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God's Word: The Only Sure Foundation



by John Huizenga

How often don't we rely on something other than the Word of God when we are challenged to give a reason why we do one thing and refuse to do another thing? Classmates may ask, "Are you going to the movies with us tonight? Who are you taking to the dance? Would you like a smoke? Why do you go to church twice on Sunday?" So often we try to hide the truth and reply with such phrases: "No, I don't feel like it. I don't like to dance. I would be grounded if my parents ever found out. I have to go to church twice." If we are pushed for the truth with a comment like, "Do you think it is wrong or something?" or "Why don't you ever want to have fun?" or "You're just a chicken," then we grow tense and defensive like Peter when he denied Christ (Mark 14:66-72). If those who are questioning our actions press on, our inconsistencies quickly come out. We begin to feel like we are on quick sand and we become sorely tempted to compromise and go with our classmates rather than tell the truth.

On the other hand, if we tell the truth, then we will find ourselves upon a firm foundation: God's Word. Our questioners quickly see that we are following consistent principles and are unable to push us into the quick sand. Why don't we just tell the truth then? Wouldn't we rather have a firm footing rather than sink?

The answer reveals our own pride. We don't want others to think we are not like them. We would rather blame the rules or our parents. Perhaps it is simply something that our parents forbid and we are embarrassed to admit that we honor our parents, as God demands. We would rather have others think we have harsh, unreasonable parents than to admit, "I am the one who believes such an action is wrong." When we take a stand, we are open targets for ridicule. In pride we would rather sink away in the quicksand of lies and inconsistent thinking than to stand on a firm foundation exposed to the ridicule of our peers.

Sometimes we are not sure exactly why we believe something is wrong. We may feel unprepared to defend what we believe. There may be no one text in the Bible that says such an action is wrong but we know it is wrong from the implications of a number of verses or the whole general thrust of God's Word. Even when we avoid telling the truth because we are uncertain about how to explain our reasons, we are still thinking about our own self-image. We don't want to be seen struggling to defend ourselves. We surely don't want to be ridiculed for being unable to explain why we refuse to do what "everyone else" enjoys so much.

Even when we are unprepared to explain fully why we do what we do, we are called as children of God always to turn to God's Word for the answer to ethical questions. This does not necessarily mean we need a quote handy for every answer we give, but we must at least be heading in the direction of God's Word with our answer rather than turning to some soft inconsistent excuse.

God teaches us that we must always turn to His Word in at least three ways when we are faced with ethical questions: 1) with the doctrine of the antithesis, 2) with the example of Christ, and 3) in the way of our own experience as Christians.

First we will take a look at the doctrine of the antithesis. The doctrine of the antithesis is about separation. We are a separate people, called out of the world of darkness, free of the bondage of sin. We are brought into covenant fellowship and friendship with God. We are called to forsake pride and give God all glory and honor (I Peter 2:9). The antithesis also separates answers to the question, “why do you do what you do?” The answers given by those left in darkness ultimately give glory to man, and the answers of a believer give glory to God. All that we do in faith is done out of love for God as we seek to obey Him. The only way to know what God will have us do is to turn to the revelation of His will in His Word. Our only real reason, then, for doing that which is right is found in God’s Word alone.

Next we look at Christ. Christ, our elder brother in the covenant friendship with God lived this truth when he answered the Devil with quotations from the Word of God (Matthew 4). When the Devil suggested that he make the stones into bread, Jesus did not say, “No, I don’t feel like eating right now.” How foolish that would be, even on the surface. Of course he was hungry.

We are foolish too when we give such excuses for not walking in sin with “friends.” By nature we are very hungry for a sinful life. Of ourselves, we would never say, “I don’t feel like satisfying my desires.” Even the ungodly know that something deeper governs our life when we turn away from worldly entertainment and the ways of self-satisfaction. We must testify of that work of God within us when we give our answers. We must give God the glory. Christ went straight to the word of God, the source of His life. He gave God all the glory and he defeated the attacks of Satan.

The only way to stand firm when tempted or challenged in your walk as a Christian is to stand upon God’s Word. The reality of this truth was made very clear to me recently in a college course called “Contemporary Moral Issues.” As I progressed through the course answering questions for the various readings, participating in the discussions, and wading through the whole spectrum of proposed solutions, it always came down to one of two possible solutions: man’s reasoning or God’s Word.

The whole course was becoming rather wearisome by the time we came to the issue of homosexuality. The focus of the class happened to be the question “should we discriminate against homosexuals?” The question was not “is homosexuality wrong,” but rather “should a person be treated any differently from the average citizen because that person is a homosexual.” Should such a person be denied any or all of the rights everyone else has.

The essay we had to read by a contemporary moral philosopher argued that homosexuals should be treated differently: they should not be allowed to marry a partner of the same sex. “Good,” I thought, “here is someone headed in the right direction.” His argument had to do with distinguishing a public and private domain among other things, but it was embarrassingly weak. All the other arguments trying to say that we should discriminate in certain cases against homosexuals also failed. It became apparent that if one follows the reasoning of man and the ideals of our country (that freedom involves life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), then there really is no consistent reason to discriminate against homosexuals.

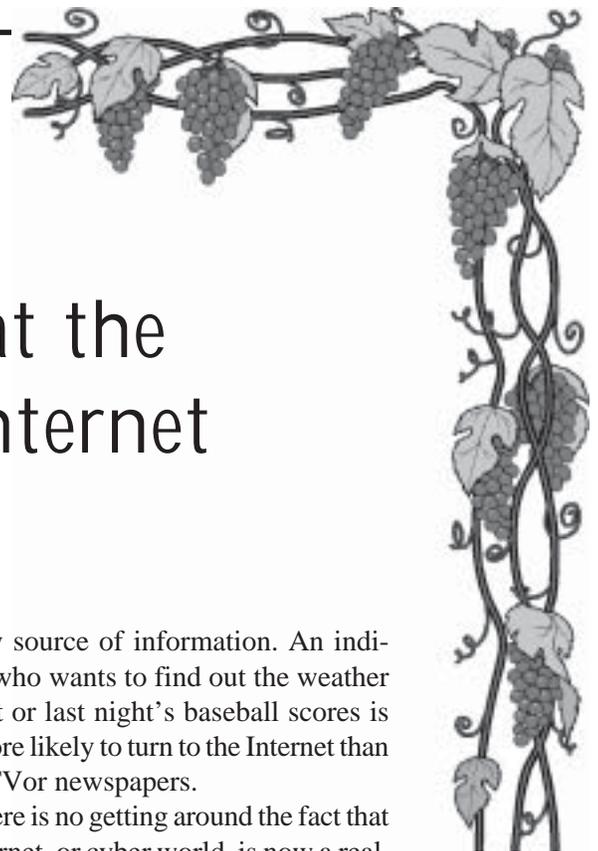
Not everyone in the class was ready to accept the conclusion: we should in no way discriminate against homosexuals. Students began to raise various objections. Most did not seem to see the weakness of every manmade objection to homosexual marriage. Some tried to argue that it is wrong because no children could result from such a marriage. Some argued that it was just plain disgusting and ridiculous. Others brought up an old classic objection “homosexuality is unnatural” but the class had already found that argument to be flawed. Some argued that it has always been considered wrong so it must be wrong. Most of those who did raise objections did so confessing that they were Christians, but to my surprise, not one said “homosexual marriages are wrong because God condemns homosexuality in the Bible and ordained marriage to be between a man and a woman.”

