
Beacon Lights

*March
1999*

*Volume LVIII
Number 3*



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BEACON LIGHTS

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\$1.3 Million Emergency Aid Package for Worship



by John Huizenga

“Worship me!” our God commands. “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters,” Revelation 14:7. Worship me, says the God of our salvation, “For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods,” Psalm 96:4. “Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone,” Psalm 86:8-10.

Worship me, says the Lord, and worship me the way I command you to worship. Worship me because of my mighty works in creation and above all worship me because of my mighty works in the salvation of my people. Worship me in response to the revelation of myself in these works. Do not add to my commands nor take away from them.

What happens when we do not feel inspired to worship? Are there ways to revitalize worship? Cain was the first to venture out on his own to experiment with worship. Cain needed an outward show of worship to cover the coldness, really the hate, he had in his heart for God. Cain had no interest in looking forward to the kind of sacrifice God would give in Christ. “And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” Genesis 4:4a-5 When Cain’s anger led to the death of his brother, God sent him out to be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth. His experiment in worship led to separation from God and the development of a wicked city.

Korah and his company also saw room for improvement in the worship structure established by God. They wanted more congregational participation. They thought they knew better than God and said to Moses “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” (Numbers 16:3) To whom the Lord responded by the mouth of Moses, “ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.” (Numbers 16:7b) God in his anger against these, who knowingly and unrepentantly tampered with His worship, called the earth to open and swallow them up alive.

Then king Saul, looking round about him, and perceiving a worship crisis, took counsel with himself to worship God as he thought best. First he made a sacrifice, himself doing that which only the priests may do. Then he kept spoil and spared lives of wicked men against the commandment of God. “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee...” (I Samuel 13:13a) And again Samuel said, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (I Samuel 15:22) Saul’s ideas for worship led to the loss of the kingdom. “And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.” (I Samuel 15:28)

Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the man who made Israel to sin, also was faced with a worship crisis. “The times have changed,” said he, “the political circumstances are such that the traditional forms of worship will only result in chaos.” “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and

said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (I Kings 12:28) Jeroboam’s ideas for worship brought him a new name, “Jeroboam the son of Nebat *who made Israel to sin.*” A new worship introduced due to political changes in Israel brought the whole nation under the fierce wrath of God.

Once again, some 3000 years later a cry rings forth from the churches. John Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, refines and defines the crisis as such: “Sweeping changes have reordered the liturgical priorities of churches across the denominational spectrum. . . . In light of these developments, Christian churches are in great need of vibrant, creative energy and patient theological reflection that will promote worship that is both relevant and profound. This work is needed because of the crises generated in many congregations and denominations caused by changing patterns of Christian worship.” (Calvin College Spark, Winter 1998, p. 7) A crisis is at hand. We need help soon, or our worship will die.

So the worship leaders, pastors, musicians, artists, dramatists, and scholars—400 in all—were summoned to meet every year for a time, to worship and study. They busily sift through the array of contemporary worship styles. They study the role of worship in institutions of higher learning. They show the seminarians how to revitalize their congregations. They show the people that they can indeed make a difference in worship. And then, when the cries for changes in worship echo in nearly every church building, comes “One of the largest grants in Calvin College history that is not for a ‘bricks and mortar’ project.” (Spark, 6) Calvin College receives \$1.3 million from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. to fund projects that will lift worship to new levels. \$1.3 million to pay the fine scholars, pay for the conferences, and pay for the programs to enlighten the floundering worshipers.

So your worship has grown heartless and dry? The Calvin Institute for Christian Worship would be happy to provide a grant, send experts to teach you how to revitalize your worship, and put on a good show that will be certain to draw a crowd. Beware, however, that your worship does not become like that of Cain—a mere outward show. Worship must proceed from the heart in response to the preaching of the gospel of Christ or else it will be no better than Cain’s. Preach the truth of God’s word, and God’s people will worship with zeal.

Your worship is too passive? You would like more congregational participation? You feel that the minister and consistory take too much upon themselves? I am sure the Institute would be happy to recommend some changes to meet your needs. Special music performances, skits, personal testimonials are only the beginning of the possibilities. But, beware that you do not take too much upon yourselves lest the anger of the Lord be hot against you as it was against Korah and his company.

You have a lack of qualified ordained men to lead your worship and preach the word? You have some gifted women? You would like some alternatives to preaching? Perhaps you have interest in a professional music ministry or liturgical dance team? Be assured that the Institute has plenty of ideas. But, don’t forget, to obey God is better than sacrifice. Follow the ideas of Saul and you will soon find yourself outside the kingdom of God.

Reformed worship practices are no longer relevant in the 21st century? You need something faster paced, vibrant, and creative? I am sure the experts at the Institute will be able to fill your need. But beware when men take council together lest they decide that the worship God demands in his word is too much or not enough and say, “behold your god who is open to whatever worship suits your desires.” Follow the counselors of Jeroboam and you will be scattered and destroyed.

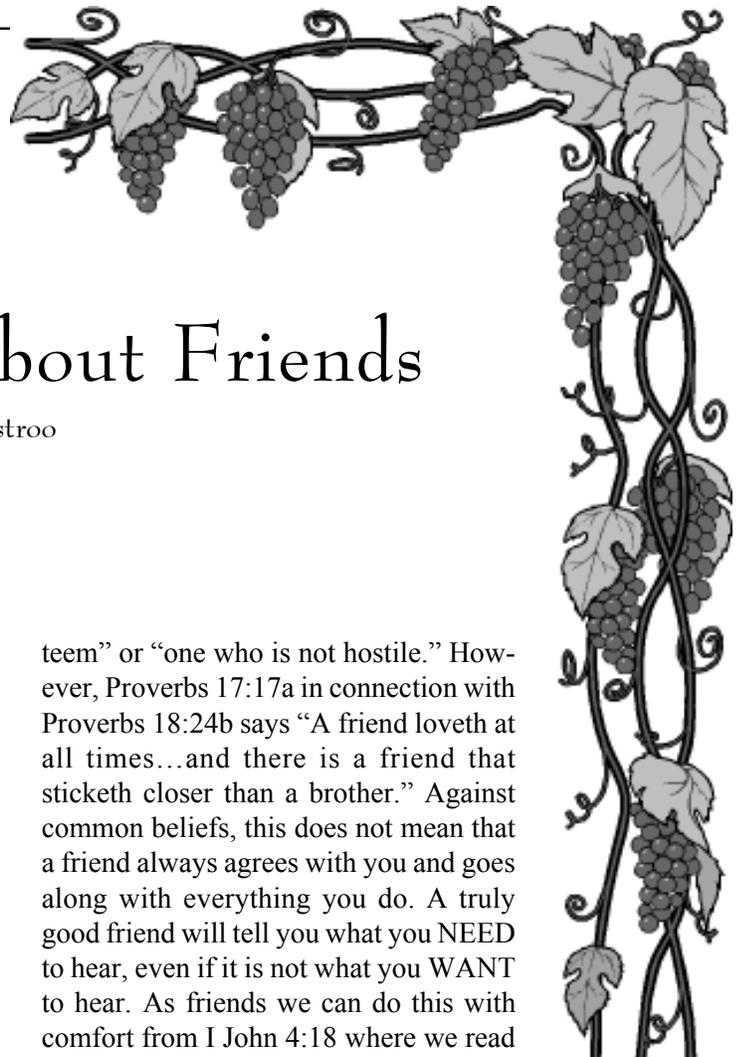
Money will not improve worship. Neither does it take notable scholars to figure out how to worship God. Think for a moment about the passage quoted earlier, “Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous

things: thou art God alone.” Psalm 86:8-10 Is worship so complicated? Worship comes spontaneously from those that know the wonder of God’s works. The problem is not in the way we worship, the problem is ignorance of God’s works.

Knowledge of God is fundamental to worship. If you have merely a foggy or distorted understanding of God, you will have no motive for worship either. You will need a lot of man made music, inspirational speeches, pep rallies, and hype in order to give the appearance that you are worshiping a God that is not known. The only thing that will make worship what it must be, is a true knowledge of God; and the only thing that will bring a true knowledge of God is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Word of God. If God is minimized with preaching about the greatness of man, and a lack of preaching about God’s sovereignty in salvation, then you can be sure that worship *will* grow irrelevant.

You have a lack of zeal in worship? Insist on the pure preaching of God’s Word. Listen intently and prayerfully to the word of God. Seek to know God. Ministers, preach the Word! Tell the great wonders God has wrought in Christ! The children of God can do nothing but render wholehearted worship when they know clearly the great work of God in their salvation. And when they worship, they are careful not to worship God “in any other way than he has commanded in his word” (Heidelberg Catechism Q. 96). ❖

Fruitful Branches



What God Says About Friends

by Cassie Jae Bonestroo

Friends. This is a term we hear about a lot today. We hear songs about them, see pictures of them, and there is even a popular sitcom with that as its title. Friends are everywhere! Who comes to mind when you think of friends? Is it the Three Stooges, Charlie Brown and Snoopy, Batman and Robyn? Or what about the group you see standing in the corner laughing and giggling? Or do you think back to the times of Jonathan and David? What does this term mean, and what IS a TRUE FRIEND?

Webster has many definitions for “friend.” Among these are “one attached to another by affection or es-

teem” or “one who is not hostile.” However, Proverbs 17:17a in connection with Proverbs 18:24b says “A friend loveth at all times...and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Against common beliefs, this does not mean that a friend always agrees with you and goes along with everything you do. A truly good friend will tell you what you NEED to hear, even if it is not what you WANT to hear. As friends we can do this with comfort from I John 4:18 where we read

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.” If a friendship has the solid foundation of Christ, then the friendship will last, through the good times and bad.

**A truly good friend will tell
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you WANT to hear.**

In a good friendship, there is no selfishness, it is not demanding, manipulative, or one-sided. A true friend will not laugh with you one minute and behind your back the next. To be a good friend, you should put aside selfISHness for selfLESSness. As the one authority for our life says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

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This does not mean the
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Throughout my life, God has blessed me with many wonderful friends. This does not mean the acquaintances from Little League, work, or day-to-day life. Many of these so-called friendships were superficial and for convenience sake. They had no solid basis and ended quickly. There were also people that led me to believe they were my friends, but later took everything I told them in confidence and used it against me. There were also those “friends” that used me to “get a ride” or “get some cash.” The Bible warns of this in Proverbs 14:20 and 19:4, when it says that the poor are despised and hated, but the rich have many “friends.”

The true friends that I am speaking of were people that accepted me for who and what I was and still, by God’s grace, am. When many people were trying to get me to do things which would have hurt me, my friends helped me see God’s way. These true friends stuck with me against the wrong, even when it wasn’t the popular thing to do. They also accepted me for what I did and did not do.

Early in the Bible, we see the devotion of Ruth to Naomi, her deceased husband’s mother, in Ruth 1:16-18. When Ruth had no physical connection to Naomi, she still decided to stay with her. She made a beautiful testimony when she said, “Whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God: Where thou diest I will die...the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” In I Samuel, we see the close friendship of David and Jonathan. The Bible says “Jonathan loved David as his own soul” (18:1). When Saul wanted to kill David, Jonathan risked his own life and tried to convince Saul that killing David was wrong. Even though David was taking Jonathan’s place on the throne, Jonathan still “loved David as his own soul.” However, their friendship was limited. The ultimate example of a perfect friend we see in God’s covenant with us. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Christ humbled Himself from the perfect sinless Son of God to our sinful flesh and the death of the cross for US!! “Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for His friends” (John 15:13). Christ did this for us!!!

As you can see, the Bible, although written thousands of years ago, still very much applies to every aspect of our lives. God has specific rules for how we are to act and live as friends and as examples of Christ. We must reflect every day Christ’s extreme love for us in our attitude toward our friends and neighbors.

Additional texts about friends and displaying love are: Ex. 33:11; Deut. 13:6; Ruth 1:16-18; I Sam. 18:1-5; II Sam. 16:17; II Chr. 20:7; Job 19:21; Psalm 35:14, 88:18; Prov. 6:1, 14:20, 17:17, 18:24, 19:4, 27:6, 9-10; Is. 41:8; Jer. 6:21; Songs 15:16; Hosea 3:1; Micah 7:5.



Cassie is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. She wrote this school paper for Bible 12.

