

---

# *Beacon Lights*

---

*December  
1999*

*Volume LVIII  
Number 12*







# The Stranger?

Author unknown

A few months before I was born, my dad met a stranger who was new to our small town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer, and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later.

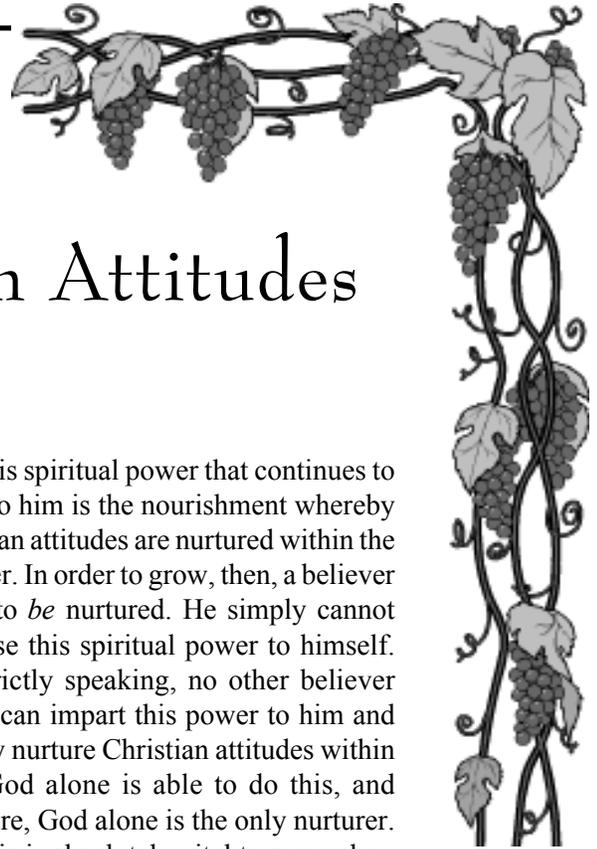
As I grew up, I never questioned his place in our family. Mom taught me to love the Word of God, and Dad taught me to obey it. But the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries, and comedies were daily conversations. He could hold our whole family spellbound for hours each evening. He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bill, and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see the movies and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars.

The stranger was an incessant talker. Dad didn't seem to mind, but sometimes Mom would quietly get up while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of faraway places. She would go to her room, read her Bible, and pray. I wonder now if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave. You see, my dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions. But this stranger never felt an obligation to honor them.

Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house—not from us, from our friends, or adults. Our longtime visitor, however, used occasional four letter words that burned my ears and made Dad squirm.

To my knowledge the stranger was never confronted. My Dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home—not even for cooking. But the stranger felt like we needed exposure and enlightened us to other ways of life. He offered us beer and other alcoholic beverages often. He made cigarettes look tasty, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished. He talked freely (too much too freely) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I know now that my early concepts of the man/woman relationship were influenced by the stranger. As I look back, I believe it was the grace of God that the stranger did not influence us more. Time after time he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked and never asked to leave. More than thirty years have passed since the stranger moved in with the young family on Morningside Drive. But if I were to walk into my parents' den today, you would still see him sitting over in a corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures.

His name? We always just called him...TV.



# Nurturing of Christian Attitudes

by David Overway

## 1998 Scholarship Essay

All Christians desire to be godly. Every believer longs to see Christian attitudes within himself and to manifest these attitudes clearly and consistently before God and man. Therefore, a Christian's chief hope regarding his attitude is that it may be like Christ's. He greatly desires to imitate and reflect his glorious Redeemer's perfect attitude.

However, a Christian is one who also sadly observes that he does not imitate his Saviour to the degree that he would like. In fact, he sees in himself only a "small beginning" of the reflection of Christ's attitudes. Even worse, he sees so terribly much of the exact opposite. He sees his sin. In disgust, he sees his rebellion, his pride, his hatred of good things, his earthly-mindedness, his unmercifulness, his impatience, his lust and intemperance. Of how un-Christian these attitudes are, he is painfully aware.

And so he must grow. He must less and less display these un-Christian attitudes in order that he may more and more grow in the display of Christian attitudes. Submission, humility, meekness, patience, hope, contentment, and sobriety must more and more grow to a greater dominance of expression in the believer's life.

Of course, a child of God is not naturally born with these Christian attitudes at all, nor is he naturally born with the ability to develop or "grow into" the display of these attitudes. Instead, he must be born again, he must be born spiritually. But still, a Christian is not even spiritually born with these attitudes in full, perfect, complete expression, nor is he at his spiritual birth given the power to develop himself and to produce within himself a growing display of Christian attitudes. Even as he is spiritually born by a spiritual seed in a spiritual way by a spiritual power, so the Christian needs a certain spiritual power to continue to come to him and work in him to progressively change him and to progressively produce in him a growing display of these Christian attitudes.

This spiritual power that continues to come to him is the nourishment whereby Christian attitudes are nurtured within the believer. In order to grow, then, a believer needs to *be* nurtured. He simply cannot dispense this spiritual power to himself. But strictly speaking, no other believer either, can impart this power to him and thereby nurture Christian attitudes within him. God alone is able to do this, and therefore, God alone is the only nurturer.

This is absolutely vital to remember. Any other teaching robs God of His glory and the Christian of his comfort. God receives all the glory when one remembers that it is *only* "God which worketh in you both to will *and to do* of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). In addition, the Christian takes great comfort in knowing not only that he is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," but also in knowing that "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Only God can carry out his sovereign counsel. God alone will nurture us so that we display Christian attitudes.

But how does our Lord do this? How does God without any help from the believer himself, other creatures, men, or angels, so work within the believer that he actually displays and grows in the display of Christian attitudes? Amazingly, the Lord works by speaking. God efficaciously causes the Christian to have Christian attitudes by talking to him. The believer, by hearing the very voice of God, is moved to desire to be characterized by Christian attitudes and even actually moved to display those attitudes (John 6: 63).

God speaks to the believer, however, by means. He does not any longer call to us in the still of the night as He did to the young Samuel. Neither does He speak from the heavens while directing a blinding bright light to shine down upon us as He did to Paul as he journeyed near Damascus. No, God speaks now though means, and

---

the main, fundamental means through which He speaks is the Scripture. God nourishes the Christian with spiritual power by speaking to him through the Word.

This Word then is the “food of the soul” which God uses to nurture within us Christian attitudes. The Canons teach that even as God uses means (natural food) to support our natural life, so also does He use means (the gospel, Word, sacraments, discipline) to feed us spiritually and to support our spiritual life (Heads III/IV Art.17) This same idea is of course presented in Scripture. In I Peter 2:2 we read, “desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” Also, the Psalmist exclaims “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103)

The chief means that God uses to speak His Word to His people and thereby to nourish them is the preaching (Romans 10:14). We receive the spiritual food for our souls by means of the preaching. In addition, God uses the means of men (preachers) to accomplish this end. This is true only in so far as the preacher preaches the Word of God. The important thing to remember here is that it is *God* that speaks and therefore it is *God* that nurtures us. The preacher is merely an instrument in the hand of the Lord.

What is it then that God says to the believer through the preached Word that is able to nurture, and support a believer’s spiritual life to the end that it so wondrously produces Christian attitudes? The content of God’s speech is Himself. He tells us about Himself! Christ prays to his Father in John 17:26, “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The declaration of God’s name here and elsewhere refers to God’s attributes (who he is) and His work (what He does). Therefore the message of the Word from God is “the gospel of peace” and “glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15) If one is to be nurtured to display Christian attitudes, God must speak to him the doctrines of election and all the other doctrines of grace which are dependent upon election, such as calling, justification, faith, and sanctification, as listed in the Canons, Head I, Art. 7. To nurture a believer, God tells him of His love for him and about what He has done for him because of that love. Centrally, God nurtures Christian attitudes within a believer by telling him about the work He has done for him in and through Christ. He tells us about the Cross!

Christian attitudes, therefore, are *not* nurtured by the exhortations of men, no matter how enthusiastically or

emotionally these exhortations may be presented. Christian attitudes are *not* nurtured by hearing a great list of things we ought to do. Christian attitudes are only nurtured by hearing God’s voice alone and hearing him tell us what *He* has done for us! This alone has the spiritual power to produce in us the attitudes of Christ and thereby to make us true imitators of Him.

Throughout the ages false teachers have complained about this way of God. They have argued that if a believer hears too much about what God has done, and not enough about what he should do, he will become lazy and careless about good works and will not display Christian attitudes. The historical Reformed church has responded to this in her creeds in a most clear and emphatic way. For example, the doctrines of what God has done are explained in the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Days 5 through 23. In Lord’s Day 24, the church confesses that although in 19 previous Lord’s Days the believer has only heard of God’s works and even that the believer’s “best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin” and only rewarded of grace, still this “by no means” makes the Christian “careless and profane,” but rather makes it *impossible* that he “should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.”

In the Belgic Confession, Art. 24, the Church confesses that she believes true faith is “wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God” and again that “it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man.”

The Canons also speak the same way throughout. The glorious doctrine of God’s work of election is described as “the fountain and cause of faith and good works” in the Conclusion. And the First Head states that “the consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security...” (Art 13). Also, the Fifth Head, Art, 12 describes the certainty of God’s work of preserving His saints as “the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation...”