My statement on the authority of the Bible in every area of my life including the issue of homosexuality brought a rather fiery assault from a number of students. The essence of the objections had to do

with their claim that homosexuality is something genetic and defines the individual. One enraged student declared “God creates all people, so why would he create someone to be essentially sinful?” Without the truths of total depravity and salvation by grace alone in Christ, I would not have had much for an answer. The end of class was at hand. I made a brief reply and one student did make a final comment in which he agreed with me. After class a couple other students also came to me and said that they were on my side. At the next class period, nobody had anything more to say. God’s word alone is a firm foundation and it has the power to silence the wicked.

Given our sinful nature, we are inclined to spare our own pride and turn to foolish reasoning when we are questioned about our beliefs. We must work against this inclination daily as children, young adults, and adults in the church. Turning to God’s Word needs to become a pattern in our lives. We need to start early in life and keep working at it. The Devil continues to assault the Church with questions and we need strong men and women of God in the church to defend the truth on the basis of God’s Word. Any other way is doomed to failure. ❖

Fruitful Branches



A Reformed look at the World Wide Web/Internet

by Kristin E. Brands

1999 Scholarship Essay.

The advent of the World Wide Web, or the Internet, is undoubtedly the most extensive global change that our world has experienced in the last decade. Like the television in the 50’s, the Internet of the 90’s has swept across the country, entering homes at a rapid pace. Homes without access to the Internet have become more and more difficult to find. President Clinton’s goal that “every home be connected to the Internet” by the 21st century appears to be being met. Any major business, organization, church, or other group is also sure to have its own website. Students of all ages are quickly replacing books with the web as their

primary source of information. An individual who wants to find out the weather forecast or last night’s baseball scores is now more likely to turn to the Internet than to the TV or newspapers.

There is no getting around the fact that the Internet, or cyber world, is now a real, integral part of our society. The question for us as Christians now is, “How do we evaluate and respond to this new, inescapable phenomenon?” Some, recognizing its usefulness, its wealth of information, and its unprecedented aid to communication, have heralded it as “the best thing since sliced bread.” Others, recog-

nizing the great dangers and obvious pitfalls which it brings, have been quick to proclaim it “of the devil,” declaring that it should have no place in Christian homes.

As Reformed (and always reforming) Christians it is our calling to be fully informed and aware of both the strengths and weaknesses, blessings and dangers of the Internet, so that we might be able to use it wisely and carefully, to the glory of God.

The dangers of the Internet are real and many, and need to be taken very seriously. We all know that our world is full of all sorts of gross sins and sinful lifestyles. Every abomination imaginable is taking place somewhere “out there.” For those of us who live in small, “Reformed” communities it has been possible to live a semi-sheltered life, without encountering many of these gross sins. The birth of the cyber world, however, is making this much more difficult. The Internet contains

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absolutely every type of worldliness, making access to it as easy as the push of the button—for adults and children alike. The Internet is the world at our fingertips.

This constant access to anything in the world has fast become an addiction for thousands of individuals. The cyber world activates and reinforces “real-world” addictions such as gambling or pornography. Countless men/boys have turned to the web as an easy and unobtrusive way to gratify their sexual lusts. At the mere click of their fingers they have all the unclothed women they could want. Numberless women, on the other hand, flock to the chat-lines and on-line forms of communication (addictions unique to the Internet), where they can flirt, fantasize, and pour out their hearts to unseen “soul-mates.” Online relationships evolve rapidly and passionately as women search for the communication and intimacy that may be missing in their own lives.

Needless to say, these addictions of both males and females have already broken up many marriages and hurt countless more. One devastated woman wrote how her husband divorced her after finding an online “soul mate” on a Christian bulletin board service. He was convinced that it was “God’s will” and was married a week later to this new woman he’d never met. His former wife wrote, “I never thought this kind of thing could happen, but it does, even in Christian families.

Another news clip renders a woman found dead and buried near the trailer of a man she’d met online, and had gone down to meet (without her husband’s knowledge). Still another report tells of a young 12-year-old boy, who shot and killed his mother and then himself, after she took him to a counselor to talk about his Internet addiction problem.

The number of alarming reports such as these is growing quickly. It is easy for us to think that this is all stuff that is happening “out there,” but we need to be warned and to realize that the dangers are also very real for us. Our sinful natures, too, could easily become addicted to the sinful allurements of the Net.

Apart from the fear of Internet addiction or gross misuse, for the Christian parent or teacher there also is the question of whether or not it is possible to safely use the net at all (for educational purposes and such). Many parents and teachers, seeking to assist in their child/student’s education have found it very difficult to use the web without running into obscenities along the way. *USA Today* told the story of a mother who recently ran a web search with her daughter. She entered the words, “I love horses,” and an article on bestiality was included in the results.

Researchers at *Focus on the Family* found similar results. The researchers ran Internet searches using the most innocent words they could think of, such as “kids’ toys.” But every Internet search engine they tried failed to limit its selections to kids or toys. Innocuous sites such as “Kids’ World 2000,” “Cabbage Patch Kids” and “Dr. Toy’s Best Children’s Products” were always accompanied by a site(s) such as “Erotic Escapades” or “Sex Hunters.” If selected, these lurid sites would reveal explicit pornographic images without so much as a warning.

Many companies are selling “blocking software” to protect kids/teens from encountering these objectionable sites. However, while these devices may provide a measure of assistance, we cannot expect them to provide anywhere near full protection. *Consumer Reports* recently analyzed the five biggest Web “babysitters” on the market. The results of their study were very discouraging. After selecting 22 easily accessible, objectionable sites they tried to access those sites while using the blocking software. Six of them were still accessed while using *Cyber Patrol*. *Cybersitter* let eight slip through. *Surf Watch* came up first, with only four sites appearing, but *Internet Explorer* failed to block out 19 of the 22, and *Net Nanny* didn’t block any at all. A catch-all

device is currently no where to be found. All forms of sinfulness are not only accessible on the web for us and our children, but can sometimes be almost difficult to keep from encountering.

The world of filth contained on the web is enormous and all-encompassing. Pornography, violence, Satanism, bestiality, every form of religion or cult, gambling, and many other types of sinfulness are all found on the web. The danger of addiction to the Internet, its chatlines, its forums, or any of its other devices is open to each one of us, by nature.

While the evils of the Internet are great and many, we also need to look at the positive aspects of the web. There are also many good, plausible virtues of the cyber world which can be used for many beneficial purposes. While we do not “look for the small bits of good among the bad” (such as looking for the good in pornography) as many advocates of common grace do, we can and should distinguish the good from the bad in every area of life. As with the television or radio (which also contain an abundant share of filthiness), the Internet contains both junk and “good stuff.”

The positive aspects of the Internet are many. As I sit typing this article, Widor’s *Toccata in F*, taken from the Internet, plays in the background. The complete works of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Handel (including the complete *Messiah*), among most other composers are also available on the Internet. Sites such as the “Cyber Hymnal” have almost every hymn available for our listening enjoyment, along with valuable information about the composer and why/when the hymn was written.

Our Protestant Reformed web site has been used to inform many individuals about our churches and the Reformed truths of the scripture. Its current records show that it has been cited 18,878 times during its few years of existence so far. Articles/pamphlets which it contains can also be used for our own edification, as well as for witnessing purposes. Other denominations also have their own similar sites which we can use for our enrichment and education, as well as to aid our ability to have a knowledgeable and beneficial discussion with someone from another denomination.