Can Wicked Men Really Do Miracles and Prophecy?

by Rev. Richard Moore

Question

We read in Numbers about Balaam prophesying and in I Samuel about Saul prophesying also. In Matthew 7:22, apparently the non-elect are claiming they performed miracles and prophesying during their lives. It seems that Judas also performed miracles along with the other Apostles. On the other hand, I Corinthians seems to be telling us that God gives spiritual gifts for the building up of His church. My question is whether the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophecy and miracles, are given only to the elect. My concern is that I am not understanding what is going on with Balaam, Saul, and Judas.

Answer

As we take up the answer of this question, I believe we will begin by separation between the miracles done by those who are not elect, and the prophecy by Balaam and other reprobate. In the first place, let us consider the fact that there are miracles obviously performed by the wicked. We find that this is the case of Judas, and it is the claim of those mentioned in Matthew 7 of whom Jesus says, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But further we already see that this was true in the old dispensation, where the magicians were able to duplicate the miracles of Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt. Howbeit with limitations in that they could not cause the plagues to cease which they helped to increase, and they could not duplicate the miracles after the third one. The testimony is clear from the Scripture that the wicked reprobate were given the ability to bring forth miracles. Further, Jesus testifies that in the last days the world of unbelief shall show signs and wonders, "For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall de-

ceive the very elect," Matthew 24:24. In our day we see this also manifested at least in part in the wonders and signs of man, through many means and even to some extent (we know not how much) through the so called faith healers and mystics. So let us begin by saying that the reprobate at given times and in a given measure were and are able to bring forth miracles.

Secondly, let us establish also that the reprobate at times did prophecy in some real sense. Again we might have the claim of those in Matthew 7, although it is not true prophecy of which they speak for they declared not the Christ of the Scripture, or at the very least did not continue in the true doctrine of Christ. However, there are instances of a prophecy given through reprobate man that comes to pass as true. Especially, there comes to mind the prophecy of Balaam, which you mention. The whole passage teaches us that Balaam meant to honor himself and to stand against God's people, but God caused that from his lips would come blessing upon Israel rather than cursing. Balaam could not speak other than what God caused that He speak, even though it would mean that he would not gain what he sought.

The matter with Saul is a bit more general and different. Here we have the case where Saul wanted to take David and do him harm, but when he sent messengers to take David, they ended up being overcome by the Spirit and were as it were in a trance prophesying. Thus Saul went himself. But when he came to Samuel and was about to take David, we read the following: I Samuel 19:23 – I Samuel 20:1 "And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets? And David fled from

Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Again He seems to have been overcome by the working of God's Spirit in such a way that all that he could do was speak words that are called prophesying. We do not know much about these words, but Saul did so in a sort of trance like-state, being cast down naked all the day, while David slips away.

**the wicked are absolutely in
the hand of God.**

We have established the fact that Scripture does speak of the wicked doing miracles and prophesying. Let us now consider how this can be? In the first place, we must understand that the wicked also are absolutely in the hand of God. That is, they are sovereignly governed by God in all that they do in such a way that they remain responsible for the sin that they commit and the evil they bring forth. This means that even Satan cannot do evil to the elect except God gives him the power to do so. This is very evident from the history of Job. Job 2:6-7 is an example: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his

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crown." Satan could not strike Job with the boils unless God gave him the power to do so. All power is in the hand of God, even the evil that the wicked bring forth is possible only if God gives them the power to do so.

The same is true of the prophesy of the wicked Balaam. Balaam would have cursed God's people and therefore God, but could only bless God's people as this alone did God give him the words to do. The wicked magicians could only perform the miracles in so far as God gave them the power to do this, even unto their own condemnation as they did so in defiance of God. The same is true of other examples. However with the prophesying of those of Matthew 7, we might add that the prophesying was most probably a false preaching as was the preaching of many evil prophets in the old dispensation.

Now we must understand that God always governs the reprobate in such a way as to serve the elect in Christ and His purpose to establish His kingdom with His chosen in Christ. In this the wicked serve the church as scaffolding serves the building of a house. When the house is done the scaffolding is destroyed. We must think in this manner when a wicked Balaam who hates God cannot help but prophesy of the blessing of Israel. Or when the wicked magicians serve God's purpose in hardening of Pharaoh's heart for the two-fold reason of saving His church through her trial with the evident teaching that there is salvation by grace alone, and the glorying of God's name in the just judgment of Pharaoh (the wicked).

From the wicked reprobates' point of view, they bring forth the signs and wonders that God gives into their power for the purpose of destroying the cause of God. They do their signs and wonders in order to tout a false gospel, modern day faith-healing (for the greatest part) is a very demonstrative example of this with their gospel of salvation by works of man. Even when the false preacher preaches for a time as Judas did, a right doctrine of the Scripture, it is for his own evil purposes, and the hypocrisy becomes clear as time goes on, as it did in the case of a Judas.

But for all of this God uses these wickedly motivated acts for His own purpose and while they mean it for evil, God uses it to save His people and condemn the wicked in their wickedness. Balaam for instance should have fallen down after prophesying the first time the blessing of Israel, but instead tried again to please the wicked Balak, etc. This he does unto his own condemnation.

Finally, to answer your question whether these are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the answer is no. Rather they are the working of God by the power of His Spirit to bring forth His purpose, but are not the gifts of the Holy Spirit as given to His elect as noted in I Corinthians 12.

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The elect use these gifts of the Holy Spirit for the edifying of the body and for the glory of God. The Scripture says that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law,” Galatians 5:21-

22. Of this the wicked have no part. But the powers given to them to exercise is always done by them for evil, and it matters not if God turns it to the good of His people, as was the case with the evil work of Balaam for example. In either case God is glorified also in the just judgment of the wicked.

I trust that this will help in your consideration of these Scriptures, but if you have further questions feel free to ask, or if I missed the point, let me know.

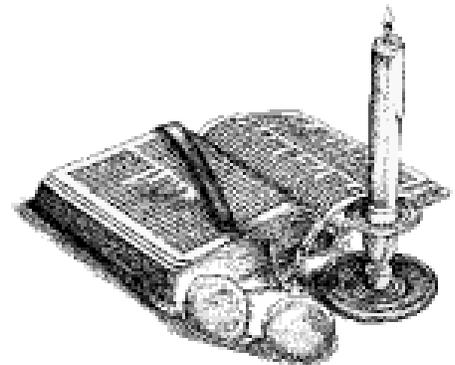
Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc.mtcnet.net. Also feel free to write follow up questions. ❖

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

From the Pastor's Study

Gideon Tested and Ready for Battle

by Rev. R. Smit



In Judges 7:25-32, we learn of the next important stage of the history of Gideon as the God appointed deliverer of His people. Immediately, one naturally wonders whether Gideon was ready for his work as deliverer. Would Gideon, as so many did in that time, do what was right in his own eyes, or would he serve Jehovah faithfully? To reveal the spiritual readiness of Gideon's heart, Jehovah commands Gideon to endure a spiritual test in the very night in which he was commissioned. Would Gideon pass this test? Let us see how ready Gideon was as a leader, see the challenges and issues involved in this test, and also consider how this applies to the young Reformed believer today.

Jehovah commanded Gideon to perform a drastic but important task in his own hometown. In Judges 7:25-26, Jehovah said to Gideon,

Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

Jehovah did not specify which time of the day to do this, but left that up to Gideon. We discover that timid Gideon went out at night to fulfill the LORD's command. He did not do it during broad daylight “because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city.” (Judges 7:27) So, while the town of Ophrah was asleep, Gideon fulfilled the LORD's command under the cover of darkness.

The next morning the town found what had been done. The altar of Baal was destroyed. The grove (the female counterpart to Baal called Asherah) that was beside it was cut down, and its wood was used to sacrifice a bullock upon the altar that was built. At the sight of this destruction to the altar of Baal and the nearby grove, the men of the city were burning with fury. Immediately they hunted for the man who did it.

They found the man who did it. It was Gideon the son of Joash. Having found him, the men were ready to kill Gideon for what they thought was a high crime worthy of immediate death. They wanted to stone him for destroying the altar to Baal.

We learn that immediately Joash defends his son by exposing the foolishness of these Baal worshipers who were furious at Gideon. Joash silenced them when he said in Judges 7:31,

Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar.

Joash's point was clear and simple. If Baal is a god, let Baal have his vengeance upon Gideon. But, the very fact that Baal was helpless against Gideon exposed that Baal is no god at all. There is no god beside Jehovah, and He alone must be worshiped.

The test for Gideon was in harmony with that truth that Jehovah is God alone of His people. Would Gideon destroy the altar of Baal? Would he take a stand against the idol worship of his fellow countrymen? Would he lead Israel in the true worship of Jehovah which is antithetically opposed to the idol worship of the heathens? Would Gideon take the lead in the spiritual reformation of the people of God away from idol worship back to the true worship of Jehovah?

By the grace of God, the answer was "yes." Gideon endured the test by faith. Through his weakness of his timidness and lack of confidence, by the grace of God alone he was made strong to take a stand against Baal

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a stand against Baal
worship.

worship in Manasseh. He took a stand for the true worship of Jehovah, the Covenant God of Israel.

If Gideon had not passed this test, Gideon would have failed as a leader and shown himself unqualified as a deliverer. Let us examine some reasons why that is true.

First, if Gideon had failed to break down the altar of Baal in his hometown, then Gideon would have been a spiritual ally of the heathen Midianites. He would have had no reason to fight the idol worshipping Midianites if he did not oppose Baal worship in his own country.

Secondly, if Gideon failed to oppose Baal worship and yet tried to fight the Midianites, he would have been trying to do the impossible. You will recall that Gideon was commissioned by Jehovah to serve under His banner in His army. How could Gideon then try to fight in two armies at the same time in the same battle? It is impossible to do. He could not serve two masters at the same time. He could not fight under two banners. Jehovah by His grace would not raise up a deliver appointed over His people with his feet on both sides of the battle line. Jehovah raised up a man with both feet on Jehovah's side ready to fight under His spiritual flag.

Thirdly, if Gideon had failed the test, he would have opposed the principle set down by Joshua many years before. Before Joshua died, he made very clear to Israel the relationship between fighting the battles of Jehovah against the heathen and the worship of Jehovah. The relationship is very close. Faithfulness in worshiping Jehovah was the way of victory and triumph over the enemy. Joshua said,

One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised you. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. (Joshua 23:10-11)

Indeed Gideon must be a man that feared Jehovah. Only in that way could he go into battle as one man against a hundred thousand Midianites in confidence that Jehovah would fight for him. Only in the way of faith and obedience to Jehovah would Jehovah reveal and grant to Gideon a gracious triumph over the enemy. That inner faithfulness to Jehovah by grace through faith was that necessary qualification which Gideon had to fight the ungodly and heathen Midianites.

Finally, to oppose Baal worship was to take the lead in turning the people to full repentance unto Jehovah. The reason the Midianites were oppressing the land was to chastise Israel for the very sin of Baal worship which

was being committed in his own hometown. If Gideon had not torn down the altar and the grove next to the altar, he would have denied that Israel had sinned and needed to repent. By his failure to destroy the altar of Baal, Gideon by his action would have made Jehovah a liar as if really Israel had not committed a sin of which they had to repent and a sin for which they deserved chastisement. Therefore, this was also a test of humility for Gideon and the people. Would they acknowledge their sin before Jehovah and turn from it, and confess that Jehovah is the God alone? Gideon and the faithful did. The contrite and repentant heart which possesses by faith the peace of forgiveness is the heart ready to do battle with the enemy.

In this passage, we learn then that Gideon's first successful battle is with his own townfolk. That was probably the toughest test he had to face. Those of one's own household can sometimes become the bitterest of spiritual enemies. Jesus experienced that fact in his

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hometown of Nazareth. They tried to kill Him when He plainly showed that He was the Messiah. By the grace of God, Gideon endured the test of taking a stand against the idolatry of his own countrymen. By that action, he was proven for the work of the position of judge among the people. Being proven, he was later anointed with the Spirit of the LORD to qualify and appoint him to the work. We read of this in verse 32 which says that "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon." That does not mean that he did not have the Spirit of the LORD before. It means that now he is officially qualified and appointed for the task so that in the minds of the people of God there is no question that Gideon is the LORD's choice to lead them under the banner of Jehovah-shalom into battle against the Midianites.