Hearing God speak about His gracious work causes all believers both to desire to be godly and to actually display Christian attitudes. Feeding upon that Word of God, a believer grows spiritually and thus Christian attitudes are nurtured within him. God speaks and we are changed into imitators of Christ! *His* speaking about *His* work! God our only nurturer! His Word our only nourishment! ❖

---

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

# Deforestation

by John Huizenga

What goes through your mind when you hear environmentalists lament the disappearance of the rainforests? Most of us are far removed from the rainforests and we form our views on the basis of what the environmentalists, talk show hosts, politicians, and economists tell us. Some want to preserve the forests—leave them alone completely. They warn that we are losing rare animals and plants that may contain a substance for the cure of cancer or other terrible diseases. Sometimes these people are derided as environmentalist “wacko’s” and “tree-huggers.” Others think we should conserve the forests—use them in such a way that we do not destroy them. And finally, there are those who want to exploit the forests—harvest them like a crop, cut them all down and use them all up.

The above mentioned voices are the voices of sinful man. The believer seeks to look at the issue through the spectacles of Scripture. What does God say about the forests that He has created? What does God say about our use of the forest?

Before looking through the spectacles of Scripture, we need to get the issue of deforestation clearly before us. Deforestation can be defined simply as “the temporary or permanent clearing of forest.” Deforestation is not limited to the rainforests; neither is it limited to this present time. Almost all the original forest of Europe was cut down between 1050 and 1250 AD. The forests of North America and Canada were harvested in the 1800’s. Now with growing populations in the tropics and advanced technology, areas such as Southern Mexico, Madagascar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines are cutting down their virgin forests to make room and money for the people.

Perhaps you look around and say, “there are plenty of trees and forests.” It is true, the forestland that has not been cleared for farming or turned into pasture has grown back and we plant countless trees in our towns and cities. The forests we have now, however, are quite differ-

ent from the original forests that covered the land. It has been fragmented into numerous small plots greatly reducing the diversity of plants and animals able to live there. Large sections of Wisconsin, for example, were originally oak savannas (majestic oak trees widely spaced allowing grass to grow on the forest floor.) Frequent grass fires destroyed brush. When roads were built, natural fires put out, the oaks cut, and non-native species were introduced, the forests became brushy and the oak seedlings which need direct sunlight had a difficult time growing. Few of us will ever enjoy the majesty of virgin forests.

Man has cut down the forests for two basic reasons: make room for crops and make money from the wood. The forests of the United States and Canada have been great sources of economic growth for the country. Now many developing countries are cutting into their forests to make room for crops and make money from the wood. It is rather hypocritical then, for us to tell other countries that they should not cut down their forests.

When we look through the spectacles of Scripture, we see a much fuller picture. First of all, we see a glimpse of the garden of Eden. This was a place of trees, animals and plants of tremendous diversity and beauty. It was designed by God to be a home for Adam and Eve. The garden was something of great value for man. Everywhere Adam looked, he saw the handiwork of God. Today man seems more impressed with his own handiwork than the handiwork of creation. Perhaps we are sad when the bulldozer plows through a beautiful section of woods but we would rather have the beautiful home in a new subdivision. We see through the spectacles of Scripture that our attitude toward the trees, plants, and animals has been greatly distorted.

Next we see that man was given dominion over the living creatures, and the trees and plants were given to him for food. Man was placed in the garden to till the land and care for it. God reveals that the plants and animals were given to man so that he could use them for

---

the glory of God. This relationship between man and creation most closely resembles the “conservation” attitude some have today—use it without destroying it. This relationship, however was also corrupted by sin. Thorns and weeds hinder his efforts to till the land, man takes all he can for his own gain, species go extinct, the creation groans. Man abuses and scorns the home which God gave to him.

Next God reveals to us that the entire world was “deforested” by the flood. In fact, God changed the whole world. The world before the flood was entirely different than the world we have now. We read in II Peter 3:6 “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” We have reason to believe that the plant life was far more prolific than the most dense rainforest today. It may even be that there was more land area and that the enormous coal and oil deposits we have today are the buried remains of all the plants and trees that grew then. We have only a small glimpse of what the creation was like then. What we observe today reminds us continually of the effects of sin in the world and turn us to Christ.

The ragged remains of creation may leave us sad, but God also reveals that his eternal council includes a new heavens and a new earth. We look specifically at the following three passages: Isaiah 65:17, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” Isaiah 66:22, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” II Peter 3:13, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” We are called to look ahead, and not at this present creation for hope.

How does this view of creation through the spectacles of Scripture shape our thoughts about deforestation? The idea of preserving the forests in original condition does not have much support from Scripture. The idea of preserving nature from the effects of man comes from evolutionary thinking in which man is just like the animals and needs to respect the other life on the earth as an equal. God reveals that the creation is to be used by man for the glory of God. Man is to inhabit the whole earth as we read in Isaiah 45:18, “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.” The fact of the flood and the

corrosive effects of sin also point to the fact that this creation will have an end. Man’s preserving creation puts his goal and purpose on earthly things and not the Word of God.

Should we then exploit the forests—use them without any regard for the effects on creation? God destroyed them once already. God gave to us dominion over the creatures and plants. We need to use the forests to build our homes and churches. Sin has corrupted the world, and we know God will make a new heavens and earth. These facts could support the argument to exploit the forests. The problem with this argument is that our chief reason for exploitation is not to obey God but rather to satisfy our greed. Exploitation is driven by greed and pride. Exploitation, devoid of any appreciation of God’s handiwork. Exploitation gives glory to man and not to God.

Even though sin corrupts the hearts of men and the creation itself, I believe that the principle of care for the creation continues from the time of creation till now. We can look at a number of passages of Scripture for guidance in this regard. When the Pharisees suggested that divorce was a legitimate action because Moses had made allowance for it, Jesus responded in Mark 10:5-9, “For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” The orders which God established in the beginning, including the relation between man and the creation, were and still are good.

God also instructs us to be good stewards of all the gifts which he gives to us. Jesus applied the principle of a good steward to our use of the spiritual gifts which God gives to His people. A good steward does not hide or preserve his gifts without using them. Neither does he squander and use them foolishly for his own profit. A good steward uses the gifts for the glory of his master. Finally, we read in Proverbs 18:9, “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.”

Having looked at the issue of deforestation through the spectacles of Scripture, what effect must this have on our life? First of all, the abuses of the creation reveal the corruption of sin and bring us to our knees before the cross. Instead of mocking those who hug trees in their attempts to save them or greedily take part in the wasting of resources, we should humbly bow before God.

---

Secondly, we need not become obsessed with the problem of deforestation and devote our entire life to saving trees, because these things are in God's hands, He will destroy this earth and make "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). Finally, we learn to appreciate the beauty of what remains of the creation and see the handiwork of God in it. On an earthly, everyday level, we can strive to live according to the principles God established in the be-

ginning: use things wisely for the glory of God. Recycle your waste as much as possible, plant some trees if you can, and strive to be less wasteful. Do these things not hoping for a better future on this earth, but rather for the glory of God alone. ❖

---

*John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is the editor of the Beacon Lights.*

---

## Church Family

# Fleeing Sin (1)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

**L**ord's Day 33, Q & A 89 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks the question: "What is the mortification of the old man?" The answer: "It is a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them." It is evident from this question and answer (and the entire Catechism) that the life of the child of God is a life of continual repentance. It is a life of continually turning from sin and separating from sinners, and turning towards God in love. Along these same lines it can correctly be said that during his lifetime, the believer is being continually converted. By conversion, we mean that the believer experiences the mortification of his old man and the quickening, or making alive, of his new man. This is the Catechism's explanation of conversion as found in Q & A 88. And this is our experience too. However young we may be, it is true that the child of God experiences within himself a sorrow for his sin. This sorrow is due to the fact that we have sinned against the living God and provoked Him (read Psalm 51). Because of this sorrow in our hearts and because of the work of sanctification being performed in us, we no longer desire to sin, but rather we come more and more to hate sin and flee from it. Sometimes this sorrow for sin and hatred of it may be very small, but by God's continued work of grace in us we grow in this aspect of repentance as we mature spiritually.

Q & A 70 of the Catechism asks the question: "What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?" In the latter half of the answer to this question the Spirit's work of sanctification is described. And part of sanctification is this, that we "more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives." When the Catechism states that we "die unto sin" we must understand this as Romans 6 explains it. The child of God is "baptized into Jesus Christ" and "baptized into His death" (vs. 3). And just as Christ conquered death and sin by His death and resurrection, so do we also who "are buried with Him by baptism into death" (vs. 4) and raised "also in the likeness of His resurrection" (vs. 5). This being the reality, we are dead to sin (vs. 2) and are no longer the servants of sin according to our new man (vs. 6). That we are more and more dying unto sin means that we become more and more free from the control of sin (vs. 7). Positively, we more and more live unto God (vs. 10). Living unto God the Catechism calls the "quickening of the new man." Q & A 90 defines this second part of the conversion of man as "a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works."

Also to be noticed from Q & A 70 is the phrase, "holy and unblamable lives." Particularly it is the word "holy" which has the idea of "separation." The sanctified child of God lives a holy life. By this we mean that he is continually involved in the "separating" of himself

---

from sin, and positively involved in the activity of communion with God. Living in sanctification he experiences being drawn out of his old man and out of this world spiritually. And being drawn out of his old man he finds that he no longer desires that which his old man desires. He finds no enjoyment in sin. He finds that he comes to hate the fellowship of those who tempt him to sin. He finds that he has nothing in common with those who walk impenitently in sin. He finds that there is no fellowship to be had with those of the world. Further, he denies his own desires and submits to the will of God. He finds that he desires the fellowship of God and the fellowship of God's people.