An article in the *Reader’s Digest* told the story of a young boy whose life was saved after his mother found the correct diagnosis for his illness (which local doctors were unable to identify) through an Internet “cry for help.”

These are only a few, specific examples of positive uses of the Internet, but there are countless more. Its

current, world-wide information stores are immensely useful in doing any type of research. Teachers and students everywhere are finding its resources invaluable as a research/information aid. For example, a fourth grade classroom I recently visited was studying the country of Switzerland. Through the use of the Internet it was possible for each of the students to connect to a Swiss email pen-pal their age. They also were able to keep tabs on any current events/weather there, as well as to order food samples from shops in Switzerland—all online. This classroom study provides merely one example of the valuable role the Internet can play in education and research.

The Internet also provides a wealth of practical, everyday uses. The maps from a recent trip I took were all taken directly off the Internet. If we had chosen to fly instead of driving, an easy way to find out all the cheapest airfares there would have been to check on the Internet. The weather forecast, current news, ads, and yellow pages are all found on the Internet for quick and easy, practical usage.

The electronic “chat-rooms” (whose negative uses were mentioned earlier) also have many positive applications. Family get-togethers, forums for sick children to share experiences, long-distance prayer groups, and cyberspace home-school classrooms can all be included in the list of positive applications in this area.

The high-speed level of communication possible through these chat rooms as well as electronic mail have done wonders in increasing the amounts of communication between family and friends from around the world. They are also a very beneficial and useful tool in the area of mission work.

As you can see, the positive, beneficial uses of the Internet are many. We must, however, be aware of all the sinful filth and common misuses of the Internet in order to use it properly. For the Christian who is aware of the dangers and is determined to use the web properly, it is possible to steer clear of the trash found there. It should not be necessary to overlook or cast aside this great gift from God because of the evil that is found alongside of it. If, however, there is a Christian who struggles within himself to fight against dangers of the internet, perhaps he needs to listen to Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:9, “If thine eye (in this case, the Internet) offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”

As a general rule we do well to listen to Paul's words in Romans 14:14, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ that there is nothing unclean of itself but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

As with every area of life, our Christian calling concerning the use of the Internet is to be on guard, aware of the dangers, cautious and wise in our use.

As with every area of life, our Christian calling concerning the use of the Internet is to be on guard, aware of the dangers, cautious and wise in our use. As I mentioned earlier, the Internet is the world. It contains everything the world contains—both positively and negatively. Our calling, as with the rest of our walk in this world, is to be discerning. The dangers are real and many but should not hinder us from using this gift of God. When used wisely and properly the Internet can be an immensely beneficial tool used for our edification, the benefits of those around us, and God's glory. *Soli Deo Gloria.* ❖

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Story Time

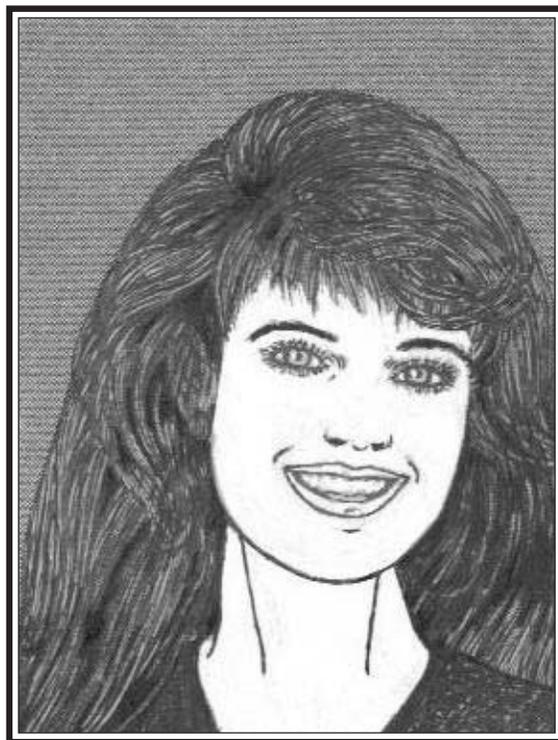
Without Further Ado: My Family

by J.P. de Klerk

It happened often, that Rachel, when she was alone at home, moved up and down in her room, tidying up after some repairs to her clothes. She hummed a Psalm and digested remarks and pieces of conversation she had picked up in the office; there were always people who complained or chattered loudly, regardless of where they were.

Rachel went through life with a smile and was always happy and thankful. She had a cozy room under the leads, half of which would soon become the livingroom of her and her future husband, Gerrit van Rijn, after they would be married. It would be their temporary residence, because they had together signed an agreement to undertake to do the management of a hostel for parents of seriously ill children, who would be in the hospital next door in the city of Vreeburg. Rachel already worked there half days as a receptionist. She had delivered the proof that she was able to handle people who were excited or were out of heart.

Every now and again she stood still, because of truant thoughts. She knew everything was going to change



in her life, but she did not worry about that. The Lord would provide—like He had done in the lives of her parents, who were still teachers in a Christian school. She did not have brothers or sisters. She went through a long list of things she had yet to do. She laughed. The hostel was finished on the outside. The painters were now at work at the ceilings and the doors. The first trees for the garden had been planted. Gerrit and she would get their own flat at the back of the building, next to a playing-garden. They would have to be available day and night for the guests in the hostel. It would be a tall order, working and praying. It would ask much of their staying-power. But they were young and happy. It was not very warm in the room, and she barely noticed it.

Rachel remembered the talks Gerrit and she had with the local Minister of the church, who was a man with a lot of experience. He had explained that they would have to face very difficult cases and emotions. They would probably often become involved in all sorts of tensions, disappointments, despair, worries and problems. Especially, of course, when a young patient did not survive. You could not make use of a collection of sugarcoated messages for real-life dramas, whenever you faced people who did not believe in God and Jesus Christ. But there would be the possibility of referring to the Gospel.

A friend of Gerrit was a surgeon in the hospital and had told them about his talks with parents and young patients. He said to Rachel: “Often you must have the patience of an angel. If there is a dangerous operation to be done, it makes most people nervous and unreasonable.”

She looked at pictures of refrigerators, spread out over her bed. She liked the one with imitation wood on the door best for the small kitchen they would get in the hostel. Of course, the guests would have twice as much room. It was financed out of gifts of Churches, social organizations, factories, etc.

During the wedding dinner, the father of Gerrit invited Rachel also to say something. She did it with some hesitation, but with a clear voice. “As far as I can remember, it has always been my wish, once to become a married woman and the mother of a family. Perhaps it will be helpful to prepare myself by being busy in the hostel, looking after several people. I am not afraid of that, because we know that God will always carry us through.” Gerrit nodded assent. Rachel blushed.

They were only together with a small group: relatives, the minister with his wife, two elders, good friends, and members of the youth-club of the Church. It was very pleasant.

There had been many people in the church to see the wedding, even people they seldom met. Gerrit was yet head of a business in building-materials. She had been teacher of a kindergarten for a while. He would not miss his job, because he was asthmatic and he was not happy with all the dust at his workplace. She had had a lot of fun with the little ones.

The members of the church were a unity and always interested in the lives of each other. There was a real solidarity, like in a good Christian family, caring for each other, while there were ups and downs. There was joy, gentleness, meekness, temperance; the facets of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and His powerful grace.