The fact that Gideon must fight a battle under the banner of peace, and that he must first fight a battle among his own countrymen, raises a question. How can there be peace and warfare together in this passage? How can those two ideas fit together? Gideon created quite a stir in Ophrah by destroying the altar of Baal. Gideon by

his example strongly called the people back to the true worship of Jehovah. However, that work created a riot in Ophrah by which he was almost lynched. Is that peace? How can Gideon *fight* under the banner that has to do with *peace*?

That same question applies to the Church of the New Testament age. God raised up men in church history to fight the battle of faith under the same banner under which Gideon fought. The battle in the Reformation was against the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church and the spiritual enemies in the Roman Catholic Church. Today, there is still on-going battle to reform the church, and turn her back unto the Scriptures and the truth of the Reformed Faith. Through all the *battles* we might wonder where is the *peace*?

To answer our questions we must look to what the Prince of Peace Himself said. Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-36 the following.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I am come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Jesus teaches that the battle of faith will cause turmoil in our earthly relationships. Through that battle of faith and self-denial in which the believer remains faithful to God, there is not only earthly struggles, but also the sure reward of spiritual peace with God.

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Further, Jesus Himself, the Prince of Peace, established our peace through the great battle on the cross of Calvary. There Christ destroyed the seed of the Serpent and his whole dominion decisively. Through the destruction of the enemy and by the shedding of His own blood, Christ reconciled us unto God in peace. Therefore, through the *warfare* of Christ upon the cross and His

battle against and victory over death, we have everlasting **peace** and eternal life with God. You see, then, that “peace” and “warfare” fit perfectly together in Scripture.

According to Scripture and the passage, the believer also must fight spiritual battles in that peace. When the believer is faced with spiritual battles, they are battles to maintain his confession and enjoyment of that peace established by Christ and given to us by faith in Him.

That is the battle a young Reformed believers fights, too. You are called to fight false doctrine and heresy to maintain a pure confession of the truth so that the conscious enjoyment of the peace of salvation in Jesus Christ

You are called to fight false doctrine and heresy to maintain a pure confession of the truth so that the conscious enjoyment of the peace of salvation in Jesus Christ is not lost, smudged, or compromised in any way.

is not lost, smudged, or compromised in any way. We are called to break down the altars to Baal and return to the true worship of Jehovah. Make no mistake, such warfare will not bring us earthly peace. It will not make you very popular in this world and in this life. Church history up to the very present day has shown that spiritual Gideons, who seek to reform their denominations or congregations from error, will often meet the same reaction Gideon did the morning after.

Therefore, we object to all that would call itself “peace” when really there is no peace. The basis of true peace and unity is not compromise of cardinal doctrines, but in a faithful confession of the Reformed Faith. True peace is not merely the absence of no battles in the church. Peace is not to avoid the necessary conflicts for the peace and prosperity of Zion. Preservation of peace is not by means of the path of least conflict and disturbance. According to the passage and all of Scripture, God preserves peace and prosperity of Zion by means of diligent and vigilant battle and defense of the truth against spiritual enemies of sin, worldliness, false doc-

trine, heresy, discontent, and strife. God preserves His people by raising up among them spiritual Gideons who are prepared for battle.

We must also use some space here to notice carefully that what Gideon does in the passage comes before the real battle against the Midianites. What Gideon does here is part of the preparations. He prepares the heart of the people unto proper battle against the Midianites.

That applies specifically to the manner in which we must fight. We also need to prepare ourselves first. We must first take care of business at home in our own hearts. There in our own hearts we must repent and reform. If we have not thrown down the altars to Baal there, you and I really live as allies to the enemies on the battlefield. If that is true, then we have no reason to fight. If Gideon had sacrificed to Baal instead and not thrown down the altar, and then went to fight in the LORD’s battles, we would label him a hypocrite. Would not we be hypocritical for doing the same thing?

There is no peace in refusing to repent in our hearts and then to live before men as a member of the church militant, and pretending to fight the LORD’s battles. In

There is no peace in refusing to repent in our hearts and then to live before men as a member of the church militant, and pretending to fight the LORD’s battles.

other words, it is hypocritical for us to make confession of faith before God, His Church, and the spiritual enemies, but then in our hearts and lives behind the backs of others still sacrifice to the Baals of our sinful hearts. In that way of life, we become useless soldiers. We live as spiritual traitors to the cause of God’s Kingdom and Covenant. In that walk of life, there is no enjoyment of the peace and prosperity of Zion in that lifestyle, but only spiritual misery.

Step number one in the battle of faith is to throw down the altar to Baal and cut down the idols *in our own hearts*. In that way of returning to Jehovah in repentance, there is the humble and contrite heart prepared to

do battle against the mighty enemies. Thus, we learn from the history of Gideon here a principle that applies to the church history. Step number one in the reformation of the church institute is repentance from sin in the hearts of the individual spiritual Gideons.

Let us never forget that this first step requires the almighty and sovereign grace of God. We cannot repent of ourselves. Gideon could not throw down the altar by himself. Only God can and does work in us by His Spirit of sovereign grace to destroy our spiritual idol worship, and to live and confess the One True and Eternal Jehovah. Let us pray for that grace!

Going forward in the battle by faith and repentance, our trust is in Jehovah alone of our salvation. He has set

over us the Prince of Peace, the Captain of our salvation. In Him we have forgiveness for our past failures to repent and break down the idols in our hearts. In Him we have the strength and life to repent and then to fight. He fights in and through us by His Spirit. Because Christ has fought for us and won the war on the cross and fights in and through us by His Spirit, one of us shall indeed chase a thousand as God promises. Therefore, we shall do valiantly by grace through faith for the sake of His Zion and His own glory. ❖

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

Gem of the Month

What Happens When We Die, Mom?

*What happens when we die, Mom?
Where do we really go?
Do we climb up a mountain?
Or where it always snows?*

*“God takes us... “takes us where, Mom?
Into a deep, dark cave
Or to a lonely desert?
Don’t worry, I’ll be brave!*

*Do we go to a forest
Where we cannot be seen?
Will He make us so happy?
Or is He really mean?*

*“My dear, you must be quiet
Or you will never know
Where the Lord will then take us
When it’s time for us to go.*

*He takes us to His home, dear
Where we will always dwell,
To His house of many mansions
And we shall all be well.*

*And we will always live there
Forever, yes, we shall,
Forever in His presence
Is where we all shall dwell.*

*Now do you understand, dear,
The place that we shall go
When death creeps up upon us,
And it’s time for us to go?*

*Yes, Mom, I understand now
The place that we shall go,
When death creeps up upon us,
And it’s time for us to go!*

*He takes us to His palace
Where we shall all be well,
To His house of many mansions;
That’s where we all shall dwell!*

*Cassie Kooienga
8th grade student
Heritage Christian School*

With Man— “Nothing is Impossible!”*

by Ken Ham



Wait a minute! There’s something wrong with that title! The Bible declares, “*For with God nothing shall be impossible*” (Luke 1:37). Who would ever be so arrogant as to claim that “with man, nothing is impossible”?

Well, this is the exact statement I heard when I visited NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida in November! As we traveled around the center as part of a guided tour, I was frankly impressed at the achievements scientists have made.

What an awesome feeling it was to see the huge Saturn rocket that was responsible for launching the spacecraft that took man to the moon. This is said to be the most complicated machine ever made.

You could hear the gasps from the tourists as we also observed the massive machine that takes the space shuttle out to the launch pad. And it was an awe-inspiring sight to see the space shuttle on the launch pad ready for its next trip into space.

But as we listened to the narration in various places on the tour, over and over again we heard man praised for his achievements. At one place, after hearing about some of the things these NASA scientists have achieved, the narrator then said that with man “nothing is impossible.” Because of the technology that man has developed, and the knowledge gained, NASA boldly makes the claim that ultimately man can do anything he sets out to do.

one of the astronauts who narrated part of the tour said, “Whatever we can conceive, we can achieve.”

In fact, one of the astronauts who narrated part of the tour said, “Whatever we can conceive, we can achieve.”

Now, where have we heard such an arrogant statement before? (It’s as if man thinks he is a god who can do anything he wants to.)

As I listened to these statements, an event in history came to mind:

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do (Genesis 11:4-6).

At the time of the Tower of Babel, people arrogantly thought they could achieve whatever they wanted. However, God judged their rebellion and scattered them over the whole earth.

Why does NASA have this same philosophy that they think that *nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do*?

Remember that not long ago, the headlines in newspapers and lead stories on television news programs declared that NASA scientists had found evidence of life on Mars from a so-called Martian meteorite found on Earth? At the time, a number of scientists were very skeptical—but NASA was adamant. Millions around the world were led to believe that NASA had found evidence of life on Mars. As a result, the president of the United States pledged more funds for NASA.

Even though the media have by and large not reported it, the scientific world has actually now rejected this supposed find. One article that appeared in *Science* magazine (Issue 20, Nov. 1998) had the headline “Requiem for Life on Mars.”

The underlying reason why NASA scientists “observed” evidence for life on Mars was because they so wanted to find evidence for evolution. As you read through the material produced by NASA (e.g., look up their web site at jpl.nasa.gov and find its “Origins” page)



**the main reason for
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you will find it permeated with evolution. The material makes it clear that the main reason for NASA's very existence is that they want to find evidence for evolution—they already accept it as fact.

For instance, read the following statement from NASA's own material to see what your tax dollars support:

This discussion paper reports the findings of three dozen biologists, planetary scientists, astronomers, and cosmologists assembled by NASA and the National Research Council at the request of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. They met in Washington, DC, on October 28-30, 1996. In a workshop format, the group considered emerging directions in space science and identified origins as a unifying theme for future initiatives...

The study of origins follows the 15 billion year long chain of events from the birth of the universe at the Big Bang, through the formation of the chemical elements, of galaxies, stars and planets, through the mixing of chemicals and energy that cradled life on Earth, to the earliest self-replicating organisms and the profusion of life...

Discoveries in just the past few years provide the first scientific basis for believing that life may be widespread in the universe, in our solar system and beyond. We also have a new comprehension of the development of the universe, its constituent galaxies and stars, the number and variety of planetary systems, and the processes that shape them. For the first time in history, we have achieved the level of understanding and technical capability necessary to fill in "missing links" along the chain of origins by exploring on the Earth and outward in space, in the present and backward in time. To do so, we need to understand more about the processes leading to the origin of life, about habitats suitable for life, and about the origins of the building blocks of the universe. Answers to these questions are within reach.

Major advances over the next 15 years can be realized by continuing and building upon the multidisciplinary programs that have brought us to this point. The current and planned space science programs of NASA begin the next steps in the quest for origins and pose the technology challenges needed for subsequent steps...

Notice carefully that "origins," totally from an evolutionary perspective, is seen as THE unifying factor of the space program.

Ever since the temptation in the Garden of Eden, when Satan said, *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:5), man has been in rebellion against God, trying to be god himself.

And because of the rebellion and arrogance of the people at the Tower of Babel, God brought judgment upon the Earth.

The philosophy of NASA sadly reflects the philosophy of America as a whole. There are some Bible-believing scientists at NASA. But I can't help thinking that as NASA continues to shake its fist at God, believing it can accomplish whatever it wants to in the name of a philosophy of origins that defies His Word, God is going to judge this program (and the nation) for its arrogance.



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The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

March 1 Read Psalm 89:1-7

Psalm 89:1 This Psalm contains many of God's attributes. The first one is His mercy. God's mercy is worth singing about. By His mercy He has taken a poor wretched sinner and made Him fit for heaven. Without His mercy we would all be doomed to hell. We read elsewhere in Scripture, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Notice the parallel construction gives to us a synonym for mercy. That word is compassion. Our God is compassionate toward His people. He looks upon them in love. He has provided for them a way of escape. That way is our Saviour Christ Jesus. Do you sing of the mercies of the Lord forever? Are you thankful for that mercy that only He can show? Stop and consider this attribute of God and then give thanks unto Him whose mercy is forever. Sing Psalter 241:1.