---

**“Repentance is a flower  
that grows not in nature’s  
garden.”**

---

Having briefly reviewed the basics of the mortification of the old man, it is good that we look at the activity of repentance in this light. “Repentance is a flower that grows not in nature’s garden.” This statement, which serves as a good introduction to the topic of repentance, was written by Thomas Brooks, a Puritan. It is a true statement that not everyone lives a life of repentance. By nature, all men are incapable of repenting of sin. By nature, we all would continue to live unashamed in sin. It is impossible for the unregenerated man to come to hate his sin and flee from it. God’s Word speaks of this impossibility with these words, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23).

But, we who live out of the principle of the new man do live a life of continual repentance. This is not to be explained by some good that is found in us by nature. We know and confess that by nature there is no good thing in us. We are inclined to all evil. Rather, this repentance is caused by the work of the Spirit in us. It is God, by His Spirit, who works in us the desire to turn from our sins. There are a number of passages in Scripture which set forth this truth. One of these is Jeremiah 31:18, 19. Beginning in the middle of verse 18 we read: “Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after

that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” Another similar passage is Lamentations 5:21 which reads, “Turn thou us unto thee, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.” Both of these passages clearly show us that we are turned from sin to God only by the turning of the Spirit. And it is the Spirit which works in us to pray the prayer, “Turn thou me.” We will see later that this “turning” is a turning of our inmost heart.

There are a number of characteristics of repentance which ought to be obvious in the walk of a child of God. The first of these is sorrow for sin. II Corinthians 7:10 sets forth this aspect of repentance with the words, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” The child of God sorrows because he knows that all sin is against his heavenly Father. He knows that he has sinned against the One who shows only goodness to him. While this sorrow may be more acute in an adult, children and young people living in repentance do come to sorrow for their sins. It is written of Peter that he “wept bitterly” when the words of Jesus were brought to his remembrance that he would deny Jesus thrice (Matt. 26:75). So extreme was his sorrow that he has was brought to tears. Those who come to years of discretion and manifest by their lives that they do not sorrow over

---

**Those who come to years  
of discretion and manifest  
by their lives that they do  
not sorrow over their sins,  
but rather enjoy and run in  
their sins, show themselves  
to be of this world.**

---

their sins, but rather enjoy and run in their sins, show themselves to be of this world.

The second characteristic of repentance which ought to manifest itself in the life of the child of God is hatred of sin. Not only does one sorrow for his sins, but he comes more and more to hate his own evil nature and sin. It follows that when one sorrows in his heart that he has grieved God with his sins that he will come to hate his evil nature and sins. II Corinthians 7:11 refers to the

fact that “indignation” is part of a “godly sorrow” for sin. One does not truly sorrow for his sins until he comes to hate his own evil nature. And one will not flee from his sin until he first comes to hate it.

The third characteristic of repentance which ought to manifest itself in our walk is a loathing of ourselves by nature. To put it in the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, we must confess of ourselves: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” No doubt these are the words of a man of God with a very deep awareness of his evil nature, but we, even as young people must know this to be our state also. The child of God with a deep awareness of his depravity will manifest this in a walk of humility and submission to the will of God.

The fourth characteristic of repentance is an acknowledgment of the seriousness of sin. Sin is not a light thing as most would have us believe. Sin is not a trifling matter as preached in almost all churches. Sin is “committed against the most high majesty of God” and must be “punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul” (Q & A 11, Catechism). Living in repentance means that we meditate on this punishment. We deserve eternal death. Christ paid the price for us. We do good to think on the sufferings of Christ when we are tempted to sin. We also do good to meditate on passages such as Psalm 22 when we are tempted to fellowship with those who are living impenitently.

Next time, Lord willing, we will move on and see that repentance is a continuing act. Also, we will see that repentance goes hand-in-hand with close communion with God. ❖

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

## Whence Glory?

by Thelma Westra

*Though I attain great learning  
And many tongues can speak,  
I've mastered all philosophies  
And still new concepts seek ...*

*Though I, a first class artist  
Get all the world's acclaim;  
I craft the greatest sculptures,  
Each painting brings me fame ...*

*Though I, a king or ruler  
Have pow'r ne'er known before;  
My word is law, my strength supreme,  
Extolled the whole world o'er ...*

*Though I, a scientist renowned  
Can mankind's force expand;  
By touching one small button  
Can reconstruct the land ...*

*Though I the world should conquer,  
Yea, every battle win;  
Though all men bow before me:  
There's nothing there ... but sin.*

*The only source of glory,  
My only boast can be  
The cross of my dear Savior  
Who shed His blood for me.*



# The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

### December 1 Read Psalm 117

**Psalm 117:1** This is the shortest Psalm, but what a multitude of truths we can find in it. We read the word praise in the first verse twice. This is significant for us because as God's people we are called to live a life of praise. We also see that God calls His people from the whole world. This Psalm was written for Jews, but they had to know that God gathered His church from all manner of people. We need this same admonition today. We must see that God calls His people from all manner of races, tribes, and tongues. He may use us for this purpose. As we live lives of praise we must show our praise in being thankful that we may be chosen to bring the gospel to the nations. Let us praise Him in all things. Sing Psalter 314.

### December 2 Read Isaiah 54:4-10

**Psalm 117:2a** As we begin the season of the year in which many songs and words concerning Christmas are heard, we should stop and take notice of why there is Christmas. Sometimes we hear the phrase "Jesus is the reason for the season". I think that this is a trite phrase which does not capture the true meaning of Christmas. We can find that true meaning in the first part of the Psalm 117:2. We have Christmas because God's merciful kindness was great toward His people. He was so kind to us that He sent His only begotten Son to be born of the virgin Mary, suffer during His life on this earth, and eventually to die on the cross for our sins. Do we know what true kindness is? We definitely have experienced it from God. Do we show it to those around us? Children, are you kind to those in your class? Everyone? Young people, what about you? Older members, we are included as well. Our heavenly Father has shown to us much kindness. Let us reflect His love to those around us. Sing Psalter 315.

### December 3 Read Titus 1:1-10

**Psalm 117:2b** The third aspect in this short Psalm is truth. It is God's truth. It is the truth which brings to us no end of comfort because it never fails. Man may speak the truth, and then go out and turn it into a lie. We are all guilty of that. God is never guilty of that fault. Because of this we can be assured that He will love us until the end of our days on this earth no matter how long or how short they may be. We can live our lives in the confidence that whatever God has proclaimed will come to pass. Israel of old had this comfort as they waited for the promised Savior. The church today can rest assured that Christ will come again and take them to heaven there to live a life of praise with Him before the throne of God forever. Let us praise the Lord with our whole be-

ing. Sing Psalter 316. (These three Psalter numbers make excellent songs for morning devotions around the table.)

### December 4 Read Psalm 118:1-14

**Psalm 118:1-4** This Psalm is one of the Hallel Psalms. It was especially used by Israel for worship during the time of the Passover. It was probably one of these Psalms that Jesus and his disciples sang before they went out from the upper room. In the first four verses of this Psalm we notice that a reason for our thanksgiving to God is because His mercy endureth forever. We saw in the last Psalm the comfort we derive from the fact that His truth is everlasting. Here we see another of God's attributes giving to the child of God of any age immeasurable comfort. God's mercy is for ever. If it was not, we would be doomed to destruction because of our sin. As we prepared today to meet with the congregation of Christ, we can be thankful like Israel of old for God's mercy. Let us prepare to thank Him whose "mercy endureth forever." Sing Psalters 317:1 and 319:1-2.

### December 5 Read I Samuel 23:19-29

**Psalm 118:5** David could write Psalms from his experiences. Even though this Psalm gives no indication that it is David's, the cry of this verse could be his. But it could be any other child of God's as well. We are brought into distress. This distress could be a physical affliction brought upon us by God for our good. It may be oppression from those around us as Satan tries to cause us to fall. It could be distress caused by our sin. What ever the cause we have the blessed assurance that when we truly call upon God's mercy He will hear us and deliver us from our troubles. Today, as we enter God's house, is a good day to contemplate this fact. We can examine our lives and trials and see where we are being led. We can pray to Him in the "beauty of holiness." We can sing Psalms unto Him in thankfulness for His goodness. Above all we can listen to His word and see what He says unto us. Let us call upon the Lord with confidence today. Sing Psalter 319:3.

### December 6 Read Romans 8:31-39

**Psalm 118:6-7** This verse is a continuation of the thought of the preceding verse. The Psalmist confesses that he does not have to fear what may happen to him because God is on his side. Paul living in just as dangerous times confessed the same thing. Is this your confession, people of God? Are you oppressed because of the faith and therefore need God's help? We have a great God who will deliver us against all manner of oppression. David and the apostle Paul had to be concerned for their lives. Most of us do not have that concern. But yet if we truly walk in God's Word we

will face oppression from Satan and his hosts. We need not fear. God is for us; none can be against us. Sing Psalters 317:2 and 319:4.