Gerrit and Rachel had been part of this congregation already for several years. Well, they got a family like Rachel said, without further ado. They became very happy in a time when there were a lot less happy families around, and young people who became confused by the attractions of the world. Sometimes late at night they got a visit from parents with problems, who asked their opinion about conflicts in the family, with their children, or with the church to which they were going. It was often shocking to hear about the worries and nasty experiences some people had, apart from the illnesses of their children. They were able to bring the Glad Tidings, so that a new light could shine in a dark place, as Gerrit once said. The inhabitants of Vreeburg heard about it and a couple of times they were invited to speak for a meeting, where all sorts of situations in the community were discussed.

In six years time the Lord gave them four healthy children. The work in the hostel was not difficult and often parents who stayed there for a couple of days or longer, kept their rooms clean themselves. The talks they had with Gerrit and Rachel were as a rule more important to them than anything else. They needed a listening ear and comforting words. However, there were days that they were overburdened and they got help from someone from the hospital. Also in matters of administration they had needed a helping hand once. The Board decided to give the hostel six more units, and the Van Rijns three more rooms, because their flat was not suitable for a family of six “living souls,” like the official document stated. They noticed that there were more young victims of traffic accidents than ever before, and babies with severe problems. They sometimes spoke with nurses who were exhausted or they saw a doctor who was taking a nap in his car.

In the flat they had some minor accidents, like when the washing machine exploded, and when a thunderstorm

blew a piece off the roof so that the rain made a kind of pond of their floor, and when they all got the flu, and when their meal burnt, and when Rachel broke a leg. Then Gerrit said, "The Lord will provide," and He did.

It became springtime once again and in the birch in front of their living room a nest appeared. They had not expected that. The children stood in rapt admiration, gazing every day through a pair of binoculars, which Gerrit gave them. His eldest son, John, was now seven years old, and was keen to give the rest of the family detailed information about all that he saw. He warned everybody not to disturb the industrious, small, gray-brown birds with silvery eyes. They were not shy, and did not expect any harm from human beings. In three days the nest was ready, and the female took possession. The couple had worked on it without interruption, covering the inside with pieces of wool and cotton they had found in the area. The children laid bread in front of the birch.

A couple of days later they discovered that the birds had three tiny eggs: light blue with black specks. Gerrit and Rachel were just as excited as the children to watch this real life story. He was unable to find out what kind of birds they were. They saw that when the female left the nest to eat and drink a bit, the male took over.

The day came that the eggs burst open and three very small, naked chicks wrestled a bit with each other to get a nice place under mother's wings. It became a busy time for the parents, feeding their hungry offspring, coming and going all day. It seemed the chicks were never satisfied, from morning till evening, they screamed louder every day.

The eldest son of Gerrit and Rachel, John, was now seven years old and he took it upon himself to inform the rest of the family about all the developments he saw through the binoculars. John warned his brothers not to come near the birch, so as not to disturb their little neighbors.

Soon John saw the widely opened beaks coming out above the edge of the nest and he became worried about

a cat he had seen walking past. The children decided to stand near the window like guards, but all remained quiet. The young ones got some feathers and the children were in a rapture of delight.

Rachel used the opportunity to tell them about all babies. They all have something in common, because you have to care for them, and that is a big responsibility for the parents. Parents protect life, because God wants them to do that.

It happened one day that the children were confronted with the dangers for the young. There are drama's also in the world of the birds. What happened?

Rachel was up early that sunny morning and opened the windows to get fresh air in the house. At once she noticed that there were no sounds coming from the direction of the birch. With bare feet she went outside, taking a kitchen stool with her. She climbed on the stool and looked in the nest...or what was left of it. It was destroyed and the young birds were dead. Obviously a big bird had suddenly attacked the family and perhaps had taken the parents. It could have been a sparrow-hawk.

The dead silence in the nest stretched that day over the whole house. One by one the children went to have a look and they spoke in a half-whisper. The delicate birds had not had a ghost of a chance to defend their family against a big, aggressive sparrow-hawk. They were like some poor people in a hostile land.

Rachel told the children, "We are also like these small birds. If God did not protect and guide us, we would soon be lost, beggarly, desperate, and defeated. The enemies of God hate us, but He does not leave us, ever. Let us not forget to thank Him for every new day He gives us." ❖

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Barren Women

Dear *Beacon Lights* Editor:

We have for many years been subscribers to, and keen readers of, your excellent magazine. Especially as, by the grace of God, we have raised four covenant children and learned, along with them, the doctrines of grace, as preached and believed in by our beloved Protestant Reformed Churches.

However, this is my first attempt at writing a “Letter to the Editor,” and I do so humbly, with thanks to God for His bringing us as family under the preaching of faithful ministers of His Word since 1978. (Through Rev. Van Overloop, and then Rev. Heys. Later, Rev. R. G. Miersma both prior to, and when we organised as PRC in NZ. Still now, we hear the preaching through the faithful providence of taped services from Hope PRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, via Mr. Bob van Herk.)

Now I am a “Grandmother in Israel,” and so have much to be thankful for.

I have read with interest the articles concerning barren women. It has disturbed me somewhat in some comments made, that, notwithstanding the fact we acknowledge that our God is sovereign in all things, there appears to lurk a blind-spot when we consider marriage, and particularly the gift of children. So clearly we are taught by Scripture that it is the Lord Himself Who gives or withholds children. The Bible is replete with instances of this, as we read, for example, of Abraham and Sarah waiting in faith, until it was humanly impossible, for the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise of a covenant child. And Isaac, the promised seed, and his wife Rebekah who were childless for 20 years, until, at the special intreating of the Lord by Isaac on behalf of his wife, they received the twin boys.

Later on, after Jacob, the elect seed of Isaac, had been tricked into marrying Leah, (but also sinned in still taking Rachel, the one for whom he had worked) when the Lord had given Leah children, such great jealousy arose in the heart of Rachel that she demanded of Jacob, “Give me children or else I die.” The response from Jacob

was in righteous anger, as he said, “Am I in God’s stead, Who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?”

We could cite many more occasions where the Lord shows plainly that our procreation of children is not our doing. But these should suffice.

...we still seem to think that it
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However, because of the sinful nature we carry with us all through this life, we still seem to think that it is our own doing when we conceive and bear children. This was the case with my husband and myself in the early days of our marriage. However, I am sorry that I did not then give thanks to God as I ought, but felt that in some way we were pretty smart in having children seemingly just when we had wanted. Now I know better.

Worse still, when our plans for children don’t work out as we want, we begin to feel angry. But wait a minute, whom are we angry against? Do we really need to turn to infertility support groups to “talk out frustrations, anger, and all the other emotions that go with this?” We had better beware, for we are then turning to the world for “help”—and the world has none to give the child of God. Also we are fanning our anger against the God Who alone gives and withholds children in His sovereign good pleasure.

Thus, in forgetting the one truth, that He gives and withholds children as He has eternally decreed, we tend to forget too, to realize that it is all “if He wills” we shall do this or that. And this isn’t only with our outward plans in our daily living—it covers everything, including child-birth. This in turn takes honour from Him and is displeasing unto Him.

My reason for writing to you is to encourage all of our young, newlywed couples, and the not-so-recently wed ones too. Have deep in your hearts the knowledge

that we receive our children only by His gracious will and good pleasure. Learn to wait upon Him, and not, as we so often do, to become impatient, as if, having waited a few years we “know” we are never going to start a family.... “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths,” Proverbs 3:4-6. And also, “Trust in the LORD and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday,” Psalm 37:3-6.