March 2 Read Deuteronomy 7:1-11

Psalm 89:2 Going hand in hand with God's mercy is His faithfulness. This attribute is a great comfort for the child of God of any age. If you examine Israel's history, you will notice that they did not deserve the mercy of God. We are no different. We also do not deserve God's mercy. It is only because He is faithful that both Israel and we were and are not lost. Because God is faithful, His mercy is everlasting. Because God is faithful, we need to confess that faithfulness from generation to generation. Aged saints, have you confessed the faithfulness of God to your children and grandchildren. Parents, do you confess this faithfulness to your children daily? Young people, are you looking for the faithfulness of God in your lives? As sure as the sun is in the heavens, God will be faithful to us. Let us be thankful and praise His name. Sing Psalter 241:2.

March 3 Read Luke 1:26-38

Psalm 89:3-4 One of the truths which our faithful, merciful God has given to us is the truth of covenant. This truth provides for us such strength in times of trouble. This truth goes along with God's faithfulness. God first of all has a covenant within Himself. Then He has made a covenant with His people. In each covenant is the aspect of friendship. With God as our friend, do we need any other? God has established this covenant with us through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. What an act of mercy it was in sending His Son to die in our places! Because of His covenant we can bring up children in the fear of His name and rest assured that He will preserve them. Because of His covenant we have no reason to doubt the salvation of those children taken in infancy. God is faithful and will keep His covenant with us. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 241:3.

March 4 Read Acts 2:41-47

Psalm 89:5 Where do we praise God for his covenant faithfulness and His acts of mercy toward us? True, we should do this every day and everywhere, but we especially should do this with those of like beliefs. The world looks toward Friday as the day of deliverance from their earthly toils. We should look to the Sabbath. We should be longing to come unto God's presence with His people and praise His name. As we finish our work week, our eyes should be drawn to Sabbath not because we do not have to work, but rather that we can rest from our daily labors and work at worshipping our God with praise. Early church members were moved to such praise because of their conversion. What about us? Most of us have been members of the church of Christ from birth. Are we thankful? Do we praise God for his faithfulness and covenant promises? Sing Psalter 241:4.

March 5 Read Isaiah 44:1-8

Psalm 89:7 Now that the Psalmist has established that God must be praised, he gives a reason why. Our God is without comparison. Just as soon as we may wish to praise others or ourselves, we are confronted with the fact that our God is greater than the heavens. Being number one is a great desire in today's world. Without being irreverent, God is number one. Even to use that phrase seems trifling of His greatness and glory. He cannot be even compared on the same scale as man or the creation. And then we stop and think; He created man and the creation! Who is like unto Him? When we stop and think about that fact, we should be quick to look for ways and places to praise Him for all of His mighty acts. Do we truly want to praise Him? Do we truly wish to confess the God is great and we are nothing? Let us bow our heads in prayer and beg for the grace to acknowledge God as God. Sing Psalter 241:5.

March 6 Read Psalm 89:1-7

Psalm 89:7 The concluding verse of this section also draws us to worship. It is fitting that we look at this idea on Saturday. Saturday is the day of preparation for Sunday. It is not just a day for recreation though it can be used for that. It is not just a day to get caught up on all the things that have not been done during the rest of the week though it can be used for that. It must be a day in which we prepare for the Sabbath. Even our recreation and picking up loose ends must be subservient to that preparation. Why is this? The answer is found in this verse. We are to have God in reverence. This is not something that can be done with little thought. We cannot just wake up Sunday morning and find that reverence has been bestowed upon us in our sleep. This is especially true if we have had little sleep. Reverence must be entered into. We do this by preparing for

the Sabbath. We do this on Saturday not on Sunday. Let us be reverent when we go to God's house tomorrow. Let us fear our God with the congregation of His saints. Sing Psalter 241:6.

March 7 Read Psalm 89:8-14

Psalm 89:8-9 As the Psalmist continues to extol the greatness of God he now turns to the creation around us. What did you see out side your window this morning? What have you heard in the world of nature which speaks of the greatness of God? God speaks through this voice as well. No, it is not His prescribe method of worship with which we can use today. But it is His voice uttering forth the greatness of His power. Are we listening? Are we bowing before the Lord and confessing that He is God alone? If we look at the most powerful storm at sea, and then remember that at a single word God can still that storm; we will know that He can still all the storms of doubt and temptation that rage within us. He rules the waves, and He rules within our hearts. Let us go to His house and praise His most glorious name. Sing Psalter 241:7.

March 8 Read Job 40:6-14

Psalm 89:10 Who is the strongest person that you know? What is the strongest engine that you have heard about? Can you tangle with an elephant and come out a winner with your bare hands? God is strength. This, too, is one of His attributes. He is strength because He has created strength. God has shown His strength as the walls of Jericho collapsed with a little marching, shouting, and trumpet blowing. God has shown his strength by drowning whole armies. God has shown His strength when He has taken poor wretched sinners like us and delivered us from the power of Satan by means of a death. God is strength. Do we confess that strength? Do we acknowledge that strength in our lives? We begin our work week today. Who of us will not be exhausted as the week draws to a close? God never feels this exhaustion. He is strength. Sing Psalter 241:8.

March 9 Read Genesis 1:1-8

Psalm 89:11-12 Look around you as you go outside today. Look around at some of those beautiful nature pictures that you may have in your house. If you cannot do these things, stop and think of those outdoor scenes that have been impressed in your minds over the years. From where did these things come? Could you have brought them to pass? Job was asked this question at the end of the book. He could only throw himself at God's feet and confess His sin. Does nature bring out that reaction in us? Are we impressed by the greatness and grandeur of our heavenly Father? Do we see His power and glory in His creation? We should and we must. If we do not, we are no better, in fact, we are worse than any nature-worshipping heathen nation. God speaks in nature. Do we hear His voice? Do we rejoice in His name? Sing Psalter 241:9.

March 10 Read Romans 3:1-7

Psalm 89:13-14 There are several attributes of God found in these two verses. The one that I wish to focus on for today is justice. Our country was founded on the theme of "equal justice for all." Throughout its history this has been found to be not true. Various groups have found less than equal justice in our nation's courts. God, however, is a just God. His justice is true. Justice reigns around Him in heaven. This should bring utmost comfort to the people of God. Even when justice cannot be found in the land, justice will be found at God's throne. Justice is a cornerstone of His almighty throne. We do not fear His justice, because He looks upon us in mercy. Let us give thanks for God's justice and let us throw ourselves upon His mercy which endureth forever. Sing Psalter 242:1.

March 11 Read Psalm 89:15-18

Psalm 89:15 "Blessed is the people..." Who are these people? Why do they hear the joyful sound? Why are they privileged to walk in the light of Jehovah's countenance? The answer can be found throughout this Psalm. These are the elect. These are they who have their robes washed white in the blood of the lamb. These are they who have been chosen from eternity to enjoy the privileges of being a child of the king. Election is such a blessing. Because of our election we can hear the joyful sound. Because of our election we can be comforted by the light of God's face. Election! Such a blessed truth for the child of God. Let us rejoice in it, enjoy the joyful sound, and walk in the light of God's countenance. Sing Psalter 242:2.

March 12 Read Philipians 4:4-9

Psalm 89:16-17 Our reaction to the wonderful truth of election? We must rejoice. There are many reasons given in these two verses why the elect must rejoice. First of all we rejoice in the name of God. That name, we read elsewhere, is above every name. We also rejoice in His righteousness. Because God is righteous, our election is sure. Any strength we have is strength in the glory of God. Finally we see that our power on this earth—that power that is not earthly but spiritual—is possible only by His favor or grace. We have many reason for which we must rejoice. Are we? Are our faces long and somber, or do we rejoice daily for the wonders of God's power? We finish this week; let us do it with joy in anticipation of preparing to go to the house of the Lord. Let our joy of the weekend be the true joy of the believer and not the false joy of the world found in the ways of sin. Sing Psalter 242:3

March 13 Read Hosea 13:9-14

Psalm 89:18 In this day and age the idea of a king has been lost. But in the days of the Psalms the king was an idea full of meaning. For the king you would do anything. For the king you would put aside all of your wants and desires and do his bidding. The word worship literally means to bow the knee to a king. God is our king. Will we do anything for Him? Would we put aside all of our wants and desires for Him? Will we say that sports are not important, that our jobs mean nothing, or that the vacation we desire is nothing in comparison to the wishes of our King? Will we bow the knee tomorrow in church? Will we dress in clothing that is suitable to worship the king? Will we devote the *whole* day to the worship of the only King? One of our Psalter numbers states, "God is King for ever, Let the nations tremble." Are we trembling? Sing Psalter 242:4.

March 14 Read Psalm 89:19-29

Psalm 89:19 As we enter God's house today let us stop and ponder the office of minister, elder, and deacon. Let us not do that because of the men who occupy those offices, but rather let us do that as those offices are ordained as the work of Christ in His church. These men are not just elected, but these men are ordained by Christ! These men are not our representative, but these men are the representatives of Christ among us! These men are not mighty of themselves, but these men are mighty in their offices. We must realize that Christ has given us these men in their offices for the glory of His name. Let us thank Him for such men, and let us accord to them the honor due to them. Sing Psalter 243:1.

March 15 Read I Samuel 16:1-20

Psalm 89:20-21 Yesterday we looked at the three offices appointed in the church. We saw that they were Christ's representatives in the church militant. Today's verses name David as anointed

by God. David the fighting king is a type of Christ. The name Christ means anointed one. God has anointed Christ to fight the battles for His people. He has been anointed for the task of bringing His people into heavenly glory. Not only has he been anointed, but He has also been endowed with the strength necessary to accomplish this task. Through the strength given to Him by the Father, He has overcome Satan for us. What a comfort it is for us, whether young or old, to know that our Saviour has been anointed by God and given strength by God to fight the battle of faith for us and with us. Sing Psalter 243:2.

March 16 Read Exodus 17:8-16

Psalm 89:22-24a Have you identified the enemy that is around you? Do we understand that God's people are surrounded by enemies? Examine the history of the Old Testament. Countless times Israel's enemies rose up against them. Countless times the enemy tried to destroy the people of God. What about us? Do we have enemies? The answer is undoubtedly, yes! We are no different from the church of days gone by. Israel had enemies, the reformers had enemies, and we have enemies. But we are not left without help. God, in His faithfulness and love, will care for us. He will help us to fight against the enemy. Let us not fear, people of God. We have a mighty God who fights for the church militant. Let us identify the enemy in the world around us, and let us fight the battles of faith led by our mighty God. Sing Psalter 243:3.

March 17 Read Revelation 19:11-21

Psalm 89:24b-25 The figure of the horn is found in many places in Scripture. We do well to understand what this figure pictures. The horn was a symbol of authority and power. This symbol was used by kings to show their power. God has given to Christ the horn of power. He has done this in His name. Christ by the authority of the name of God is king of His people. Even when Christ hung on the cross in His human nature he had the comfort of God with Him. Even when it seemed the darkest and it appeared that God had forsaken Him, He could cry my God and my Father. This is a comfort for us. Our king is not a weak human king who depends on human power. Our king is powerful. His authority is God Himself. When He goes before us to fight, He fights with that authority. Let us exalt the horn of our salvation! Sing Psalter 243:4.

March 18 Read Colossians 1:12-19

Psalm 89:26-27 The enemies that Christ fights for us are around us all the time. But there is another enemy that He fights for us. That enemy is sin and the father of sin, Satan. Even as He hung on the cross making the ultimate sacrifice for us, He was fighting Satan. He was crushing the one who had been prophesied against in Genesis 3:15. Christ was not merely dying on that cross; Christ was fighting the battle against Satan for us. Even as we look for those enemies around us, we must look for the enemy within us. Our sins "rise up against us prevailing day by day." Are we without hope; are we without comfort? No and a thousand times NO! Christ is more powerful than any king. God through Him has shown us mercy and has taken our sins away. Let us give thanks every day and every hour for such a blessing. Sing Psalter 243:5.

March 19 Read Psalm 89:19-29

Psalm 89:28-29 We hear advertisements for materials that will last a long time. We read guarantees for something which will last for the life of our possessions. These items and their guarantees cannot last like the promises of God. God's mercy lasts forever. That is astounding when you consider the objects of that mercy.

His covenant is without end. That, too, is astounding when we consider that He made that covenant with feeble man. The covenant must be unilateral or it would never last. We would break it immediately after we entered into it. Finally we have the assurance that our lives in the world to come will be forever. God, unlike corporations today, will not go out of business and leave His guarantee no better than the paper it is written on. When God promises something it is truly everlasting. Sing Psalter 243:6.