### **December 7 Read Jeremiah 17:1-8**

**Psalm 118:8-9** When we face oppression or any difficulty we must make a choice about whom we will place our trust. Do we trust in the arm of flesh, or do we trust in the living God? The Psalmist had no difficulty answering this question. He knew that it was better to trust in God than man. Is this your experience, people of God? Have you been guilty of placing your trust in the ways of man and ignoring God? This is a terrible thing especially when we know how great our God is. There is nothing that He cannot do for us. There is no difficulty so great that He cannot help us to escape. When we are tempted to ignore God and trust in man, let us fight this temptation with these verses. When we do this, God will help us. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 319:5.

### **December 8 Read I Samuel 17:40-50**

**Psalm 118:10-12** People of God, do you face trouble by using the name of God? Consider David in the passage for today. Here he was a mere lad facing a giant. His main weapon was the name of God. With that weapon he overcame Goliath and won the battle for Israel. We, too, have that weapon. When we wield this weapon against all difficulties, we, too, will be victorious over all sorts of troubles. The name of Jehovah is both a weapon and a comfort. By His name we can rest assured that He will help us. That name is so precious to Him that He has even given a commandment about it. People of God, use Jehovah's name. Not in vain. Not carelessly. Those uses will cause us to be guilty. But, rather, use His name to fight the battles of faith. Sing Psalter 317:3.

### **December 9 Read Psalm 118:1-14**

**Psalm 118:13-14** We come to the end of this section of Psalm 118. In it we have been admonished to fight the battle of faith in the strength of the Lord. This is the summary found in the two verses for today. We, like the Psalmist, can know that we will receive help from Jehovah. Because He helps us, He will not only become our salvation and strength, but He will become the content of our songs. Do you sing, people of God? Young people, is God the content of the music you sing and to which you listened? Our God is able to save us. He will save us. We must show our gratitude to Him in our music. What will it be? The music of Jehovah or Satan? There is no other kind. Psalter 317:3.

### **December 10 Read Psalm 118:15-29**

**Psalm 118:15-16** In these two verses we have an example of why we praise the Lord. In the first part of verse 15 we are told that in God's peoples' houses is found rejoicing and salvation. In the rest of this pair of verses is the reason. The almighty hand of Jehovah is exalted and "doeth valiantly." What a comfort it is to have someone's hand upon us whom we can trust. Every little child knows that when he is holding father's hand he is safe. We have that same sense of safety through the hand of God. Let us make our homes full of rejoicing because of the right hand of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 320:1.

### **December 11 Read Hebrews 11:1-11**

**Psalm 118:17-18** In these verses we have a little insight into the cause of this Psalm's being written. The author had been chastised by God for some sin. This chastisement was such that he

came close to death. But through it all he came to understand that this affliction was for his good. He realized that he would not die, but rather would live and would tell of God's goodness to others. God, like a faithful earthly father, knows what is good for His people. His chastisements though severe at times do not lead to death but rather to salvation. Like the Psalmists we must be ready to declare the works of the Lord to those around us. This season gives us ample opportunity to do this. We do not tell the sentimental story of Christmas but rather we must declare the real Christmas story. Sing Psalter 317:4.

### **December 12 Read Isaiah 26:1-8**

**Psalm 118:19** This verse is an excellent one to consider on the Sabbath Day. It should be our earnest desire that the gates of righteousness be opened unto us on this the first day of the week. We need to enter those gates of righteousness and be fed with "food convenient for us" on the Lord's Day. What is our attitude as we enter church today? Have we prepared ourselves to go to church? Are our young people prepared? Did we see that they were home early enough last night so that they were ready to attend church. What are we going to do once inside those gates? According to the verse we will praise the Lord. Are we ready to do that? Are we ready to sing the songs of Zion with a ready and willing heart? Are we ready to pray? To listen to the word of Christ? Let us utter this prayer often, and let us desire to praise the Lord just as often. Sing Psalter 318:1.

### **December 13 Read Isaiah 35:1-10**

**Psalm 118:20-21** These two verses are a continuation of yesterday's thought. The gates of righteousness are not just entered on Sunday. We should desire to enter them every day of our lives. As we go off to work or school this morning, we should be entering the gates of righteousness. As we work or play, we should be praising Jehovah. Why is this so? The answer is because when we call upon God in any distress, He will hear us. He then will bring to us salvation. This may not be in the way we might expect, but rather it will be in accordance to His will. In gratitude for that salvation we must enter the gates of righteousness and praise Jehovah. Let us pray for that grace, and let us carry out our daily work in the praise of Jehovah. Sing Psalters 318:2 and 320:2.

### **December 14 Read Psalm I Peter 2:1-10**

**Psalm 118:22-23** Salvation should be marvelous in our sight. As we consider the birth of Christ in this season of the year, we must not lose sight of the purpose of that birth. Christ, born of a virgin, was born for a life of suffering for our salvation. Is this not a marvelous work? Is it not past comprehension of such feeble mortals as we are? Because of its being so marvelous, we must bow in humble adoration toward it. He who was despised and rejected of men has become the most important part of the building. Man would not choose Him. Man would never choose Him. But He was ordained by God to become the head of the corner. Let us praise His name in the true meaning of Christmas-our salvation. Sing Psalters 318:3 and 320:3.

### **December 15 Read Genesis 1:1-8**

**Psalm 118:24-25** At creation there was more than objects being created. God also created time. He gave to us the day in which we can do our work, in which we can play, and most importantly in which we can praise Him. In creating the day He also created the works of that day. We cannot say that we shall do this or that.

---

God has ordained what we will do. Oh, we may plan, we may pray to carry our some activity; but we must always confess, “Thy will be done.” As we go through out this day let us remember that it has been made by God. Let us rejoice in whatever comes to pass in this day because we know that it is good for us. Let our prayers rise up each morning with that thought in mind. Let us pray for prosperity not necessarily earthly prosperity, but definitely let us pray for spiritual prosperity. Sing Psalters 318:4 and 320:4.

**December 16 Read Matthew 21:1-11**

**Psalm 118:26** You surely recognize this as the content of the people’s shout as Jesus entered Jerusalem one week before His death. The people recognized that this was the Christ. They were not so sure what to make about Him. He did not seem very kingly. What about us? Do we recognize the Christ? Do we know what to make of Him? As we get closer and closer to the day in which we celebrate His birth, how are we behaving? Do we know what Christmas is? Do we know why Christ was born? Let us stop each day and consider our salvation which was wrought for us by Christ. He who was born a baby and crucified on the cross. We cannot have one without the other. Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Sing Psalters 318:5 and 320:5.

**December 17 Read John 12:44-50**

**Psalm 118:27** Have you seen the light? This is a common idiom in the English language. But is a question that every child of God must consider. No, we are not talking about an extraordinary experience. We are not looking for the light of a vision. We are looking for the Light of the world. Jesus Christ is that light even as He testified of Himself. Because He is the light, He gives light and life to His people. In two days we will go up to His house. The light will shine out during the sermon. Will we be steadfast to that light? What about tonight, young people? Will you be doing things in which you do not want that Light to see? The Light shines in the darkness. He knows whatever we do, even if it is in secret. Christ is the light of the world. Let us seek that light and wish for its brilliant beams to enlighten all that we do. Sing Psalter 318:6.

**December 18 Read Psalm 118:15-29**

**Psalm 118:28-29** The Psalm ends with the same words as it begins. After the psalmist considers many things, he only has one confession. God’s mercy is good and endureth forever. What about us, people of God? We come to the end of another week. As we look back upon the past week, must we not confess, that God’s mercy endureth forever? Must we not say that God is good? As we prepare for the Sabbath, let us confess these things, and let us ready ourselves to go to God’s house and praise His wonderful name. Let us sing Psalms of praise unto Him and the lamb who reigneth forever and ever. Let us live lives in which God’s mercy is truly reflected. Children, young people, saints of all ages, let us know that God’s mercy endureth forever and let us thank Him for it every day. Sing Psalter 318:7.

**December 19 Read Psalm 119:1-8**

**Psalm 119:1-2** We come to the longest Psalm. But yet it may be one of the most precious. Except for a few verses, each verse names the Word of God in it in some way. Look for each of the synonyms and see how precious God’s Word has been throughout the ages. Are you blessed, people of God? Do you walk undefiled in God’s law? Do you seek to do that? Today is Sunday. We all know the fourth commandment. Are we going to keep it holy?

Or is the NFL playoff game something that we cannot miss? Are we off on vacation and have not sought the means of grace today? Have we failed to find a church with the all the marks of Christ’s church? These two verses have much to say to us not only today but also every day of our lives. Let us read them over and over and mark their importance. Sing Psalter 321:1.

**December 20 Read Psalm Romans 7:12-25**

**Psalm 119:3-4** By nature we have “all sinned and come short of the glory of God” Of this the law testifies most diligently about us. We are commanded to keep all the laws and we keep none of them. But yet, because of Christ we are accounted righteous before God. We have the blessedness of them that do no iniquity because we have been justified by faith. Do we live lives of gratitude for such justification? No, these are not lives filled with the good works of those who think this is pleasing to God. These are lives that love God’s law and keep it day and night. Help us, O Lord, to keep Thy law diligently everyday of our lives. Help us to live lives of gratitude and to be one of the blessed people. Sing Psalter 321:2.