How can we follow the above admonitions? Only by grace! By filling our lives as young wives, with the joyful activities of caring for our husbands, (our primary calling: Genesis 2:18), building up our homes, attending on the means of grace faithfully together (which includes society meetings, Bible studies, etc.), rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep. Then, striving hard to serve the Lord in all these ways, we shall forget selfish longings, avoid sinful coveting after not-yet-given children—even when we see friends around us blessed with babies—and we shall be pleasing unto our God.

Do not pander to sinful anger and brooding on what you have not got. Rather, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). And, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” (I Tim. 6:6). And, “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess. 5:18). And then with Paul we can begin to say, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” For in all these ways, we

can avoid falling into self-centered and self-pitying attitudes of mind.

This isn’t easy! The Lord never promised us an easy life when we follow Him, for He warned that we must daily take up our cross and follow Him. If that cross is, for you, a few years of waiting for a child, then do not complain. What He has ordained for each one of His children is always and only the very best no matter how hard that way may seem to us.

We came under the PR preaching back in 1978, through the providential working of the Lord in our lives. But He also took us through the deep way of suffering for the truth’s sake, and eventually brought us to reliance upon taped worship services each Lord’s Day, in which we thankfully receive His richest blessings. I could also sit down and howl my heart out because I wanted to bring our family to the USA in order to have them grow up as you dear saints have been doing, with church, school and daily fellowship with fellow believers of like mind. It seemed to me that it was too hard to bear the loneliness. However, the Lord has shown us that our place is still to be right here. For how long, we do not know. But if we (and you) are in the Lord’s place, we are in the right place. This includes our place/position in our whole life. Right? God’s place (and situation, and circumstances), is always and only the right place to be.

I hope that this letter will be some encouragement to our much-loved fellowsaints, and strengthen those dear sisters who wait for their families to be given them of our heavenly Father, with patience. By grace alone.

Yours in Christ,

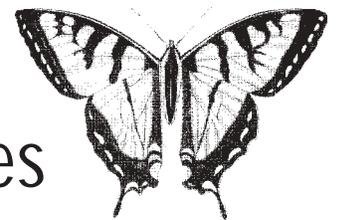
Delysmulation

A member of the Wellington Protestant Reformed Fellowship, but living on the South Island of NZ.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

The King ... of Butterflies

by Deane Wassink



Regaled in orange and black splendor, the lowly monarch butterfly in many ways points to the

glory of the King of kings and Lord of lords, The LORD Jesus Christ.

Take Time

by Angela M. Schipper

*Take the time today to say I love you,
To your spouse, your child, your friend.
Take time today, and not tomorrow
To work on problems and help them mend.*

*For today may be the last time
You'll have the chance to say
"I love you, and you mean so much to me
Upon this very day."*

*God calls to Himself His children
The time we do not know.
That's why each day we have to treasure
And let our kindness show.*

*Tomorrow may be too late
To kiss our child goodnight.
To tell our spouse "I'm sorry"
And to make every thing all right.*

*Never take the day for granted
And that loved ones will be around.
Never assume that they know already
How strong our love for them abounds.*

*Take time today and not tomorrow
To encourage the helpless and the weak.
Take time today and not tomorrow
To show all acts of kindness, and with care our
words we speak.*

*Think not as if each day is the last
Nor, of it as an ending.
Each time you see your loved one smile
Remember it as a beginning.*

*It is a beginning to a memory
A treasure that will always stay.
That helps us through the bad times
When our loved ones go away.*

*God calls home His children
Today or tomorrow we do not know
So treasure each day and each moment
And through us let God's love always show.*

*Angela is a member of Hudsonville Protestant
Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

Why would a butterfly be counted as part of the wonderful ecosystem of Michigan's lakeshore, you ask? You may be surprised at the answer. Not only do they inhabit the clusters of milkweed plants that live on the lakeshore, but they also use it in many more ways. One October day when hiking the lakeshore with fathers and sons from church, including my own sons, we found hundreds of monarchs on the beach. Alive, but battered by wind and sand, they perched on the shoulders and hats of the boys like so many sparkling jewels fanning their wings slowly and stiffly because of the cold. The boys then cupped them in their hands and warmed them with their breath so that they could continue their halting journey with a gentle toss into the air. Why were they there? They were the injured and weary remnants of one of the most fascinating migrations I have ever heard of.

After several life cycles of egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly, the last generation has its reproductive

development arrested by the shortened hours of daylight in the fall so that it can travel to the south to over-winter. They travel far south to the mountains of Mexico. All the surviving monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains travel thousands of miles to gather in only two mountain valleys up high in the Sierra Madre Mountains near Mexico City. Others begin their journey in southern Canada. They move at a steady speed of twenty to thirty miles per hour in all kinds of weather, and travel along the shore of Lake Michigan where we found them. They continue on from Michigan to hibernate in Mexico until the longer daylight hours cause their reproductive organs to finish development so that they can lay eggs when they again return from their journey.

In the valleys, there are so many perched on the trees and forest floor that they cover nearly every square inch of surface. Sometimes they hang from each other in great golden drapes. A Mexican friend who lived there told

me it was an incredible sight to see the acres and acres of slowly moving wings flashing golden in the sun. The area is now designated as a national park for their protection. You can find pictures of this sight in the National Geographic magazines of 1975, when they discovered this secret after nearly forty years of searching.

The butterfly with its lifecycle is a beautiful picture of the death and resurrection of God's people. We are awed and humbled by this spectacular manifestation of the power of the Creator in this migration. Imagine, a lowly insect able to travel such great distances with such accuracy having only God's navigational system alone built into its genes. It did not learn its path from parents or follow others. New generations travel this way every year. No evolutionist can explain such a wonder. God alone is the source of this great migration. Even worldly scientists are amazed at this inexplicable phenomenon.

If our Creator can so guide the butterfly how much more can He and does He guide the lowly human worms that are called to serve Him. Surely we can put our trust

into His Fatherly care. If He can bring the frail monarch through all the dangers of this incredible journey, how much more can He bring us safely home to our eternal resting place. We are humbled at so great a God.

*Like the monarch in regal array
Wings its journey from day to day,
So His people through dangers all
Wing their way to heavens portal.
Strengthened along each weary step
Burdened with cares that oft could wreck
They find in Him a solace deep
For like the monarch their souls He keeps
Till like the butterfly in robes of gold
In robes of white we enter His fold.*

We serve an awesome God! ❖

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

Edgerton Summer Retreat 2000 Lake Shetek, Minnesota August 14-17

Register now to join the congregation of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church, August 14-17, 2000, for a few days of fun and fellowship on the shores of Lake Shetek. We'll be staying at the beautiful Lakota Retreat Center. Three days of activities and relaxation are planned, while we explore together the area of Christian stewardship. Registration forms are available from your Pastor. Cost for attending is \$50 now, and an additional \$35 when you arrive at registration on Monday, August 14. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Sharon Kleyn at (507) 442-4441 or email Jill Gunnink at jill@sdcul.com.

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The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

June 1 Read Psalm 139:1-12

Psalm 139:1-3 A well-known truth is “God is everywhere!” What is our reaction to such a profound statement? Do we, like David, comprehend the whole of its meaning? Do we want to know its meaning? There are three ways in which we can respond to this statement. We can shrug our shoulders and say, “So what?” and go on our merry way doing what we want to do. We can become afraid and act as if God is this terrible potentate waiting to snuff out our lives without warning. Or we can take comfort in the fact that God is everywhere. Yes, we live in holy awe before Him, but we have the blessed comfort that He is with us in all things. God is God and there is none else. Let us find comfort in that statement and live a life pleasing to His ever-seeing eye. Sing Psalters 382:1 and 384:1.