March 20 Read Psalm 89:30-37

Psalm 89:30-32 Yesterday we saw the sureness of God's covenant with us. We also saw that only because He alone established that covenant would it last. In today's verses we more clearly see the impossibility of our keeping the covenant. By nature we are sinful. By nature we sin, weekly, daily, and even hourly. We do forsake His law. We break every commandment in it daily. By nature we do not want to keep the commandments of God. We like sin. We like to follow the ways of the world. We do not want to keep the Sabbath. God has told us that He will come upon us with the rod. He will lay stripes upon us. This is not the punishment that takes away sin. On, no, that could only be born by the lamb of Isaiah 53. But God does chastise and correct us. He does this daily. Let us not be weary in His correction. He only corrects those whom He loves. Let that be our comfort as we are chastised for our sins. Sing Psalter 243:7.

March 21 Read Hebrews 6:9-20

Psalm 89:33-34 Yesterday we saw how we sin daily. If we enter into a covenant or contract in this world and fail to keep the terms of that contract, the contract will be broken, and we will no longer receive the benefits of the contract. God's covenant is different. Because it is unilateral, we cannot break it. It is this way because of its very character. It is based on God's lovingkindness and mercy. It is also based on His never failing faithfulness. Because this is true we can rest assured that what He has promised us, He will surely give us. Our place in heaven is sure. We will taste of the goodness of God in the land of the living. Let us thank Him for His mercies which fail not. Sing Psalter 243:8.

March 22 Read Amos 4:1-5

Psalm 89:35 Another of God's attributes is His holiness. If you would take a concordance, you would find many texts which speak of the holiness of God. Holiness has the meaning of purity. If we would take a piece of God and remove impurities from it, it would become more beautiful. If we would use a more advance process, we could increase its beauty. Finally we would reach the limits of our ability to purify that gold. God is holy. He has absolutely no impurities in His being. His beauty is unsurpassed by anything on this earth. By that holiness and beauty, He has sworn that he will continue His covenant with us for ever. This should afford to us utmost comfort. God is holy. His word is sure. Do we need anything else? Sing Psalter 243:9.

March 23 Read Amos 4:6-9

Psalm 89:36 The words of today's text contain thoughts that we have touched on before. This, too, is a technique the Holy Spirit uses in Scripture. When we find repeated thoughts: for example Pharaoh's dreams, the words on the wall in Babylon, or the three times the sheet was let down before Peter to name a few, we must see the sureness of Jehovah's word to those to whom He is speaking. Pharaoh and Belshazzar would find this out the hard way. It is our privilege, as the people of God, to experience this sureness of

God's promises. First of all Christ's kingdom is forever, and secondly His people will be subjects in that kingdom forever. What a comfort it is for us to know that this will surely come to pass. Sing Psalter 243:9.

March 24 Read Amos 4:10-13

Psalm 89:37 In verses 36 & 37 the Psalmist Ethan uses the sun and the moon as pictures for us to understand the everlasting character of the kingdom of Christ. On the fourth day of creation, these were placed in the heaven not only as light holders but also for signs. We must always look at creation in this way. We must look at the various aspects of creation and see what God is telling us. Like Samuel we must say, "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." If we neglect the message of the sun and moon, we neglect the beauty of God covenant and become no better than idolaters and worship the sun and the moon. Even as they appear daily so Christ kingdom will last for ever. Sing Psalter 243:9.

March 25 Read Psalm 89:38-67

Psalm 89:38-40 All of a sudden the word of our Psalm changes. From the easy-to-listen-to words of Christ everlasting reign, we go to the harsh words of the historical fact. Israel had not kept the commandment of God. From the sins during the days of the judges, to the sins of Saul, and to the sins of Rehoboam, they had ignored and trampled upon God's commands. Now they were paying the price. Enemies were running roughshod over the land. The familiar landmarks were gone. All was in ruin. This is true with us today. When we neglect to walk in God's ways, He will come upon us. He will make us remember His law. Of course His mercy is not taken from us. But yet He points out our sin to us. We must see, we must be humbled, and we must bow before Him in repentance. Sing Psalter 243:10.

March 26 Read Lamentations 1:1-11

Psalm 89:41-44 When we fall, the world notices. They noticed as Israel was carried away captive by Babylon. They noticed when David fell into sin with Bathsheba. One of Nathan admonitions upon David was that he had caused the enemies of Israel to blaspheme. Jeremiah's words in today's reading point out this sad fact. Jeremiah had to watch the people of God go into captivity with the mocking cries of Edom in the background. This is true today. Young people, the world's young people watch as you become drunk. They watch as you go into that den of iniquity the movie house. They see the videos that you rent and purchase. They hear the music that blares forth from your cars. What do they do? They laugh. They laugh at you, and they laugh at God. We must stop and think. We must stop and not walk in sin. Pray to our heavenly Father that He will help us not give the world an occasion to blaspheme. Sing Psalter 243:11.

March 27 Read Lamentations 1:12-22

Psalm 89:45 Shame! That is a word that has lost the meaning that it once had. A couple commits fornication and either refuse to confess their sin before the church or they confess it but do not act ashamed of their sin. They live as if nothing has happened. A man becomes drunk and takes his place in society as if nothing has happened. One of the consequences of sin is shame. We must be ashamed before God and His church when we sin. We must realize that we have brought a blot upon His most holy name. Sin does not cause us to cease our lives, but it should make us consider the way we live them. The more we hide sin, the more we will fill the chastisement of God. Shame is not bad; it is a consequence of sin. Let us see shame as a way to bring us to repentance. Sing Psalter 243:12.

March 28 Read Psalm 89:38-46

Psalm 89:46 How long? Are these two words part of our every day prayers? Do we ask God how long will it be before He delivers us from this valley of the shadow of death? Do we ask for help in putting away our sins so that we can escape God's chastisement upon us? Sometimes we do not wish to ask how long. We like it here on this earth. We like our sin. We do not want to know when we will be required to give account for our deeds in this life. But we must learn from the example of this prayer. We must ask how long? And we must pray for Christ to come quickly. Sing Psalter 243:12.

March 29 Read Psalm 89:47-52

Psalm 89:47-48 Young people, do you consider how short life is? Do you consider that it can be over in a few minutes even for those who seem to be so strong and full of life. Jacob who was 130 years old confessed that his days on this earth were few. I am sure if you talk to some of the older members of your churches they will tell you that life is short. In the next breath they will also tell you that it is too short to waste in sin. You might not want to hear those words but we need them. Notice the shift in pronouns in that last sentence. Every child of God needs to consider the shortness of life and the magnitude of sin. Let us do this daily, and let us remember that redemption only comes from our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 243:13.

March 30 Read Deuteronomy 32:1-9

Psalm 89:49-51 Another attribute of God is His truth. Truth is another one of those ideas that has been lost in this world. To tell the truth is not held in high esteem. People of God, especially young people and children, you must tell the truth at all times. We must do this because our God is a God of truth. His word is truth personified. Because His word is truth, we know that it will surely come to pass. Because He is truth, we must reflect that truth in our lives. Because He is truth, we can call upon Him to deliver us from sin and from all our enemies. Love God's truth, people of God, and in all that you do, speak the truth in love one to another. Sing Psalter 243:14.

March 31 Read Psalm Daniel 2:14-23

Psalm 89:52 Daniel had just spoken courageous words to Arioch. He had put his life and the reputation of God on the line. What did He do? Did he stand wringing his hands in despair? Did he try to hide from what he had said? No, Daniel and his three friends went to God in prayer. They prayed to the God who knows all things and asked for help to reveal both the dream and its meaning. When God provides him the answer, he again prays a prayer of thanksgiving. In that prayer he blesses the Lord. This should be our attitude even as we live our lives beset by enemies and sin on every side. In every circumstance of life, we must pray the words, "blessed be the Lord." Then we must end our prayers as Ethan does with this Psalm, and the Holy Spirit with this section of the Psalms with the words Amen knowing that it will most certainly be even as it pleaseth the Lord. The last stanza of Psalter 243 is very joyful. Sing it as you end your devotions. Sing Psalter 243:15.

Psalter 402—Reasons for Praise

by Beth DeVries

O sing ye Hallelujah!! We are again called to praise our God in this versification of Psalm 147. We raise our voices to God in thanksgiving for all that He has done for us. This is good and pleasant. God builds up His church and gathers in His elect people. For this we raise our voices in praise. The first stanza reminds us of these truths and that God will always call back those who wander for none of the elect will ever perish. We know that God in His sovereignty has foreordained His own people and preserves them to eternal life. We of our own are incapable of doing anything to earn our salvation; we are grateful for this. God’s sovereignty gives comfort to those that are brokenhearted because God as God has saved us.

This Psalm continues to attribute praise to God in speaking of creation and the wonders contained in it. God knows the number of the stars which are innumerable to us. He also calls them each by name. We can not even begin to comprehend the naming of all the stars of heaven. God controls the clouds and the rain. This rain makes the grass and the grain to grow. The world is blessed with plenty by God’s almighty hand. God supplies the beasts and birds with food, how much more He supplies us with all of our needs. God cares for all of His creatures and hears their cries. We sometimes worry about our daily needs but God will care for us as He does for all of His creatures.

God sends the snow and ice to enfold this earth causing us to stop and meditate on the wonder of it all. We wonder how man can withstand the deep cold that descends on this earth. The fact is without God’s gifts of heat and shelter, we can not survive. We remember that God also sends the warm winds that melt the ice and

snow when spring has come. We often attribute this to natural law as expressed by science, and we forget that it all comes by God’s almighty hand. It is God that brings the changing of the seasons. The seasons show God’s power over His creation. We see this rule of God over His creation also in Psalm 135:6,7 “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas,

and all deep places. He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh the lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.” May we always reflect on and remember that God controls our creation and be joyful for all of the weather that He sends us; sun, rain, snow, and fog.

This Psalter versification also speaks of God being praised by the meek that humbly trust in Him. God is not pleased with earthly shows of power and greatness, but rather by those who trust in His love. When we confess thanks to God for His many gifts to us, then is God pleased.

God makes us to know His statutes and judgments so that we will live to His glory and honor.

God shows His grace to His people in a way that He does not to the reprobate. The gift of the Holy Spirit shows us the truths of His Word that we may know Him more fully. We also receive the gift of grace and mercy from God’s almighty hand. We are called to always give thanks to God for these unmerited gifts. We sing the songs of Zion in praise to our God. This Psalter versification teaches us to humbly praise God as we observe the creation in which we live. Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord. ❖

402 Reasons for Praise

PARALLEL 10' 3/4 and 10' HARMONY: John R. Dykes

1. O sing ye Hal - lu - jah! 'Tis good our God to praise;
 2. The star - ry host His num - ber, He calls them all by name;
 3. The heav'n's with which He cov - ers, He sends the shew - ing sign;
 4. He be - comes pow'rs do - lighten Him, No star - ly pomp or pride;
 5. He sends His swift com - mand - ment, And snow and ice are fold;
 6. The star - ry host His judg - ment, He makes His peo - ple know,
 'Tis pleas - ure and he - ven - ing To His our songs to raise;
 His great - ness and His wis - dom His won - ders work pre - cious;
 The light of all the moon - tains He fills with grace and grace;
 He loves the meek who fear Him, And in His love con - fide;
 The world, and more are a - ble To stand be - fore His aid;
 To Him all to no oth - ers His grace He bests to show;

He builds the walls of Zi - on, He sends her war - d'ring sun,
 To keep her safe from all her foes, He builds her in - ter - mediate;
 Their great - ness and His good - ness Their dis - cre - tion and His grace;
 A - gain His great com - mand - ment, The world of men - our race;
 For such - less grace and mer - cy Your grate - ful praise - us bring;

He binds their wounds and coun - teth, The low - ly - heart - ed ones,
 He sends her all His com - fort, His great - ness as far and wide,
 He gives His peace and glad - ty, His gifts are all His grace,
 The snow and ice are melt - ed, A - gain the wa - ters flow,
 To Him give thanks for - ev - er, And Hal - lu - jah - jah - jah - jah.