**December 21 Read I John 2:18-29**

**Psalm 119:5-6** As we considered our lives how often must we mourn with the psalmist that we wish our way were directed to keep God’s statutes. As we go to sleep at night and consider our day, we must confess that we have sinned much. We must know that in not keeping God’s law we become ashamed. We must be ashamed, for we have failed to please our heavenly Father. But there is hope! Through His Son, whose birth we celebrate this week, we have the confidence that we will have respect to His laws. No, not perfectly, that will not be our delight until we go to heaven. But yet we have a small part of the new obedience in this life. Let us respect and keep the laws of God and not be ashamed in them. Sing Psalter 321:3.

**December 22 Read Psalm 119:1-8**

**Psalm 119:7-8** The psalmist’s plea in the final verse of this first section is that he is not forsaken by God. What a dreadful thing that would be! Forsaken by God. Christ felt that on the cross as He cried out, “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me.” We would feel it, too, if it were not for Christ’s ultimate sacrifice. What must we do? We must strive to keep the statutes of the Lord. We must strive to learn them. This means that we must spend much time in the study of His Word. We must do this personally. We must do this with our families. We must do this with the church. People of God of all ages, study the Word of God. Then you will have the comfort that He will never forsake you. Sing Psalter 321:4.

**December 23 Read Psalm 119:9-16**

**Psalm 119:9** Young people, take the time to read our verse for today again. Do you know the answer of the first part? If you do not, do not worry, God has provided it for you in the second part. Do you want to cleanse your way? Do you understand what it means to take heed to God’s Word? Taking heed to God’s Word means that first of all you know God’s Word. Just as in yesterday’s verses there is a necessity to have knowledge of God’s Word. Cleansing our way does not consist in works righteousness. It does not consist in taking part in man-made projects of good works. Cleansing our way means we walk in faith which consists of the knowledge of all that God has revealed in His Word and a confidence that it is true for us. Only then can we have the clean hands

---

and pure heart of the mature child of God. Young people, do you want that? Do you seek that? Sing Psalter 322:1.

**December 24 Read II Chronicles 15:1-15**

**Psalm 119:10** Can we say that we have sought Jehovah with our whole heart? If we cannot, why not? The psalmist was a man as we are. He possessed no special graces that would allow him to wholly seek the Lord. We must make it our desire to wholly seek the Lord. Then we must ask Him grace not to let us wander away from the goodness of His law. As we look toward Christmas, we should do this in gratitude for the sacrifice Christ made for us. For it is only through Christ that we can seek the Lord whole-heartedly. Let us ask for the grace to do this all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 322:2.

**December 25 Read Luke 2:8-19**

**Psalm 119:11** Today is Christmas. How are we spending it? Are we using it to thank God for the birth of His Son for our salvation? What about today's text? How does it fit in with Christmas? The answer is found in John 1:14 where we read, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us..." Christ is the Word. We must take that word and hide it in our hearts. Now our verse also implies that we use His Word the Scriptures in this way. Are you memorizing Scripture? Are you hiding it in your heart so that you might not sin against God? Our children learn readily. We must take the opportunity to help them hide God's Word in their hearts. But while they are learning, we can also be learning. Let us worship today by hiding the Word in our hearts and His Word as well. Sing Psalter 322:2.

**December 26 Read Proverbs 3:11-22**

**Psalm 119:12-14** Today's verses start with a blessing. We bless the Lord because He cares for us in all things. Then we pray that He will teach His statutes unto us. We must realize that this is the only way we will find blessedness in this life. Then we utter words of thanksgiving with our mouths. This can be by way of prayer, or it can be by way of song. In all these things we must realize that they are more precious than any riches. By this time you must notice that these three verses sound like a way of worship. As we enter God's house today, we must use what He has given us in our worship. Man's made-up worship will not suffice. Let us worship and bow down before our God. Let us use His laws to help us in our worship. Let us rejoice that He has given them to us. Sing Psalter 322:3.

**December 27 Read Psalm 119:9-16**

**Psalm 119:15-16** People of God, will you confess the words of today's verses? Will you take the time to meditate upon God's precepts. Time is the key word here. Meditating is not something you can do quickly. It takes time. Will you give that time to God? Do you have respect unto His laws? If He says, "Thou shalt not..." will you say, "Oh, yes I will"? We must have respect and honor toward God's commands. Will you delight in God's statutes? Do you love to keep the Ten Commandments? Do they give you great joy and delight? Finally, will you remember God's Word? We heard that Word yesterday. Do we remember the text, the theme, the main points? Young people, do your activities cause you to forget God's Word? If they do, you had better find new activities. Look back over these four "I wills." Are they our confessions? Sing Psalter 322:4.

**December 28 Read Psalm 119:17-24**

**Psalm 119:17-18** The psalmist has two desires from God. He asks God to deal bountifully with him and to open his eyes. In both these requests, he uses the imperative. He writes them as commands. This shows how serious he is in his requests. The bountifulness that he wishes is not earthly but rather spiritual. He is not asking to be healed from a physical blindness but a spiritual one. Are these our requests? Are we as serious about them as the psalmist was? Are we desirous of spiritual bounties? Do we seek them? Notice that the psalmist considers them necessary to life itself. With out the bounties of God's law he and we would feel spiritual death. Let us look for the wonders of God's law and daily seek after them. Sing Psalter 323:1.

**December 29 Read Hebrews 11:8-16**

**Psalm 119:19-20** How many of us are comfortable being a stranger somewhere? If we go to a strange city, are we comfortable driving around in it? If we go to a land with people of a different race, are we somewhat uneasy? That is the way that we should feel about our lives on this earth. We should always be uneasy because it is full of strangers to us because we are strangers on this earth. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were truly strangers in Caanan. They were happy about it. We should be truly strangers in this world and be happy about it. Why? Because this is the way that God will lead us to heaven where we will no longer be strangers but truly feel at home with everyone present around the throne of God. Sing Psalter 323:2.

**December 30 Read I Samuel 13:8-14**

**Psalm 119:21-22** Saul looked like he had it all. He was the people's choice to be king over a desired location in the world. He was tall and handsome. He seemed to have the whole world in his hands. But Saul was missing one thing. Saul did not have the love of God in his heart. Saul was a proud man who had no use for God and His commandments. Saul hated God's commandments. He thought he could worship in his own way. Obedience to God was not high on his list of priorities. What was his end? He was removed from being king. He lost all that he thought he had. His kingdom was given to a man after God's own heart. Do we pray to have reproach and contempt removed from our lives? Are we willing to be humble toward God and all that is His? Let us make this our prayer and let us keep God's testimonies. Sing Psalter 323:3.

**December 31 Read Psalm 119:17-24**

**Psalm 119:23-24** As we end another year and look toward a new one, what are our thoughts today and tonight? Do we speak against God and His laws? Or are we meditating on them even as we close the year in His house? Can we confess that His testimonies have been our delight over the past year? Did we teach them in a proper attitude to our children and grandchildren? Did we keep them grudgingly which means we did not keep them at all? Who or what helped us to make decisions in the past year? Young people, did you decide to marry? Did you decide to date? Is your chosen one, one of God's chosen ones? Let us look at all that we have done in light of God's Word. We will have to confess that even our best efforts were no good in His sight. Then let us pray for the grace needed to delight in His law and all that it means. Sing Psalter 323:4.

# Psalter 27—God the Highest Good

by Beth DeVries

**O**ur highest good is God! This what David desires to teach us in this Psalm. We are led by the confidence of David to also put our trust in God. We see that there are many difficulties and sorrows in life but God remains our strength. This Psalm then goes on to speak of the blessed heritage that we have received of God. These are all aspects of our trusting in God.

The first stanza of Psalter number 27 speaks of putting our trust in God. This implies a trust through all of our life. There is only One in whom we can always trust and that is God our Father. David speaks from experience that God has always been at his side and has always taken care of him. God has been and remains our Lord and Saviour.

We read of this kind of trust in God in many passages of Scripture. We look at Isaiah 26:3-4 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusted in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.” The

trust that we have in God grants us peace of soul and mind.

It is when we lack trust that we find ourselves far from God. It is this trust in God that leads us to conclude that God is our chief and only good. We read in verse 2

of Psalm 16 that David’s goodness extends not to God. This means that neither David’s nor our goodness merits with God but rather God is ever good to us. The many blessings that we receive from God are undeserved by us and do not come to us because God owes us anything. What have we apart from God?

The Psalm goes on to speak of delighting in

the saints that are in the earth. The versification expands on this idea and speaks of loving those who fear the name of God and walk in His sight. We know who many of these people are. They are the ones with whom we worship each Sunday and with whom we meet for Bible study. The Psalm calls them the excellent of the earth. We should desire to meet with these people and enjoy

27 **God the Highest Good**  
 PSALM 16 C. M. ST. PETER Alexander R. Reimagle

1. O God, pre-serve me, for in Thee A - lone my trust has stood;  
 2. I love Thy saints, who fear Thy Name And walk as in Thy sight;  
 3. Their sor - rows shall be mul - ti - plied Who wor - ship aught but Thee;  
 4. The Lord is my in - her - it - ance, The Lord a - lone re - mains  
 5. The lines are fall - en un - to me In pla - ces large and fair;

My soul has said, Thou art my Lord, My chief and on - ly good.  
 They are the ex - cel - lent of earth, In them is my de - light.  
 I share not in their of - fer - ings, Nor join their com - pa - ny.  
 The full - ness of my cup of bliss; The Lord my lot main - tains.  
 A good - ly her - it - age is mine, Marked out with gra - cious care.