June 2 Read II Samuel 2:1-12

Psalm 139:4-6 Even every word is known of God before we speak it! People of God, do you understand what that means? Even our thoughts are under His knowledge. We may not be careless with our thoughts or words, much less our deeds, for they are in God’s hand. When David truly understood the meaning of this idea, he was speechless. This knowledge was more than he could comprehend in his finite mind. He knew that God was greater than he was and that he could never be like God. What about us? How do we consider God? Do we try to be as gods? That is what Satan tempted Eve with. Do we try to take away from the glory of God by our daily life? Or do we confess our utter lowliness before His face and say “O God, how great Thou art!” Let us remember that we are creatures and He is the Creator. Let us do this now in prayer and in our daily life. Sing Psalters 382:2 and 384:2.

June 3 Read Jonah 1:1-10

Psalm 139:7-8 Running from God. Have you ever tried it? In our reading for today we have one of the most famous accounts of one running from God. Jonah had to learn the hard way that this was not a wise thing to do. Through the storm, the sailor’s questions, and the fish, he was taught that to run from God was fruitless. God sometimes must teach us that lesson. We like to run or hide from God. Sometimes our actions are such that we wish them to be hid from the all-seeing One. God, however, will teach us that we cannot run or hide from Him. Then as Jonah did we must relish the thought of entering

into God’s presence. Are we looking forward to the Sabbath? Sing Psalter 382:3.

June 4 Read Jonah 1:11-17

Psalm 139:9-10 Yesterday’s meditation talked about running and hiding from God. We saw that this is a fruitless activity. In verse 10 we see that God does not let us despair when we fall from the sense of His mercy. His loving hand is with us. He will not let us fall even when the way is rough and full of pitfalls. Like Jonah we will feel the loving hand of the Father. Like Jonah we must give thanks to God for His goodness. What better way is there to give thanks than to attend worship. This we can do today. This we must do. Let us go up to God’s house and say with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Sing Psalters 382:4 and 384:3.

June 5 Read Psalm 139:1-12

Psalm 139:11-12 As creatures we see the light and darkness as opposites. And they are. Our Creator has given them to us as pictures of the antithesis that He has placed between good and evil. But when we use the darkness to cover up our clandestine activities, it is not a cover from God. He can see us no matter what the time of day or night. This is not because He has exceptional eyesight. Or because He has abilities to sense what is happening no matter what the time of day. God knows all because He is God. He knows each of our activities because He has ordained them in His sovereign will. This is both a warning and a comfort for us. It is a warning not to depend on night to hide our sin. It is a comfort that He sees and cares for us all the time. Sing Psalters 382:5 and 384:4.

June 6 Read Psalm 139:13-24

Psalm 139:13-14 “Fearfully and wonderfully made!” Every time that I consider the meaning of these words, I am filled with awe. To see the birth of a child, to look at each of its parts, and to know that God has directed each cell to be where it is is an awesome thing. To understand how a young child learns how to talk is past my feeble understanding. Birth and growth are truly a miracle wrought by God. Our response to such wonder must be praise to the Creator. We can know by the knowledge of faith that God has made us by His power. For that knowledge we must give thanks daily. Do we acknowledge that we are fearfully and wonderfully made? If so, let us praise God; if not, let us ask Him to open our eyes in this matter. Sing Psalter 383:1.

June 7 Read Acts Jeremiah 1:1-8

Psalm 139:15-16 Yesterday we spent some time looking at the physical aspects of growth and development and how they are all ordained in God's council. In today's verses we see that not only our bodies are ordained by God, but also the activities carried out by these bodies. Jeremiah learned that as he was called by God to be a prophet in Judah before the captivity. God has for us a plan for our lives. It is our duty to learn that way as He reveals it to us day by day. Each day we must pray for eyes to see that which God has ordained for us. Then we must also pray for the grace to accept the way we must go daily, and in our whole life. Let these ideas be constantly before us as we live our lives. Young people, as you seek the path that God has for you, remember to seek the path that He has ordained before you were even born. Sing Psalter 383:2.

June 8 Read Romans 11:26-36

Psalm 139:17-18 After being amazed about our beginnings, we now are amazed at God's greatness. The Psalmist expresses his wonder at how God cares for him. We, too, must do this daily. Even when we sleep, God's providential care is over us. His ways are past finding out. In math we sometimes use the terms infinite and infinity to describe some numbers. These are actually only very weak pictures of God who is truly infinite. Not only are His thoughts numberless they are precious. There is nothing on this earth that can compare with them. Let us consider our God and see how great He is in all His ways. Sing Psalter 383:3.

June 9 Read Job 21:7-18

Psalm 139:19-22 These verses are sometimes misquoted, misinterpreted, or misused. They do not give the child of God *carte blanche* permission to hate anyone. We may only hate, and these we must, those who hate God. Are we grieved with those who rise up against God in their actions? Do we reprimand those who take His name in vain? Do we talk to our neighbor about his desecration of the Sabbath? It seems as if David completely loses his train of thought when he pens these words. Nothing can be farther from the truth. First of all we must remember that it is the Holy Spirit who inspired David. Secondly we must know that we cannot appreciate God's wonders and surround ourselves with those who hate Him. Let us glorify God by hating His enemies. Sing Psalter 383:4.

June 10 Read Psalm 139:13-24

Psalm 139:23-24 This Psalm is ended with a beautiful prayer. After saying that he will hate those who hate God, David asks God to search him so that he can do this. We cannot hate anyone without having our own hearts examined by the mighty God to see what is in there. Sadly we know that we have all kinds of sin hidden in our hearts. We must pray for God's grace to root that sin out of our lives and to walk in His everlasting ways. We cannot walk that way by ourselves. We need His fatherly hand to lead us upon each step of that path. Ask God to search your hearts, people of God, and listen to Him when He tells you what He finds. Only in this way will we be able to praise Him with our whole being. Sing Psalters 383:5 and 384:5.

June 11 Read Psalm 140:1-13

Psalm 140:1-5 This first section of the Psalm is David's prayer for deliverance. Once again we can see that David did not have an easy life. He was beset on all sides by enemies. Sometimes the enemies were within Israel and even his family such as Saul or David's own sons. Sometimes they were without Israel such as the tribes around his beloved country. David knew that his only hope was to turn to God. Do we know this? As we go to church today, will one subject of our prayer be deliverance from our enemies? Will we pray to be kept from those who hate us because we are the chosen ones of God? Think about these things, people of God. It seems easy to live now but what about in the days before our Lord returns. Are we ready? Are our children and young people ready? Sing Psalter 385:1.

June 12 Read Hebrews 10:19-21

Psalm 140:6-8 After bringing his plea for deliverance to God, David now gives the ground for such a plea. That ground is that God was his God. Is this our confidence? Many of our children have just finished another year of school. Did we stop to give thanks for another year of covenant education if we were so blessed to provide our children with that kind of education? Did we give thanks for help for our children who had to be educated in schools where little if any was taught from the Bible? We do have enemies. And these enemies may be seeking to destroy our children. Let us constantly bring the needs of our covenant children to God even as they are surrounded by enemies. Sing Psalters 385:2.

June 13 Read Psalm 140:1-13

Psalm 140:9-13 The first three verses of today's texts are imprecatory in nature; that is, they ask God to bring vengeance upon His enemies. These are not popular thoughts in today's "love everybody" world. To ask that God would bring evil is not the stuff you find in most churches and upon the lips of most who say they are Christians. Do we pray such things? David did and we must follow his example. The last two verses are words of thanksgiving for deliverance. David knew that God cared for His afflicted children. We can know this as well. Let us study this prayer and make it a model for our daily prayers unto our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 385:3.