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

Sing Praises with Understanding (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We as Reformed believers ought to be very discriminating in our selection of music that we sing and allow ourselves to listen to. The devil is very crafty and many a lie has been promoted through the medium of music. We may be able to spot the lie very easily in the things we read and hear spoken to us, but when the lie is presented to us among the flowing notes of music, we can be so easily fooled. In fact, the music can be so pleasing and the lie so subtle, and the emotions so strong, that we can find ourselves singing along and enjoying ourselves.

There are two extremes in which the devil can present the lie to us through music. The one is a seemingly pious setting, perhaps in a historic church, with a talented organist, and pews filled with older men and women singing with all their hearts along with a choir. The other may be in a more modern auditorium, with very emotional, upbeat music being sung by a talented group. In both situations it seems that we can be overcome by our emotions and find ourselves singing along with some very unsound songs. But let us remember, that we are to be singing with understanding.

**let us remember, that we
are to be singing with
understanding.**

There are many reasons why the Reformed believer, young and old alike, delights in the singing of Psalms. First of all, in the Psalms, we sing of the works of God. In Psalm 147 we are instructed to praise the name of God for His “greatness is unsearchable.” When we read through the Psalm, every verse extols the many perfections and works of God. In verse 7 we see the goodness and righteousness of God. In verse 8 we read of God’s grace, compassion, and mercy. In verse 11 we see God’s glory and power; in verse 13 His eternity. In verse 17 we have before us God’s holiness and justice. Not any-

where in this Psalm or in the others will we find reason to boast in ourselves and exalt ourselves. But we praise God, for His greatness is unsearchable.

Secondly, young and old delight in singing the Psalms because after the pattern of the Heidelberg Catechism, we must first know how great our sins and miseries are and from where our deliverance comes before we can express our gratitude to God for this deliverance. It is in the reading, singing, and understanding of the Psalms that we see a distinct picture of our true condition apart from the work of God in us. In Psalm 38:5 we read, “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.” In Psalm 51:5 we read, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” In these verses, we have the doctrine of the total depravity of man, explicit in the Psalms, yet commonly denied in almost every religious song popular today.

Thirdly, we sing in the Psalms that our deliverance is in God and Him alone. In Psalm 18:32 we read, “It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.” It is God who teaches us to do His will, whose Spirit is good, and who leads us into the land of uprightness (Psalm 143:10). Psalm 146:5 speaks to us that our happiness is in having the God of Jacob for our help and our hope in the Lord our God.

It is interesting to note that throughout the Psalms we are instructed to sing praises to God because of His great works. The works of God are the reasons for our praise. This connection can be found in many verses

**The works of God are the
reasons for our praise.**

throughout the Psalms. In Psalm 98:1 we read, “O sing unto the Lord a new song; FOR He hath done marvelous things.” In another instance we read, “Praise Him FOR His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness” (150:2). Our only reason for praise is the

mighty works of God. How humbling a reality for us His creatures, for in the Psalms we see that all honor, glory, and praise is rightfully God's. This also is in contrast to the "christian" music popular today where some of the glory goes to the performer(s), some to man who performs good works on his own, and the little remaining honor goes to a god of man's imagination.

Fourth, young and old take delight in singing the Psalms because in them we see the end of our enemies and the judgement of God upon them. How easily we can be overcome with feelings of despair and helplessness because of the apparent success of the enemies of God and the apparent weakness and smallness of the true Church. In the reading, singing, and understanding of the Psalms these doubts and worries are dispelled for we read and sing of the judgment of God upon those who hate Him (and us) and His truth. In Psalm 35:1 we read, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." In verse 6 of the same Psalm we read the words, "Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them." In Psalm 55:15 we read the powerful words, "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them." These words of the Psalms we ought not to be afraid to repeat, for they are the inspired words of God. Can you find (if it is possible) the judgments of God spoken upon his enemies in the "christian" music commonly sung today?

Finally, in the reading and singing of the Psalms, we are reminded of the fact that we are in the midst of a fierce battle. Our life is that of a warrior and at all times

Can you find (if it is possible) the judgments of God spoken upon his enemies in the "christian" music commonly sung today?

we are surrounded by deadly enemies. This truth is plainly before us in the Psalms. In Psalms 57:4 we read, "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." In Psalm 71:10, 11 we read of the attempts by our en-

emies to place doubt within us concerning our deliverance with the following words, "For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, Saying, God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him; for their is none to deliver him."

It is with this awareness of the battle raging both in us and around us that we are called to know not only the Psalms, but all of God's inspired Word. For how can we fight unless we are aware of the battle? And how can we go off to battle without knowing who the enemy is? And when we meet the enemy, how can we fight unless we are equipped with the necessary weapons? The answers are to be found in His Word. It is through His Word and the work of His Spirit in us that we are victorious. Let us be diligent in the reading and studying of that Word, so that we are continually growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord (II Peter 3:18).

Let us especially grow in our knowledge of the Psalms. They are despised today by the false church and no longer sung in most churches. Instead, hymns and contemporary music have taken their place. Why? Because the Psalms are doctrinally sharp and expose the lie for what it is. This is why we ought to delight in the Psalms for they express the truths of the Word of God clearly and distinctly and fill us with a great comfort. Let us sing them at every opportunity we have and not be so quick to say, "But we sing them every Sunday in church." Who really knows the depths of the Psalms? At what occasion are they not appropriate? Where is there better music to be found?

This is why we ought to delight in the Psalms for they express the truths of the Word of God clearly and distinctly and fill us with a great comfort.

In the singing and reading of the Psalms we will not be found in violation of Psalm 74:8. "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that he hath done." ❖

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

The Christian's Attitude Toward Government (2)

by Prof. Robert Decker

The following is the text of a lecture given in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, MI, November 6, 1998.

Last month we ended with the following paragraph: “*This then is the threefold calling of the Christian with regard to the civil government. We must be subject to the superior authorities, not resist, but obey them. We must pay our tribute or taxes to support and maintain the government. And, we must pray for those in authority over us.*”

What is the reason for this calling? Why this threefold calling?

The first reason why we must obey, pay taxes to, and pray for the civil rulers is they are “ordained of God.” Note well, how strongly this is emphasized in Romans 13:

1. “There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God” (verse 1).
2. If we resist the authority we are resisting “the ordinance of God” (verse 2)
3. No less than three times does the passage refer to the superior authorities as “ministers of God” (verses 4-6).

The meaning is plain. God has ordained, determined in His counsel or decree, that there should be the institution we call the civil government. God has also placed the authorities in those offices. Through whatever means, free elections, dictatorships, or what have you, God has put the rulers in authority over us. They are God’s ministers, literally, God’s servants. Whether willingly or in spite of themselves, they are God’s ministers/servants. “By me,” the Lord says, “kings reign, and princesses decree justice. By me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth” (Proverbs 8:15-16). According to Isaiah 45:1-6, God raised up Cyrus to free the captives of Judah in Babylon.

Because they are ordained of God the authorities are accountable to God. They must bear the sword. “Bearing the sword” is a figurative expression for executing judgment. They must bear the sword fairly and justly. They must be a terror to evil works, not to the good. They must be revengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil. Again, whether they know this, whether they exercise their authority consciously as God’s servants, makes no difference. Someday they will render account to God for their ruling!

For this reason we must be subject to them (verse 5). “Wherefore there is necessity to be subject” This is divine necessity. We’ve no choice in the matter; we must be subject to the authorities.

“Not only on account of wrath,” must we be subject. The ungodly are subject on account of wrath, if they are subject at all. They fear the punishment of evil doing and so to avoid the consequences, they outwardly obey the authorities. We, God’s people, obey “for conscience’ sake.” “Conscience” means “to know with” According to his Spirit-filled, sanctified conscience, the Christian knows with God the truth of His Word concerning the superior authorities. He knows that the authorities are God’s ministers and that as such the rulers have authority from God to maintain good order in society. They have the right to execute God’s judgments on evil doers. Thus the Christian obeys, not because he fears the punishment of evil doing, but because for conscience sake he fears God. He obeys for God’s sake and because he loves the Lord.

This biblical truth is summed in our Reformed Confessions. The *Heidelberg Catechism* teaches that God governs all things, nothing happens by chance, all things come by God’s fatherly hand. We can trust Him since nothing so much as moves without His will (Lord’s Day 10). The *Catechism* explains that we must show all honor,

love, fidelity to our parents and to all in authority over us. We must submit ourselves with due obedience to their instruction and correction...since it pleases God to govern us by their hand. The *Belgic Confession* likewise teaches that God, because of mankind's depravity, has appointed magistrates so that the world should be governed by their hand, for the external restraint of evil, for good order in society. And because God did this, we must obey the authorities (Article 36).

The only exception to this is when the authorities demand that which is contrary to God's will as revealed in Scripture and summed in His holy law. The Old Testament Scriptures give several examples of this. The Hebrew mid-wives, because they feared God, refused to murder the male babies of the Israelites as Pharaoh had commanded (Exodus 1:16-22). Daniel and his friends in Babylon are outstanding examples for us. They refused the king's meat and wine because it involved idol worship and eating that which was unclean. They refused to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's great image though it meant a burning, fiery furnace. And, Daniel prayed to the Lord as always in spite of the king's decree and the lions. In the New Testament, according to Acts 4:19-20 and 5:29, the apostles, Peter and John, testified, "we ought to obey God rather than men" and they continued to preach even though forbidden to do so.

Note well! We may not revolt against the government. We may not try to overthrow the government. We

**Note well! We may not
revolt against the
government.**

obey always, except when we need to obey God rather than men, and, then we suffer the consequences. We might be imprisoned, perhaps tortured, perhaps put to death.

But what about times of scandal and persecution? That there's scandal is obvious. Our president has admitted it. He ought to repent and resign. He is not worthy of the office. Failing this, he ought to be impeached and removed from office. But until this happens, he's still the president of the United States, and we the citizens must be subject for God's sake. We obey knowing that God will hold Mr. Clinton accountable for his sins. But we are subject.

Should we find ourselves, as many Christians in other lands do, persecuted for the faith, what then? Still we obey unless the government demands of us something contrary to God's will. And again, we do so knowing that the persecuting rulers will one day give an account to the Lord for all their wickedness.

Do you believe this? Perhaps you object and say, this holds, but not in times of scandal and persecution. Do you know when the Apostles were inspired to write the New Testament? It was written in the latter half of the first century A.D. The Epistle to the Romans was written during Nero's reign which was from A. D. 54-68.

Two things characterized this period. The first was terrible immorality. Prostitution was legalized and rampant. Both female and male prostitutes abounded as did homosexuality and lesbianism. Nero himself kept a castrated slave as a lover. Adultery and divorce were as common as marriage. Interestingly enough, most women worked outside of the home and were involved in the professions: law, medicine, business, etc. The games were numerous and unbelievably cruel. Gladiators fought with other men or animals to a bloody death

And all of this was especially true of the authorities, the wealthy, the senators, and the military leaders, and the emperor himself. Murder, intrigue, sexual immorality, gluttony and drunkenness; all these were the order of the day among the leaders and authorities.

There was cruel persecution of the Christians. They were imprisoned, tortured, starved, and put to death. So cruel were the tortures and persecutions inflicted at Nero's orders that even the ungodly enemies of the faith called for a halt to it.

In such times as these were the Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament with its account of our Savior's atonement and resurrection, the apos-

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tolic era and the Epistles and the gathering of the church out of the nations, when the apostles wrote, Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, honor the king, obey magistrates, pay tribute, pray for those in authority over you, Nero was on the throne, the worst of them all.

May God give us grace to be subject to the superior authorities, to pay them tribute, and to pray for them; now and in the future with but one exception, *viz.*, when

obedience to the ruler involves disobedience to God. In that case we obey God rather than men. For the rest, we leave all in the hands of God Who judges righteously and before whom all, also the superior authorities, must render account. ❖

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Letter to the Editor

WWJD

Dear *Beacon Lights*,

I am writing this letter in response to an article published in the September, 1998 issue of the *Beacon Lights*. The article proposed reasons why the author felt the WWJD bracelets, popular today, are not fitting for Reformed Christians to wear.

The first sentence of the article states, “We believe that WWJD bracelets are not appropriate attire for the Reformed Christian to wear.” Who are the “We...” spoken of in this statement? They are not clearly defined. Hopefully, this is not intended as a blanket statement for the whole Protestant Reformed denomination. I am sure that not every member of the Protestant Reformed denomination agrees with this strong statement. A decision such as whether or not I will wear a WWJD bracelet is my choice and has nothing to do with how strong or weak my faith is.

