty and eight years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good; and how could I curse my God and Saviour!" Still prodded by the proconsul, he finally declared, "If you would know what I am, I tell you frankly that I am a Christian."

Needless to say, he was put to death. They burned him at the stake. His prayer before the fire was lighted was this, "Lord, Almighty God, Father of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ through Whom we have received the knowledge of Thyself; God of angels and of the whole creation; of the human race, and of the just that live in Thy presence; I praise Thee that Thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to take part in the number of Thy witnesses, in the cup of Thy Christ." ❖

The late Rev. Heys was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches from 1941 to 1980.

A Martyr-Reformer Lived Here

by J.P. de Klerk

Jan de Bakker (also known as Johannes Pesting) was the first martyr for the Reformation in The Netherlands. He was born in 1499 in the Dutch town of Woerden, and he died at the stake on September 15, 1525 in The Hague. You see here the State Reformed Church of the village of Woubrugge (in his days it was called Jacobswoude), where he began to preach the Reformation, refusing to continue work as a Roman Catholic priest. He had studied in Leuven, where Erasmus was his teacher, became priest in Utrecht, but criticized the Roman Catholic teachings. Then he went to Woerden, though the bishop of Utrecht commanded him to appear for a tribunal to defend his viewpoints. He was arrested, but liberated by the population, who believed he was right. Then, in 1523, he paid a visit to Wittenberg, where he spoke with Dr. Martin Luther. When he came back, he was again commanded to appear in Utrecht and refused. Instead, he started to travel to all the towns and villages of South Holland and North Holland, preaching the Reformation. In Delft he visited Rev. Cornelis Hoen and Rev. Willem Gnapheus, who were locked up in prison, and encouraged them in the faith. In 1524 he went to the city of Haarlem, where the people were quite happy with his preaching. But the bishop of Utrecht was furious and when he visited Woerden in May 1525 he was arrested and was brought to the notorious prison “De Gevangenpoort” in The





Hague. He was interrogated four months by a variety of Roman Catholic theologians. He was steadfast in his defence of the Word of God and explained again and again that the rules and regulations of Rome are not in accordance with the Scriptures. On September 11 he was condemned and given over to a judge. Four days later he was strangled and burned to death as a heretic. The church in Woubrugge is in fact rebuilt, with a stone of remembrance in the wall, mentioning the particulars of the life of Jan de Bakker. You see the entrance at the riverside, and the back of the building from a distance between the trees. ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Hills

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Kaylie rode with anticipation as she and her family drove through miles of flat pastureland, cornfields, and farms.

"Are we almost to the Bear Bluffs?" she couldn't help finally asking.

"Sort of," said Dad. "The scenery should be changing shortly. After that it won't be far."

Kaylie couldn't wait to see the hills of Bear Bluff Valley. She had seen them once long ago, and remembered how amazingly large they were. It had seemed as if she couldn't look at them enough!

A few more fields, a few more farms, around one more curve—and the valley spread before them in the distance, the hills rising up, hazy blue and high. The hills loomed up higher and higher the closer they drove, with new sights and more hills ever coming into view. Kaylie was struck with awe.

"Why are hills and mountains so beautiful?" asked Mother. "There's something about being here in them. They're so majestic, so, so..."

"So *there*," Dad supplied the word.

"There?" said Kaylie. "Of course they're there!"

"They're rock solid immovable," he explained.

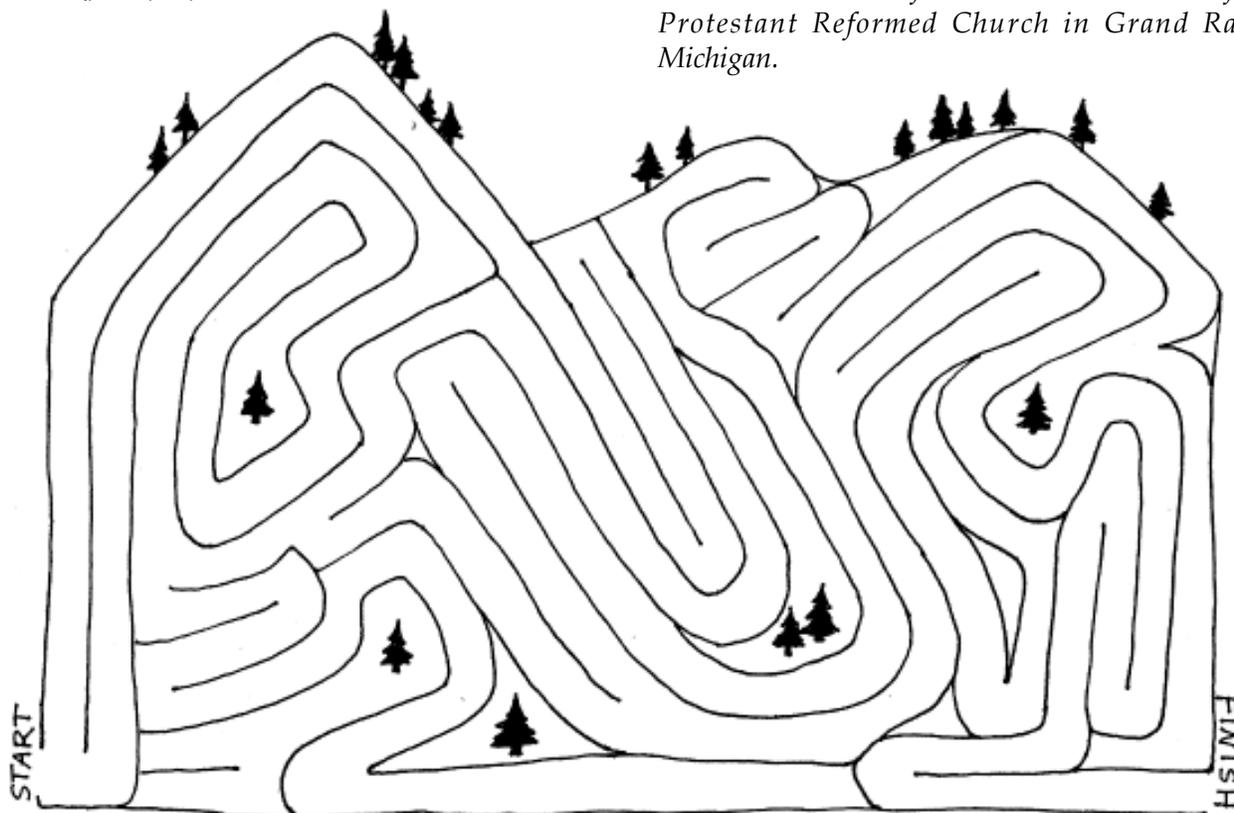
"They're *there*, at least until God Himself moves them. What a picture of how sure God's protection is for us!"

Mother began humming a tune, and Kaylie found herself singing the words as everyone joined in:

*Unto the hills around do I lift up
My longing eyes;
O whence for me shall my salvation come,
From whence arise?
From God the Lord doth come my certain aid,
From God the Lord Who heav'n and earth hath
made.*

(Psalter #347) ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Devin Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Berens—Georgetown,
MI

Trevor Allan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Kamps—
Georgetown, MI

Caleb Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers—Hope, MI

Breanna Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Pipe—
Southeast, MI

Alaina Mary, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Thad Lubbers—
Southeast, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

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

Stephen Dykstra—Lynden, WA

Tanya Pipe—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Grant Klein and Miss Kalie Vis—Doon, IA

Mr. Stephen Dykstra and Miss Rachel Bertsch—Lynden,
WA

Mr. Tyler Pipe and Miss Michelle Streyle—Southeast, MI