---

their fellowship. David in this Psalm speaks of fellow saints as those whom he delights to be with.

Fellow saints can be a strength to one another. We think of the fellowship within the church. We are all very different individuals yet united by the love of Christ. I Corinthians 12:12 speaks of this "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." We delight in our fellow saints simply because they are that, fellow saints.

The third stanza talks about those that worship another god. The wicked of the earth are those that seek their own delights. God will multiply their sorrows and trials. This is not always evident to us. It often appears as if the wicked have more than we do, but this is usually in physical things. We know however that they have not the quiet peace that comes from trusting in God alone. We are exhorted in this text to not join with them. In fact David goes so far as to not take their names into his lips. That speaks quite strongly of our association with the world. We are not to make friends with those in the world but rather with God's people. We tend to be around people that think like we do. May we take a good look at those with whom we spend time. Do we serve the living God or the gods or this earth? May we separate ourselves from the gods and friends of this earth.

We turn in the final two stanzas of Psalter 27 to see the great inheritance and goodly heritage that has be-

come ours. The Lord is our inheritance! What a blessing! We are so undeserving of this blessing, yet God has given us a Saviour. God chose us to be His people and then gave us a Saviour. The Lord alone can fill our life with goodness. God provides all that is necessary for our body and soul. We may think that we need something else, but God knows what is good for us. May we not turn to the things of this earth to fulfill us. We will find fulfillment in nothing except trusting in God. If God doesn't provide it, then we do not need it.

The lines are fallen unto us in good places. This implies that God has provided well for us and given us plenty. God gives us a heritage that we should glory in. That heritage is life in His name. We know that often times we seek to go our own way in this world but God is always there to pull us back to Him. God cares for His people which He has shown by the fact that He has given them life in Him. We do not deserve this life or the blessings that come with this gift of life. May this lead us to ever be thankful for our God and His benefits to us. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5, 6. ❖

---

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

---

## Story Time

# Fourth Floor, Room 113

by Chris Meyer

*Writing Contest Winner – 1<sup>st</sup> place, Age 14, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade*

**A**s I walked into the hospital, all sorts of antiseptic smells assailed me. I scrunched up my nose. I had always hated hospitals. I walked down the hall and waited for the elevator. An

intern with a girl in a wheelchair followed me. She was pasty white and her eyes were closed. Would this be how Amber would look? No, I just couldn't imagine it. My best friend, who was always so healthy and strong, as sick as this? No, God would never let that happen.

We had come to the 4th floor. The intern with the girl followed me out of the elevator. Oh no! If she was getting off here too, then she must have cancer also. But, I tried to reassure myself, not everybody with cancer looks like that.

Now, which way was Room 113. I turned right. It was five doors down and to the left. I knocked and slowly opened the door. She had a private room all to herself. There were flowers and stuffed animals everywhere. Cards were strung on strings throughout the room. Mr. and Mrs. Mathews were sitting in chairs.

They greeted me and explained that the nurse was with her. That's why a curtain was around her bed. The nurse came out a few moments later and rolled the curtain back in place. I looked and there she was. There was a cap that covered her bare head. Her face was very white and splotchy. When she saw me, she asked for me to come nearer in such a frail voice, I thought I was imagining it. The hand that beckoned me nearer looked like mere bones with a thin layer of white skin covering them.

"Don't cry, Susan," she said.

But tears were already forming. I had waited so long to visit her since the time that she called me on the phone and said that she was in the hospital with cancer. Her health had deteriorated so fast. The doctors had said that she had been living with it for a while and they didn't know what it was until then. They said that there wasn't much chance of her living at all. They said that they would try chemo only a couple of times to see how it went.

"It's all in God's will," Amber was saying, "you can't do anything about it. Just come closer and tell me all that's happening in school. Oh, and how's your family?"

\* \* \* \*

Two days later, at 11:00 PM, I received a call from Mr. Mathews saying that Amber wanted me to come.

When I arrived to Room 113, there was a doctor and three nurses there. When Amber saw me, she beckoned feebly for me. As I held her hand, she told me what a good friend I was and how God had blessed her with

such a friend as I. She told me she knew what was going to happen, but that it was all in God's providence.

"Be happy for me, Susan," she said. "All is better at the place where I am going. No sicknesses, no chemo, no cancer. Be happy for me and make a new friend once I am gone." And then she asked, with the best smile she could manage, "If you want to do something for me, just never forget me. I know you'll make new friends, but please never forget me." She tiredly lay still, and I backed out of the room for Mr. and Mrs. Mathews to take my place.

I sat on a chair that was next to her room. Why? Why? I asked God. How could this happen? Amber just didn't deserve it.

I went home and looked at all the mementos that Amber had given me. Trinkets, pictures, notes that were passed during school, photos, and Christmas and birthday presents all reminded me of her. Her sweet, cute, and healthy face on all the photos just made me want to cry forever. Just to think, I would never see that healthy face alive again.

\* \* \* \*

At the funeral several days later, I looked at the casket, but the top was closed. I knew I would never see my best friend, supporter,

backer, and chum I had ever had, in earthly form again.

Later in the minister's sermon, the pastor talked about Job. About how he, in all his afflictions still acknowledged that all this was in God's plan. I realized that this was exactly like Amber. She contentedly received God's will without arguing. While I, on the other hand, was arguing. I realized that I was being selfish. I wanted her all to me. I wanted to rob her of that heavenly peacefulness that she was experiencing now and that she would experience forever. Right then and there, I asked God for forgiveness, and I thanked him for all that had happened on the 4th Floor, Room 113. I knew that she was with the Lord, and happier than she would ever be down here on this earth.

---

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

# God, The Savior of All Men

by Prof. Herman Hanko

*Reprinted from the CPRCNI newsletter.*

*“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe,”* I Timothy 4:10.

**T**his text, along with others of a similar kind, has often been quoted in support of the free and general offer of the gospel, which teaches that God desires the salvation of all men. The text says, so it is argued, that God is the Savior of *all* men.

Those who regularly receive our Newsletter know that the Protestant Reformed Churches firmly believe that God does not desire the salvation of all men, but that God wills the salvation of His elect only.

But how is this text of Scripture, part of the infallible Word of God, to be explained?

Two remarks of a more general kind ought to be made before we explain what the verse teaches.

The first remark is this: Surely, whatever else the text may teach, it does not teach that God desires to save *all* men. The text does not say that God *desires* the salvation of all men; it says rather: “God *is* the Savior of all men.” Those, therefore who want to make this text something of all universal text, must remember that then they must also conclude that all men are saved. Finally, at the end of time, every man who ever lived will be saved;

no man will be lost; none will go to hell; all because God *is* the Savior of all men.

The second remark has to do with the text as a whole. We must remember that the clause in the text that causes so much dispute is not the main thought of the text. The main thought of the text is found in Paul’s statement to Timothy: “Therefore, we both labour and suffer reproach.” Paul is reminding Timothy of all that they endured on behalf of the gospel. They toiled with great weariness, spending themselves in the work of the ministry; they endured the reproach of those who hated the gospel and brought suffering upon them for their faithfulness to the gospel.

Why were they willing to do this?

They were willing to labor to the point of overwhelming weariness and they were willing to suffer in the cause of the gospel because their trust was in the living God—so the text emphatically states.

But how was their trust in the living God the incentive to labor and suffer reproach?

That question Paul answers in the statement: “Who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.” So the text teaches that these men (and all faithful ministers) are willing to exhaust themselves in the cause of the gospel and are willing to endure every persecution because they know that God will save all men, especially those who believe.

---

Having put the statement at issue in its context, we are not in a position to ask: What does that statement mean?

If one studies the history of interpretation, one discovers that orthodox and Reformed commentators differ on their interpretation of the text. Basically these commentators take two different positions, both of which are plausible.

One group of commentators appeals to the fact that the word “Savior” can also mean “Preserver,” or, “Sustainer.” These men would then translate the clause: “...God, Who is the *Preserver* of all men, specially of those that believe.” Their idea is then to emphasize the truth of God’s providence: God Who creates every man, also sustains each man by the Word of His power. But He is especially the Sustainer or Preserver of believers.

Another group of commentators concentrates on the word “especially.” These men prefer to translate the word “especially” as “namely” or “that is.” Then the meaning of the text would be: “God is the Savior of all men, namely, of those who believe.” The text would then teach that the words “all men” are to be understood as “all kinds of men,” “men from every nation, class in society, tribe, and language.” These would take the word “Savior” as meaning “salvation from sin and death and the bestowal of blessedness in heaven.”

Both translations are possible and both interpretations seem plausible.

It is true that the word “Savior” can mean “Preserver.” Every lexicon of the Greek New Testament allows for the translation. Thayer, e.g., in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* translates the Greek word: “savior, deliverer, preserver.” He appeals to other texts where the meaning is, according to him, preserver:” II Peter 3:2: “...Lord and Savior (or, Preserver);” and Ephesians 5:23: “Christ...is the Savior (or, Preserver) of the body.” Whether Thayer is correct that these two texts mean Savior as Preserver is another question.

The problem with this interpretation is that this hardly seems to be a reason why Paul and Timothy toiled so laboriously and suffered reproach in the cause of the gospel. Why would the mere fact that God preserves the life of all men be incentive to do this? It is hard to say.