The first reasoning the author brings is that there is too great a temptation to fall into idolatry while wearing the bracelets. I do not feel that these bracelets are meant as amulets or charms that will magically keep you from sinning. At least the people that I know who wear them

do not think so. They were designed as a visual reminder that I need to constantly think in a Christ-centered way. I need reminders daily because of the old man of sin in me. Jesus faced the same temptations we do. He could overcome them perfectly. A reminder is beneficial to me, who is not perfect as He is.

The author also stated in his article that by wearing the bracelets one associates him or herself “with the Arminians and other hypocrites who promote evil doctrines while wearing these bracelets (pg. 5).” I find this statement offensive and judgmental. The bracelet is not promoting the evil doctrine of Arminianism and is not to be blamed here. Just as the scalpel is not evil because some doctors use them to perform abortions. Just as we do, Arminians also use Scripture to support their doctrines. Are we to use the same line of reasoning for this example as well? The bracelet is merely a piece of fabric with letters embroidered on it and is not evil. However, people use good things in wrong ways. We must not, therefore, do away with the object, but with the wrongful actions of the user.

The WWJD bracelets were also classified with the Jewish phylactery. The author quoted Matthew 23:5 in

his article which says, "...they make broad their phylacteries..." The phylactery is also called a tefillin and consists of a small black box and black straps. The box holds scrolls on which are written Scripture and are used during the weekday morning worship services. The straps are wrapped around the arm with a box on the biceps. Another box is placed on the forehead with the straps hanging down over the shoulders. Blessings are recited while the tefillin are placed and after the service they are removed. One Jewish website gives this as the reason why they are used, "...tefillin are meant to remind us of God's commandments." They are literally taking the command by God to bind the Word of God to your arms and your forehead. The Pharisees in Matthew 23:5 were rebuked because they were boasting and making public displays of their worship. They were not rebuked for using the phylacteries. I feel the author segregates unfairly the external acts of worship to God and internal love for God.

At the end of the first piece of the article are listed three texts which the author states are frequently used "to show that there is nothing wrong with WWJD bracelets (pg. 6)." These texts all speak of having the Word of God on one's hand and forehead as spoken of above. They were most likely speaking of phylacteries which the Jewish children of Israel would most likely have used. The author explains that these texts must be taken spiritually because we do not read of the Old Testament saints as following this practice and because it would be impossible to write the entire Law of God on our hands and forehead. I think the author is missing the point. It isn't about physically writing the letters on our faces and hands. The text doesn't even say anything about "writing" them. The text uses the word "bind." It also isn't about what our forefathers did or did not do. It's about finding the best way to continually keep our eyes on Christ and not forget Him in our everyday activities. If some people can do this without a physical object as a reminder, then that is wonderful. I personally need a visual reminder to help me.

The author also tells us that baptism is the way we witness and that by our Christian walk others see the light of Christ. I couldn't agree more. But that is not the end of the story. There needs to be more to complete Christ's idea of witnessing. We also need to take an active approach by going out into the communities and seeking out those who are hungry for the Word. The apostles did not just continue everyday living waiting for others to ask them questions. They broke through

barriers, went to people who were considered the scum of society, and went to people even though others criticized them. One person I spoke with said she wears the bracelet to work. Several co-workers have asked her what the abbreviation stands for. She explains the significance of Christ in her life to that person and exposes them to the Word. She then gives the person the bracelet in hopes that they will pursue finding out more about Christ.

The underlying theme under every point the author of the September, 1998 article brought up is not that the bracelet is wrong, as he suggests. The theme is that we, as Christians, need to be careful that the attitudes behind why we wear the bracelets are God-glorifying. The purpose behind the bracelet is to remind us throughout the day that we must have on the armour of God and show ourselves to be true followers of Christ. This can be accomplished with or without a bracelet. Some may prefer to wear a cross pendant on a necklace. Once again, the choice is personal and not something that we judge each other by. We must show ourselves to be different from the world in the way we live our lives. People should be able to see our different attitude whether we are wearing a bracelet or not.

I felt that the article of September, 1998 poorly demonstrated the stance of the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches and the stance of Christians in general who wear these bracelets. If the article was meant as a personal opinion, then I have no problem with a brother or sister in Christ holding this view. When it is published in a magazine sounding as if it is the belief of the entire Protestant Reformed Church, then I have some difficulty. We should not be using this time and space to be judging one other. As brothers and sisters in Christ we should be uniting to find better ways to spread the gospel and get each other excited in the faith. Then we will be strongly united and able to withstand whatever attempts to destroy us.

Holly and Sally Ondersma

Response:

The heart of your argument can be found in the following quote from your letter: "I personally need a visual reminder to help me." Let us understand what God's Word says on the matter.

-
1. The child of God puts God's Word about his neck, in front of his eyes, and upon his fingers in a spiritual sense. Read Proverbs 3:3, 21, 22; 4:21; 6:21, 22; 7:3.
 2. God puts His Word in the hearts of His own. Read Psalm 37:30, 31; 27:8; 40:8; 119:9-16; 119:80; 119:111.
 3. Those who have His Word (law) in their hearts, meditate on that Word and constantly bring it to remembrance. Read Psalm 1:2; 77:11, 12; 119:15, 16, 24, 48, 97-105, 161-168; Proverbs 6:22, 23.
 4. Christ gives unto us His Spirit, Who "by His power...defends and preserves us against all enemies." (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 51). Read II Corinthians 1:22; I Peter 1:2; John 14:16, 17; Acts 5:32; Titus 3:5,6.
 5. The Spirit, dwelling in us, is the THE REMINDER. We pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The Catechism's explanation (Q&A 127) of this sixth petition reads in part: "since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory." Read Galatians 5:15, 16; Romans 8:5, 6; Psalm 51:6, 11, 12; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; I John 3:24; I John 4:4; John 14:26 which reads, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Further, we are to "pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit." (Q&A 115).
 6. From this knowledge of God in our hearts and the testimony of the Spirit in us flows the fruit of our confession. Read Psalm 89:1; Psalm 116:10; II Corinthians 4:13; Romans 10:8-10; Psalm 119:27, 46, 172.
 7. We live out the truth because we believe and say in our hearts, "I love thee God, through Christ!" To say that we must first ask "What would Jesus do?" before we act, is to reduce Jesus to nothing more than the Example in whose steps we must walk (read *In His Steps, "What Would Jesus Do?"* by Charles M. Sheldon). Rather, we live out of 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." (Heidelberg, Q&A 90). Read I Peter 4:1, 2 (having the mind of Christ); Galatians 2:19, 20 (having the life of Christ in us); Romans 5:11, Matthew 22: 36-38; The 150 Psalms.
 8. We fight temptation with God's Word which we know and love and which dwells in us. Read Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 ("It is written..."). We err because we do not know Scripture or the power of God (Matthew 22:29).
 Let us humble ourselves before God's Word and apply ourselves to growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18).
 ❖

*John R. Cleveland, Jr.
Hope PRC, Walker*

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 14

What is Wrong With the Three Points

by Rev. C. Hanko

This is not an attempt to prove that the theory of common grace is anti-Scriptural and anti-Confessional, since our present purpose is to show what happened in 1924 from the point of view of an observer. Moreover, this is done extensively and thoroughly in a book that will soon be published and be made available, written by Prof. Herman Hanko.

My intention now is to point out a few serious objections that must be raised against the entire theory expressed in the Three Points.

First of all, the question has been raised: What is the juridical basis for common grace. That is, since the elect people of God receive saving grace only on the basis of the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross, when and where was common grace merited for those who are still under condemnation because of the guilt of their sin? Surely God is just, on what basis does He now show favor upon the objects of His wrath?

The answer has been given, that this grace was merited already early in the suffering and dying of Christ on the cross. Appeal is made to the first cross-word: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is said to refer to all those involved in crucifying the Christ as they represent all humanity. But then, how about the word 'forgive,' does that not mean: "to pardon (an offense of the offender)," "to remit the debt (of a debtor)." They say that in this case the word forgive means: postpone judgment, show favor in this present time, only to pour out Thy wrath in the day of judgment.

Notice, first of all, that there is no proof for this argument anywhere in the Scriptures. There is no proof whatever that our High Priest, who was making atonement for the sins of His people, had any others in mind than those given to Him of the Father, for whom he was laying down His life. Secondly, imagine if you were to interpret the word 'forgive' in the model prayer of our Lord to mean: Father, postpone judgment upon our debts, as we postpone judgment upon our debtors. Prof. Samuel Volbeda was confronted with this question at one time, and is said to have answered: "There is no juridical basis, since it is merely a temporal thing." But God is just. Can we lose sight of God's justice and speak of a favor or love that is contrary to justice? Our Catechism teaches us in Lord's Day 4 that God "is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment *temporally* and eternally (Gal. 3:10).

You will recall that in chapter 2 reference was made to the Afscheiding, the Secession or Separation of 1834 under Rev. De Cock of Ulrum. Mention was also made of the fact that even among the men of the Secession there were some who preached a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. The immigrants that came to America in the middle of the 19th century were mainly from the Secession, and also here in America the general, well-meant offer was preached.

You will also recall that in that same chapter reference was made to Dr. Abraham Kuyper and the Doleantie, or the Separation of 1886, when another group withdrew from the Herformde Kerk, the State Church. Kuyper was the man who developed the theory of com-



Prof. Volbeda: Asserting God as temporarily gracious and temporarily unjust.

mon grace as being the favor of God upon all mankind, whereby sin is restrained in the heart so that the sinner is capable of doing that which is good in the sight of God. This is the theory that was adopted by the Synod of 1924. And you will likewise recall that Kuyper wanted *no* general, well-meant offer of any sort. He maintained that saving grace is particular, common grace is merely God's favor upon the wicked during their present existence.

Yet, amazing as it may seem, these two errors were brought together in the First Point. God's favor upon the wicked is said to be evident from the offer of salvation to all mankind.

There was always a strong disagreement between the children of the Afscheiding and the children of the Doleantie. Although they had formally joined together in 1892 and had formulated the Conclusions of Utrecht in 1905 to bring a sort of unity among them, the two groups within the denomination in the Netherlands were still distinguished as A and B, both having their own congregations, their own ministers and their own seminary.

Even in America there was no difficulty in starting an argument about the five points that kept these two

groups apart. Yet the Synod of 1924 took the common grace of Kuyper and joined to that the general, well-meant offer of the Afscheiding. The two had become friends. Whether this was done intentionally, to get all the members of the churches in agreement with the Three Points, or whether this was occasioned by the fact that both of these theories were being denied by the two ministers is hard to know. But the two were brought together in the First Point of Common Grace, and both are maintained in the Christian Reformed Churches.

Yet this is, after all, not so strange. Dr. Abraham Kuyper may have wished to distinguish between the two, yet when one speaks of grace for the unregenerate, of the love of God for the ungodly, one is compelled to conclude that God also desires to save those upon whom He bestows His favor. How can God show favor or love without desiring to save?

It is often said by members of the Christian Reformed Church that the word common grace is never used among them nor mentioned from the pulpit. That, no doubt, is true. It is even true in our churches that, while in our early history hardly a sermon was preached without some reference to common grace or the offer of salvation, now these terms are rarely mentioned from our pulpits. But



Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives

The Afscheiding united with Kuyper's Doleantie in ... 1924?

principles carry through. Also wrong principles carry through. For a world and life view is involved.

But two examples need be mentioned. The theory of long periods of creation is commonly accepted in the Christian Reformed Church. And that in spite of the clear record of creation in Genesis 1 which speaks of six days of twenty four hours. The views of the scientists are accepted even though they run directly contrary to the Word of God. In fact, the inerrancy of the Bible is commonly denied. If it seems that a certain basic principle is not involved, one is allowed to think and act according to his conviction, right or wrong, as, for example, in the case of women in office in the church.

In the second place, the general, well-meant offer of salvation has led to the official stand that the church has taken that God loves all men and eagerly desires to save all. The fact that all humanity is not saved is because so many willfully reject the salvation that is so freely offered to them. Man proves to be strong enough to resist the will and desire of the Almighty. Predestination is no longer mentioned, reprobation virtually denied, election silenced.