June 14 Read Psalm 141:1-10

Psalm 141:1 In reading the salutation to this prayer of David we get a sense of urgency from the words. David wishes for God to hear him and to answer him speedily. This is not a vain hope on David's part. God will answer us. Sometimes His time is different than our time, but always His time is best. Do we cry unto God when we are in distress? I mean, do we pray daily because daily we are in distress because of our sins? David was not praying out of desperation and we should not either. Rather our prayers should be based on the wonderful knowledge that Christ is at God's right hand making intercession for us. Let us pray and let us pray often. Sing Psalter 386:1.

June 15 Read II Chronicles 30:13-27

Psalm 141:2 Israel of old had set times in which they were commanded to pray. These set times were to guide them toward Christ. Sometimes they strayed from these times and had to be brought back to see the right way. Hezekiah was used by God to bring them back to a true worship of Jehovah. The Passover Feast recounted in this chapter shows us a right way of worship. Are we truly thankful for deliverance from sin and Satan? Do we show it in our daily worship of Jehovah? Let us pray not out of custom or superstition but rather out of a heart turned to God the Giver of all good. Sing Psalter 386:2 and 3.

June 16 Read James 3:1-12

Psalm 141:3-4 David's first petition in this prayer is that God help him to keep his mouth from all evil. As we read in James, the tongue is an unruly member of our body. It can only be tamed by the grace of God. Children, do you ask God to help you choose your words carefully? When you talk about other children, what do you say about them? Do you think God is pleased by your words to and about your friends? Young people, what about the words that come from your mouths? Are they acceptable to your heavenly Father, or does filth spew out of your lips like sewage from a broken pipe? Parents, what about us? What do our children hear from our mouths? Are we good examples? God's gift of speech is a good thing. How are we using it? To God's glory or to Satan's? Sing Psalter 386:4.

June 17 Read Matthew 16:21-28

Psalm 141:5 Are we willing to be rebuked or reprimanded by a fellow believer? Are we willing to listen and to make whatever correction may be necessary in our lives? Young people, if you have recently made confession of faith, you promised that you would place yourself under the discipline of the elders if it became necessary. We need to realize that rebuke is for our profit and is good for us. God uses these words in a way that will help us. Peter must have smarted at Christ's words, but later he must have realized that they were for his good as he preached the gospel. Let us hear our neighbor when he rebukes us and let us ask God to open our hearts to such words of rebuke spoken in love. Sing Psalter 386:5.

June 18 Read Jeremiah 29:4-14

Psalm 141:6 At first glance David seems to be exulting in the overthrow of his enemies. He seems to be looking for revenge. We can understand this because how often have we exulted over the downfall of someone we envied? Looking closer at this verse in the context of the whole Psalm and the whole of Scripture, we can realize that David is jealous only for God's cause. This is much different than exulting over the downfall of some rival. Let our words today as we attend church be sweet in God's ears, and He will be pleased with us. Sing Psalter 386:6.

June 19 Read Psalm 25:12-22

Psalm 141:7-8 Once again we see the perilous place that David and the children of Israel were in. Looking at verse seven there seems to be no hope for them. But because David has tasted the goodness of the Lord he can say the words of verse

eight. Are our eyes upon the Lord? Do we look to Him no matter what the trials of this life? Some of us may have health problems which seem insurmountable. Others of us are afflicted by those on the job. Others may be in financial difficulties. In each and any circumstance our eyes must be upon the Lord, for He will lead us on the path of life. The path will ultimately lead to our heavenly home. Notice, that is David's last thought. He is not concerned about his physical body's end; he prays that his soul be not left destitute. Is that our prayer now? Tomorrow? Forever? Sing Psalter 386:7.

June 20 Read Psalm 141:1-10

Psalm 141:9-10 In the final verses of this Psalm David prays that he may not fall into the temptations of the wicked. Of course, these temptations are orchestrated by Satan against the child of God. This is also one of the petitions of the Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." The last part of that petition can also be read "deliver us from the evil one." This must be a constant part of the prayer of the believer. Notice, David also prays that the wicked fall into the traps set for him. This is also proper as we saw at the end of the last Psalm. Let us make these petitions part of our own prayers, and let us pray that God will hear us. Sing Psalter 386:8.

June 21 Read Psalm 142:1-7

Psalm 142:1-2 Once again we have a Psalm which is a prayer of David. This prayer appears to have been written when he was fleeing from Saul and hiding in a cave. The surroundings were dark and dismal. The situation almost intolerable. David did what every child of God must do when faced with difficulty. He goes to God in prayer. Young people, have you made this your habit? Have you learned to pour out your needs to God in prayer? Do you study the Bible so that you know how to pray and for what to pray? Prayer takes preparation. The best preparation is found in the pages of God's Word. There is no trouble too small to bring before our God. Pour out your hearts before Him and He will hear you. Sing Psalters 387:1 and 388:1.

June 22 Read I Samuel 22:1-2; 20-23

Psalm 142:3 David had just received the news that Saul had slaughtered the family of the high priest. Even though we know that this was ordained by God because of the sin of Eli and his sons, David felt responsible for what had happened. He felt he owed Abithar as much as he could give him. Doeg's evil was a trap for David. David knew what to do. He turned to God in prayer. If David would have relied on his own strength, he knew it would have been hopeless. We, too, must learn to rely only on our heavenly Father even when it seems hopeless in our eyes. To do otherwise will bring much trouble. Sing Psalter 387:2.

June 23 Read Mark 14:43-53

Psalm 142:4 After looking within himself for help, David now looks to see if any man could help. He had a cave full of men maybe as many as four hundred. He saw none to help him. Notice that last line: "...no man cared for my soul." Not only did David have no one to help him physically, he saw that

spiritually there was no help to be found on this earth. In this way David is a type of Christ as we saw Him in our reading for today. We must never look for salvation on this earth. Christ is our salvation, and He is in heaven. This is a comfort, is it not, people of God? We know the weaknesses of men. Even if they wanted to, they could not care for our souls. We must place our trust in our heavenly Father who has sent to us His Son to die on the cross. We can realize the fact of David's predicament in this life. We may look around us but there will be none to care for our soul. None but Christ who loved us so much He gave His life for us. Sing Psalters 387:3 and 388:2.

June 24 Read Lamentations 3:22-32

Psalm 142:5 After looking around him for help, David turns to the Lord. No, God was not a last resort here. God was David's sure aid. He knows that man could not help him. He definitely knew that he could do nothing in his own strength. Therefore he cries unto God for aid. Jeremiah had had the same experience as he prophesied in Judah's last days. He was convinced that help came only from Jehovah. Is this our experience, people of God? Do we confess that our help can only come from Him who made heaven and earth? Let us confess this daily, and more importantly, let us live out of that confession. God is our refuge both now and in eternity. Sing Psalters 387:4 and 388:3.

June 25 Read Psalm 116:1-9

Psalm 142:6-7a Even in David's woe he remembers God. First of all, he remembers that God can help him. This is evident from his requests. They are made in confidence. What about us; do we have and do we exhibit the confidence to ask God for help when we are in trouble? Do we even remember to pray? Are our prayers such that they come from a true and living faith? These are no prayers in a foxhole. These are the prayers of one who is used to praying at all times. This takes practice, people of God. We must be praying as Daniel did—morning, noon, and evening. The last part of today's verses speaks of the reason why David wants deliverance. He does not want this for himself. He wants deliverance in order that he may praise God's name. Do we think of that when we pray for help? Sing Psalters 387:5 and 388:4.