The other interpretation, namely that the word “especially” means “namely” is an interesting one. Although the Greek word is used in other places in the New Testament with the meaning “especially,” two passages almost certainly should be translated as “namely,” or “that is.”

The first passage is Acts 25:26. Festus is speaking to Agrippa about Paul, who was a prisoner about to be sent to Rome for trial. Festus says: “Of whom (Paul) I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before *you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa* that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.” It would seem that, because Festus is speaking to Agrippa, that the text could just as well be translated: “Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, namely, before thee, O king Agrippa.”

The other passage is II Peter 2:9, 10: “The Lord knoweth how to...reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but *chiefly* them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness....” Surely the apostle means that “the unjust” are the same as “them that walk after the flesh.” Hence, the translation could very well be: “The Lord knoweth how to...reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: *namely* them that walk after the flesh.”

This same interpretation can be applied to I Timothy 4:10. If this is the case then Paul is saying that God saves all men, namely believers. He saves all kinds of men: male and female, bond and free, Gentile and Jew, king and subject, master and servant, rich and poor, wise and foolish, Greek and Roman and Italian and Dutch and German and English—all kinds. But God saves all kinds who are believers. That is, not every man head for head is saved; only believers are saved. And only believers are saved not *because* they are believers, so that God looks around for whoever might be a believer, to save him; but believers are saved because all God’s salvation is by faith. Believers are elect, and their faith is a gift of God. These God saves. This meaning of the words “all men” is surely in harmony with the rest of Scripture. See, e.g., I Timothy 2:4, Titus 2:11.

Because God saves all kinds of men, those who are busy in the ministry of the gospel (as Paul and Timothy were) are willing to exhaust themselves in the work and are ready to suffer every reproach. God is pleased to save through the foolishness of preaching. Preachers who preach trust in God to save His church from all men. To have a part in that work is a glorious privilege. No suffering is too great, no labor too exhausting when by the work the glorious church of God is saved. ❖

---

*Prof. Hanko is a retired professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

# Early Church History— The Apologists (2)

by Rev. John A. Heys

*Reprinted from the April, 1946 issue of Beacon Lights (Vol. 6, no. 6).*

**A**s we remarked last month, the false doctrines which spurred the early New Testament Church on to Scripture-study and the formulation of new confessions of the truth centered chiefly around the doctrine of Christ. This is to be expected, for Christianity centers around Him and professes Him to be the only begotten Son of God who came into our flesh, suffered and died for our sins, rose again the third day and ascended to glory as the King of all creation. It is certainly true that the Church in the Old Testament dispensation had this truth in types and shadows and that His coming and even the nature of His coming was promised and prophesied of old. Yet this truth was very displeasing to the unbelieving Jews who wanted the re-establishment of David's earthly throne. The faith of these unbelieving Jews who professed to believe only the Old Testament Scriptures, rejected Christ and continued clinging to the temple worship and sacrifices as though the Lamb of God had not been offered and accepted, is called Judaism. It naturally opposed Christianity. On the other hand, the truth of Christ which Christianity confesses is so different from the pagan religions of the Gentiles that it is to be expected that these Gentiles also will oppose it and attempt to prevent its spread.

From both these quarters, that is the unbelieving Jews and the Pagan world, the truth of Christ was attacked in the early history of the New Testament Church. It was therefore also against these factions that the Apologists strove in their defense of the truth. Somewhat later these factions crept into the church and sought to destroy it from within. The discussion of this matter will have to wait till later. We are now considering the Apologists and their defense of the truth against those outside the church who were seeking to overthrow its faith in Christ.

These Apologists were then early church fathers who did that of which Paul speaks to the Philippians in chapter 1:27. They strove together for the faith doctrine—of

the gospel of Christ. You may wonder how they acquired this name "Apologists". The name is given them because in a good sense of the word they apologized for the principles and doctrine of the Christian religion. Of course, we need not apologize for anything in the Scriptures in the sense that we have to make an excuse for it. Nor need we express any regrets that its language is strong and uncompromising. However, if you look up the word "apology" in your dictionary you will find that it also means, "a defense or justification". In that sense the Apologists apologized for the teaching of the Christian religion. They defended it, and comparing it with the heathen religions and doctrines of man, they showed that it justly has a place in this world.

---

**They defended it, and comparing it with the heathen religions and doctrines of man they showed that it justly has a place in this world.**

---

These Apologists were divided into two classes, the Greek Apologists and the Latin Apologists. Although both groups defended the truth of Christ over against both Judaism, which was the doctrine of the unbelieving Jews, and Paganism, which was the religion of the world, the Greek Apologists were very learned and philosophical while the Latin Apologists were practical and juridical. The Greek Apologists sought to make plain that Christianity is reasonable and not a series of contradictions and foolish beliefs. The Latin Apologists set out to prove that Christianity was morally excellent and therefore had a right to exist as well, if not more rightfully, than the other existing religions.

---

Let me say a few things about the objections which Judaism and Paganism raised against Christianity. Then we can appreciate what these Apologists were up against and also appreciate the work they performed in defending the faith of the gospel of Christ.

One need not look far to find objections to Christianity. Without faith there are many, many things to find and hurl against it. The Jews and Gentiles had little trouble finding fault with the faith of the gospel. They declared that Christ was illegitimately born out of wedlock. They pointed out that He associated with the lowest and least intelligent class of people having ignorant fishermen and cheating tax-collectors for His friends. They taunted the Christians for believing in a man who died an ignominious death as a public enemy number one. The unbelieving Jews especially seized upon this since according to their belief the Messiah would come in glory and worship forever. Similarly they derided the Christians for believing in and worshipping a crucified malefactor who was dead and departed from this world.

One other interesting thing to be noted for us today is that the unbelieving Gentiles derided Christianity because it did not present or promote any new culture or any material progress for social improvement. At the same time they pointed out that Christianity was a serious, morbid movement which brings no joy and happi-

---

the unbelieving Gentiles  
derided Christianity  
because it did not present  
or promote any new culture  
or any material progress for  
social improvement.

---

ness into the world. It all sounds rather familiar today, for that is just exactly what the world and the modern church considers to be the calling of the church. Salvation from the guilt of sin has no place in the modern church. The blood of Christ has no value. To the modern church Christianity has value only because it brings a good set of morals to make this world a good place to live. Paganism is not fighting the church from without now. It has crept into the church and is seeking to undermine it from within. But Modernism has this in common with the Paganism the Apologists fought that it has no use for Christ's cross which to the true church is the heart of the faith of the gospel. ❖

---

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

---

---

## The Old "Schepershuis"

by J.P. deKlerk

**H**ere a shepherd once lived. The word "scheper" was local dialect in the Southeastern part of the Dutch province of Drenthe.

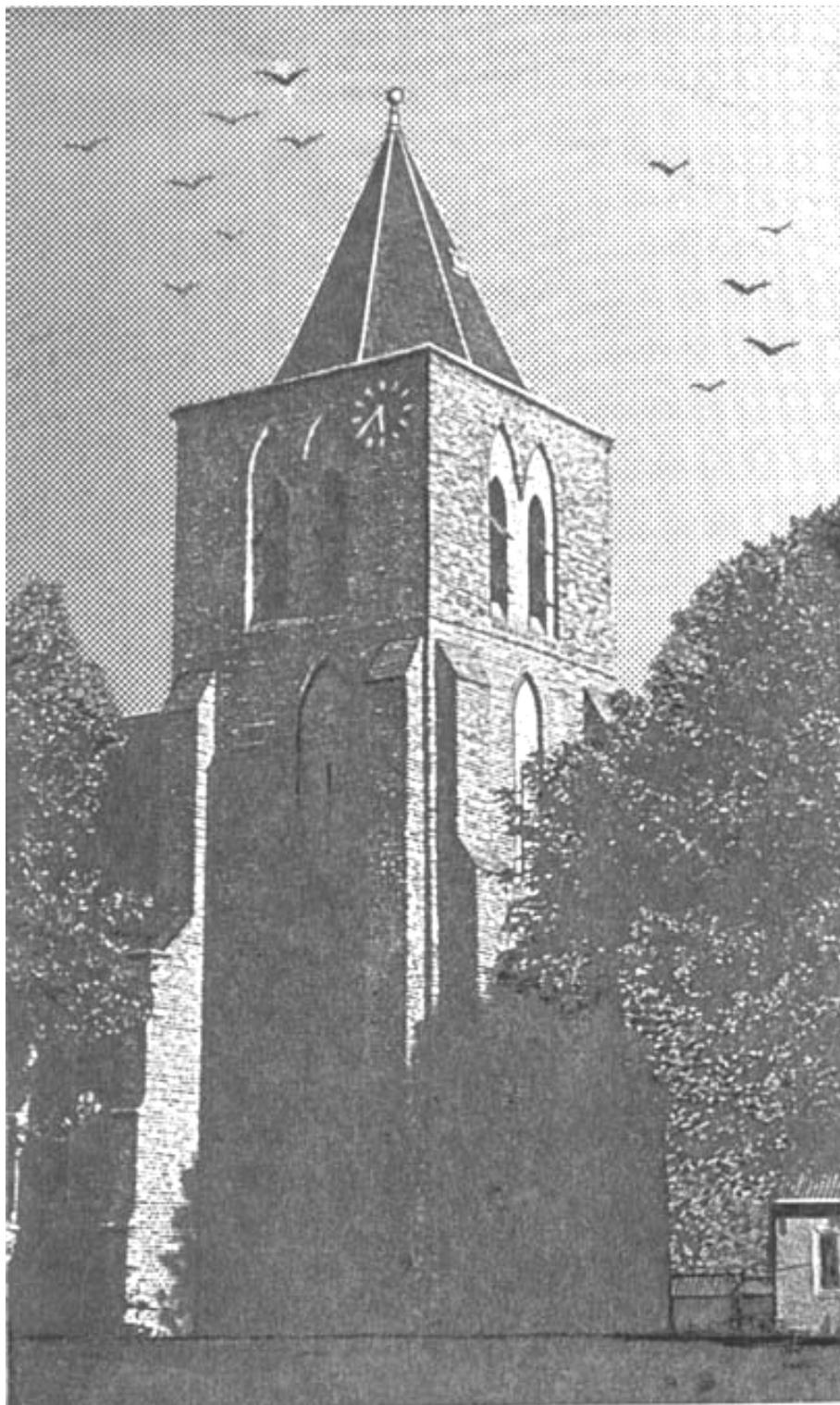
I made this drawing in the beginning of the war, at a sunny afternoon. There was no road, but a very small path in the tract of heath. You could go over it with a bike, or walk. The name of the county was Knarphoorn, but by the end of the war, during the liberation of The Netherlands, battalions of the Canadians and the Germans clashed here and everything has been razed to the ground. It is now built with firwood.