Prof. Heyns, who taught in Calvin for years, said that predestination belongs to the hidden things of God, the revealed things are for us and our children. He taught and his followers still teach that at baptism God promises to every child eternal life on the condition that he will embrace and not reject this promise. To that he added that God bestows a baptismal grace upon each child, so that he is enabled to embrace or reject the promise. Making confession of faith has been referred to as becoming a volunteer for Jesus. This entire teaching is not only Arminianism, but also Pelagianism.

The good that sinners do, God's love for all mankind, and God's desire to save all mankind are in flagrant conflict with the Confessions, especially with the five points of Calvinism maintained in the Canons of Dordt, yet these Confessions are ignored, hardly ever referred to, buried under the dust of time.

The doctrine of the antithesis has been replaced by the error of the synthesis. The emphasis in the preaching, as well as in the writings, as well as in the minds of the people, is on man, a better world, a better tomorrow. The Sunday worship services are often directed toward audience appeal. Hymns and various forms of entertainment are introduced. Some churches hold but one service on Sunday. Lost from sight is the fact that worship services must be directed to the worship and praise of God, must be God-centered, not man-centered. Our chief



Prof. Heyns: Evincing the pride of natural man.

purpose in assembling together must be to glorify God with our singing, our prayers, our gifts, and the hearing of the Word. And the Word must receive the emphasis, for the Word, not the antics or oratory of the minister, is the power of God unto salvation. We come together in the communion of saints on the Sabbath day to glorify God and in doing so to receive His blessing.

The very evil that the Synod of 1924 warned against becomes increasingly evident in the church. First the worldly unions were given the name of "neutral organizations," then the movies and the dance were condoned, then divorce and remarriage was approved, thereupon the offices in the church were made open for women.

When we take a wrong turn on the highway of life, we wander farther and farther from the right road. When a church departs from the truth it becomes apostate, and unless it repents and returns, it becomes the false church.



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

Reformed Churches in East Slavonia

by J.P. de Klerk

There is an area of about 2500 square kilometers alongside the river the Donau, and Kroatia (formerly a part of Yougo-Slavia) and Serbia (which is still part of Communist Yougo-Slavia), locally known under the name "Small Cra-ji-na." After fifty years of oppression by the Communists in Belgrade (Marshall Tito), it had a war for five years (1991-1996) with the Serviers (mainly Communists) whose army occupied their land. Now they are separated by a frontier, guarded by heavily armed soldiers (tanks) of the United Nations. The people have been terrorized, their houses destroyed or plundered. Now amid all that turmoil, there are still 1500 Reformed Kroats

of Hungarian heritage.



They have as a symbol some slices of bread with two fishes, reminding them how Jesus Christ fed those who came to listen to Him. You see it here....

There is a village with the name Kopa evo, where live 280 people left of the 1000 who were there before their war. The minister was forced to flee for the army.

The next village is completely flattened; that was Bilje. The Reformed Church has a tower without a spire. You see that storks have built a nest there....

Next is a town with the name Lug, with the Reformed Church of Rev. Csáti Sz. Lajos. In January, 1993, the Communists started a fire in the big organ it has, but young people of the congregation extinguished it with tubs and basins with water. This Church is founded in 1540. Four men were executed by the Communist army



from Serbia. But the Lord protected His people from starvation, from lack of medicines, destroying several churches in the whole area of East Slavonia.

Three Reformed ministers are left, and they are working hard to get everything restored and in use. They are Hájek János, Csáti Sz. Lajos and Csáti Sz. Aranka. A son of Hájek János helps with funerals and the catechism class (Heidelberg Catechism). There is a shortage of ministers. Now many refugees are coming back from Hungary. The Reformed ministers from Hungary who lend a helping hand are not allowed by the government to stay in the country. Relief parcels have come in

from The Netherlands (even aspirin is not always available). Rev. Hájek teaches Bible class once a week a half hour in four public schools. He is often asked to assist a funeral of a Roman Catholic, because they don't have enough priests, and he is free to preach the Reformed faith. The same goes for very ill people, when he is asked to come at their bedside. The Roman Catholic majority is tolerant. The Reformed Church is, under the law of the land, a sect. Everybody is poor and keeps going with a garden, some chickens and a pig.



The Reformed Churches of East Slavonia started centuries ago with missionaries from The Netherlands, in the days of Prince William I, via Hungary. Once the Dutch Navy saved the lives of imprisoned Reformed preachers, who were brought to Italy by the Roman Catholics (a job of Michiel de Ruyter). Now members of the Liberated Reformed Churches have paid visits to this area, and try to help the congregations. Every Lord's Day the bells of the Reformed Churches are ringing again. You see the interior of the Church in Kopa evo.

There is also a picture of Rev. Csáti Sz. Lajos and his wife standing before the entrance of the Reformed Church in Lug. You see also Rev. Károly Andel and his



wife, Ilona, at home, in another town, namely Osijek. He is an assistant minister with a Lutheran background. During the five years of war, he lived right at the front-line and was daily occupied with funerals of all the victims of the bombardments. The melodies of the Psalms they sing are still the ones they got from The Netherlands (Reformed Churches) centuries ago.



Although Osijek lies in Croatia, Rev. Andel pays visits to sick people in the hospital of Novi Sad in Serbia. Since the "Peace Treaty of Dayton" (November, 1995) the Communists don't ask him anything. Almost half the people who live here have yet pieces of exploding grenades in their bodies, he says. There are inhabitants of Bosnia amongst them, who don't have a house, but help other refugees to restore or rebuild theirs.

A problem is that often houses left behind during the war (with everything in them) have been taken over

by refugees coming from the other sides of the front-line, so that the owners coming back to East Slavonia come to stand at closed doors; they are not welcome. You can talk about legal rights, but nobody has the means to enforce them. There are places where a whole family lives in one kitchen.

The Hungarian Rev. Janos Kettos is the head of a Reformed Church of people who still have the nationality of Yougo-Slavia, but are ethnic Hungarians, in East Slavonia. His biggest problem is to teach the children, because during the war several families fell apart, fled in different directions, looked for shelter (security) and food in cellars of ruined buildings, and had lost everything.

In neighboring towns in Servia, the Communist president Milosovic has closed the Reformed Churches

(Korog, Haraszti and Laslovo, where the Church building is severely damaged). Half of the inhabitants came over the frontier and fled last year to East Slavonia.

Seven young men went to Hungary and Rumania to study (Reformed) theology. Some small Reformed Churches exist at isolated places, with old tired ministers. There are no elders left, because they died during the war. These people feel often lonely and forgotten. There is even one in the capital of Croatia, Zagreb, "Reformed in the diaspora," which is in fact known only because it has a famous girls' choir of evangelistic value. "Honour be to God in the highest." God has given them the courage to do all they can at the place where they are. ❖

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

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Kent Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Ferguson—
Edmonton, Alberta
Eungaag David, son of Pastor Sung Ho Lee & Sung
Hyun Kim—First, MI
Mason William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Feenstra—
Georgetown, MI
Abigail Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykema—
Grandville, MI
Nelson Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Vink—Grandville, MI
Samuel Scott, son of Rev. & Mrs. Laning—Hope, MI
Blake Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul De Roon—Hull, IA
Abby Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Van Ginkel—Hull,
IA
Ruth Adriana, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ray Schwarz—
Loveland, CO
Alec Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hanko—Randolph, WI

Callie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil DeVries—
Randolph, WI

Lexi Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Ophoff—
Southwest, 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:

Karen VanTil—Byron Center, MI
Matt Dykstra—First, MI
Dewey Engelsma—First, MI
Dan Vink—First, MI
Lisa Baas—Grandville, MI
Nathan Schipper—Grandville, MI
Esther Spriensma—Grandville, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The following story was sent in by 11-year-old Gina Verburg of Lansing, Illinois. Thank you, Gina!

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Jackets and Judges

Tom McCon was playing with his motorcycles. "Vroom! Smash!" cried five-year-old Tom. "Boo-eee!" He ran his toy ambulance to the crash and brought the injured toy man to the small box that served as a hospital. "He's dead! He will go to hell!"

Thirteen-year-old Sarah looked up, startled. "Tom! You never say that! You can't be the judge of that. God is!"

Tom looked very confused. "But he wore a leather jacket! He was bad. All people who wear leather jackets are bad and naughty!" he cried in protest.

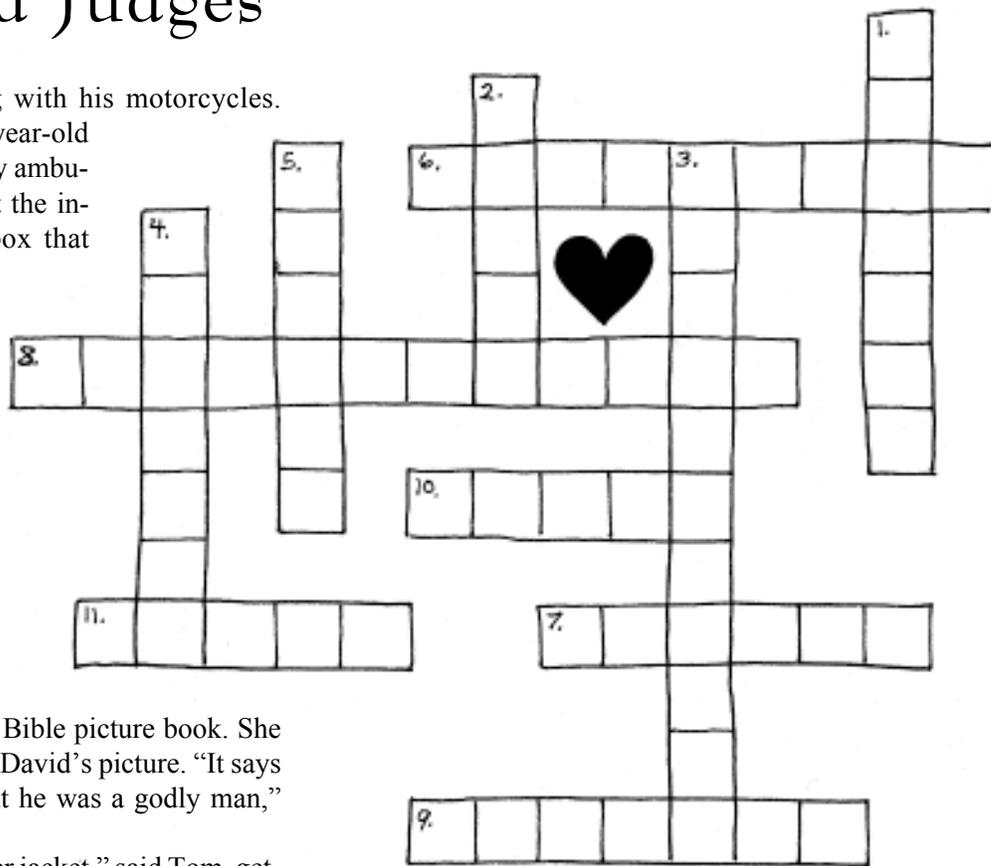
Sarah sighed and packed up her homework. She got her Bible picture book. She flipped the pages and turned to David's picture. "It says here that David was ruddy, but he was a godly man," said Sarah.

"But he didn't wear a leather jacket," said Tom, getting up.

"No, Tom McCon! The point is you cannot judge people by their looks, but by who they are inside—and only God sees that," Sarah gently said.

Tom turned and looked like he understood. "Oh! God decides. Not little boys!" he cried. "Thanks, Sarah. But tell me more about David. Start at the beginning!"

So that's what she did. ❖



Crossword Puzzle:

Look up I Samuel 16:7. What kind of appearance does man look on? **1 Down**. What does the Lord look on? **2 Down**. When looking on Eliab, what were two things that Samuel was not supposed to look on? **3 Down** and **4 Down**.

Read I Samuel 16:12. What does God tell Samuel about David? "Arise, **5 Down** him: for this is he."

David said to Solomon: "...for the Lord **6 Across** all **7 Across**, and understandeth all the **8 Across** of the thoughts..." I Chronicles 28:9.

"...but God **9 Across** your hearts..." Luke 16:15.

"And the heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is **10 Across** himself. **11 Across**" Psalm 50:6.

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

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