This is not why I tell you this today. You see, that shepherd's house still attracts me in my memory, because of the idea that goes with it. A shepherd with a herd reminds me of the Shepherd, Jesus Christ. No, not this particular old building, that the shepherd had built himself and covered with straw. It had only one room and one pump connected with a well, but the Lord's House has numerous mansions, and there is everything at hand, all we ever need. Behind this earthly house was a big stable for the sheep, where they were safe, protected against the cold in the winters with snow and ice. Our Good Shepherd protects us day and night, in wartime and when there is peace, when there are thieves around or people who want to kill us. Always. Wonderful, isn't it? I wanted to share this thought with you.

## The State Reformed Church of Biggekerke

**O**n the Dutch island of Walcheren (province of Zeeland) you find the small town of Biggekerke, close to the more well-known seaside resort of Valkenisse. There on the heavy sea clay this church was built; the tower in 1400, the rest somewhat later. The tower never needed to be restored. This church has had a famous minister in the years 1832-1834; his name was H.J. Buddingh. He belonged to the Calvinist dissenters ("Afgescheidenen") and came in conflict with the consistory. He departed to the city of Groningen. ❖



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

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

"What's 'at?" asked little Zachary as he pointed to a bird fluttering among the branches above them.

"That's a bird, Zach. Can you say 'bird'?" Amy said to her little brother as they walked down the street.

"Bord," he said with a smile. But it only took a few more seconds for Zachary to point at something else and say, "What's 'at?" The question kept coming and coming.

Amy sighed. "Mom, does Zachary have to ask what every single little thing is?"

Mother chuckled. "Yep. Going on a walk is good for Zachary. And you're doing a good job of teaching him many new words."

"What's 'at? What's 'at?" continued Zach. Amy shook her head, but tried to answer his questions as best she could. Then it was her turn for a few of her own.

"Mom, why do some trees grow into such nice, rounded shapes? I mean, how do they know to do that?"

"Hm, that's a good question. I suppose part of the answer has to do with the way sunlight shines on them, but the real reason must be that God designed them that way. Already at creation God made each tree to bear seed 'after his kind'. A seed from a pine cone always grows into a long, tall pine tree, and an acorn nut always grows into a big, round oak tree."

"Well," answered Amy, "it's pretty amazing."

They walked a little farther until Amy suddenly exclaimed, "Hey, look at the ducks! See the ducks in the pond, Zachary? Can you say 'duck'?"

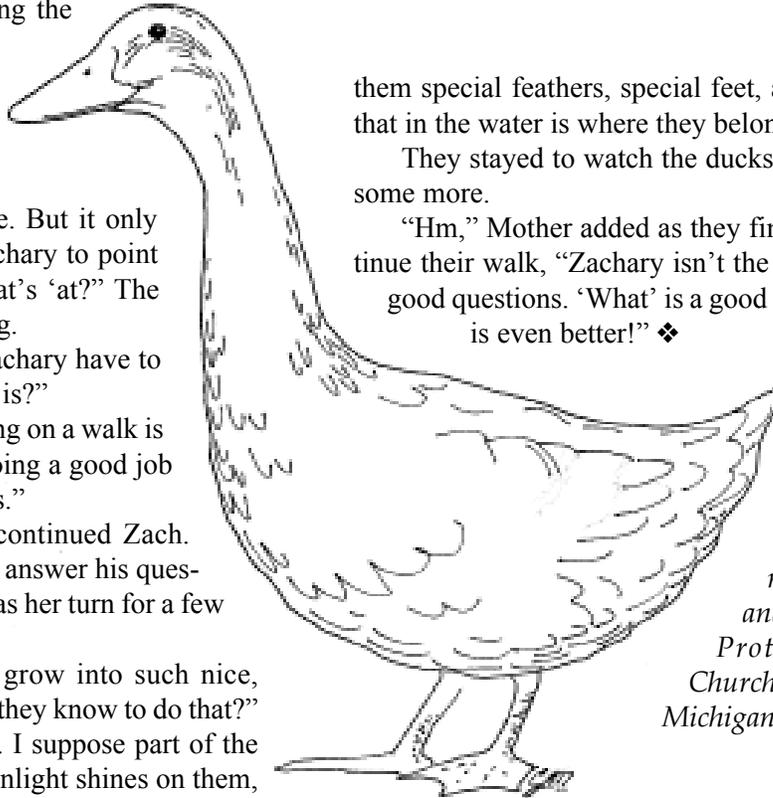
"Duck!"

"You said that very well!" said Mother.

"But those ducks," said Amy as she paused to watch them more closely, "why do they like the water so much? It must be terribly cold, yet they look like they're enjoying it!"

One of the ducks waddled out of the pond and shook his tail feathers with a jittery shake. Zachary laughed.

"They are amazing creatures," said Mother. "God created them exactly for living in the water. He gave



them special feathers, special feet, and special bills so that in the water is where they belong."

They stayed to watch the ducks splash and waddle some more.

"Hm," Mother added as they finally turned to continue their walk, "Zachary isn't the only one who asks good questions. 'What' is a good question, but 'why' is even better!" ❖

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

## Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Proverbs 2: 3-5

T	S	E	H	C	R	A	E	S	K	K	E
P	D	N	A	T	S	R	E	D	N	U	P
R	C	V	O	I	C	E	R	O	O	A	L
O	K	R	A	F	K	V	W	U	W	A	I
V	N	H	I	E	F	L	H	S	L	F	F
E	E	D	S	E	E	I	V	I	E	T	T
R	C	T	I	D	S	S	N	A	D	E	E
B	V	S	G	A	F	T	R	D	G	R	S
S	K	E	S	E	R	U	S	A	E	R	T

# BEACON LIGHTS

P.O. BOX 375  
Jenison, MI 49428

Periodical  
Postage  
paid at  
Jenison, MI  
(UPSS046-840)

## Church News

### BAPTISMS

*"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*  
Mark 16:16

**The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:**

Peter John, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Chesebro—Byron Center, MI  
Brandon Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gunnink—Byron Center, MI  
Ashlinn Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cal Hassevoort—Byron Center, MI  
Zachary Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jay VanBaren—Faith, MI  
Brooke Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Scholten—Faith, MI  
Josie Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanderKolk—First, MI  
Brenden Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Harwood—Georgetown, MI  
Jocelyn Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Holstege—Georgetown, MI  
Thomas Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Bos—Grace, MI  
Sue Ellen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Henry DeJong—Holland, MI  
Trenton Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Meeuwssen—Holland, MI  
Justin Gerrit, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Cleveland—Hope, MI  
Allen Wayne, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kalsbeek—Hope, MI  
Madeline Joelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak—Hope, MI  
Olivia Joy, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. James Laning—Hope, MI  
Kyle Zachary, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Lotterman—Hope, MI  
Taylor Lin, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Schwartz—Hope, MI  
Collin Case, son of Mr. & Mrs. Terry Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI  
Curtis Mitchell, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Dykstra—Southeast, MI  
Reka Clarice, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Hoving—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:**

Mike Brummel—Faith, MI  
Lori Dykstra—Faith, MI  
Trevor Kalsbeek—Faith, MI  
Rachael Pastoor—Faith, MI  
Dowie Vander Schaaf—Faith, MI  
Vance Hayes—First, MI  
Vonda Bleyenbergh—First, MI  
Jessica Bomers—Grandville, MI  
Joel DeVries—Hope, MI  
Jason Engelsma—Hope, MI  
Bethany Venema—Hudsonville, MI  
Daniel Terpstra—Peace, IL

### MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

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

Mr. Nathan Van Overloop and Miss Tracy Bishop—Faith, MI  
Mr. Darren Deemter and Miss Amanda Johnson—Faith, MI  
Mr. Wayne Bleyenbergh and Miss Brenda Dykstra—Hope, MI  
Mr. Jayson Alsum and Miss Kari Moelker—Hope, MI  
Mr. Scott Vander Griend and Miss Beth Eriks—Peace, IL