June 26 Read Psalm 142:1-7

Psalm 142:7b David's second reason for deliverance is that he thinks of God's church. The church will gather around him. Why? To praise David? Because they are so relieved for his safety? NO! NO! NO! Oh, these thoughts may enter some minds, but these are not David's thoughts. He realizes that his deliverance will cause the church to praise God. Think of the church in the New Testament when Peter and John, and then Peter again, were delivered. They offered prayers of thanks to God! Let us remember that. Our churches may not glory in what they have accomplished. They must glory in what God has accomplished! Let us pray for the grace to put all thoughts of pride from our hearts. Let us pray for the grace to glorify God in all circumstances of life. Sing Psalters 387:6 and 388:5.

June 27 Read Psalm 143

Psalm 143:1-2 Once again we consider a prayer of David. We should use these prayers to help us to know for what to pray. In these opening verses David declares himself to be a sinner. He realizes that he cannot go to God on his own merits. It is only through the righteousness and faithfulness of God that he dare approach His throne of grace. He knows that because of his sin he deserves eternal judgment. What about us? Do we know how to pray this way? Do we come to God's throne like the Pharisee or like the Publican? Do we ask God to be merciful unto us the sinner? Let us make these words ours, and let us daily come before God's throne of grace asking for His help in time of need. Sing Psalters 389:1 and 390:1.

June 28 Read I Samuel 23:13-18

Psalm 143:3-4 Is it too much for you, people of God? Are you so much in despair that you do not know which way to turn? Has the death of a loved one left you feeling lost, miserable, or despondent? Do you face sickness day in and day out? There is only one thing that we can do. We must cast all of our cares upon Jehovah. David felt this way as he was being chased by his enemies. He thought he could take it no longer. But then he went to God in prayer. This is what we must do. We have been saying this over and over the last few weeks. But it is true. It bears repeating. Pray, people of God. Pray often. He will hear us and will care for us in the way that is best. Sing Psalter 389:2.

June 29 Read Deuteronomy 32:7-14

Psalm 143:5-6 Do you like to reminisce on the past? Do you like to think about past happenings of your family? David did too. He saw this to be a good thing. His reminiscing was about God's doings however. He was not talking about past glorious victories in battles. He was not thinking about beating Goliath or the bear and lion. He was thinking about what God had done for him. In doing so he found rest and comfort for his soul. God has done great things for us as well. He has given to us salvation. What a wonderful thing to reminisce upon! Let us do it often, and let us be comforted by such remembering even as David was. Sing Psalters 389:3 and 390:2.

June 30 Read Matthew 14:22-36

Psalm 143:7-8 Was it a long night last night? Was there something in your life that caused you not to sleep last night? For the people of God we may rest assured that whatever bothers us, it will not be a lack of the lovingkindness of God. Those mercies are sure every morning, as Jeremiah testified. After a long night the disciples were glad to see Jesus. Peter had to learn about Christ's mercies even as he sank into the Sea of Galilee. The distressed in Galilee were touched by that mercy even as Christ healed them that morning. Let us lift our souls to God knowing that He will see us through the long nights unto the glorious morning in heaven. Sing Psalters 389:4 and 391:1.

Psalter 273— The Deliverance of Zion

by Beth De Vries

“The Deliverance on Zion” is the title of the Psalter versification to which we turn this month. This versification comes from Psalm 102:12-22 and emphasizes the always-present help of our God. God’s attributes of immutability and of His eternity are discussed in this passage. We shall look at when and how God protects His people. Also emphasized in this passage is the response of the people of God to this deliverance and protection.

God is eternal and His love endures for all ages. We hear this idea preached to us and we read of this, but how often do we actually meditate on what this means for us? He has no beginning and no ending. We can reflect on this truth by looking at some passages of Scripture that demonstrate the eternal nature of God. We turn first to Psalm 90:2 which reads “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” This shows how God existed before He created all things as we know them. God will continue from everlasting to everlasting; how can we understand this when we cannot even really understand the term “everlasting?”

A part of the truth of God being eternal is that He is not limited by time as we are. This is seen in II Peter 3:8 which reads “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” As we think on this truth, we know that as God is eternal, He is also immutable, or changes not. These two attributes follow hand

in hand. Psalm 102 speaks of this in verse 12, “But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever.” We also read of this in Malachi 3:6, “For I am the Lord, I change not.” There is great comfort in knowing that what God decreed before we existed will continue to be the truth for all time and eternity.

This leads us to the idea that God in His eternal, immutable Self is always present to help His people.

This is seen in Psalm 102 by “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:” and “He will regard the prayer of the destitute.” God will take care of His people in their time of trouble. In the first 12 verses of Psalm 102, which we will consider next month, the Lord willing, David speaks of being afflicted and brought low. The section that we are now considering is David’s response to this and his realization that God is with him. God helps us when we pray to

Him for help and acknowledge our dependence on Him alone.

God shows His love for the Church also in this passage. David speaks of the restoring of the walls of Zion that were destroyed. These walls are a means of protection for the church, and the enemy may at times destroy this protection. But God will always return and build them up again. We know that this means when the church faces difficulties and persecutions God will protect her because He loves her.

We owe to God a response of thanks for these blessings of protection and safety. We have not merited this

273 The Deliverance of Zion

PSALM 102 L. M. SELENA Isaac S. Woodbury

but have received it freely of God. We then show our appreciation by giving thanks. In prayer to God we thank Him for caring for us and blessing us in abundance. Another way in which we show our thanks to God is by singing praises to Him. Whether we do this in the official worship of the church or in our own homes, we should constantly sing praises to God. We read of this in Psalm 102:21-22, "To declare the name of the Lord in

Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the Lord." May we ever be found praising God with the songs of Zion. ❖

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

Where We Stand

Witnessing and Testifying of the Truth (3)

by Rev. Barrett Gritters

Young People's Convention, Redlands, 1999. In this final installment, Rev. Gritters gives us some practical helps for witnessing and testifying of the truth.

PRACTICAL HELPS

But still you say, "I don't feel prepared to talk about creation, or life and death." So I would like to give a couple of suggestions as to how we can be prepared to talk about these things.

Number one: memorize. We've done some memorizing tonight. We memorized three texts. We memorized four points in addition to Rev. Koole's three. Memorize! Memorize, memorize, memorize. Memorize in catechism. We're good at it. I wonder if we do a very good job, though, of repeating the same texts every year so that the young people, when they're finished with catechism, are able to have a dozen or two dozen texts in their mind with regard to the truths of the Word of God. Let's do that in catechism this year. Memorize the Word of God.

I really think that one of the reasons we're afraid to witness is that somebody's going to say to us, "Does the Bible really say that?" And I say, "Oh, my. Where does the Word of God talk about creation?" Well, now you're ready to start. Then, by Hebrews 11:3, write another text in the margin of your Bible that will lead you to Psalm 33:6, 9 and Colossians 1:15, 16, that say all of creation is for Christ. And then go from text to text in

your Bible. But memorize! Number one: you're not ready because you haven't memorized very much.

Number two: practice. Practice witnessing to the neighbor. I'd like to make a suggestion, not to you but to your young people's leaders. When society begins again in the fall and they ask, "What are we going to discuss? What will we study?" then say, "I've got an idea. I want us to train to witness to anyone that we meet about creation, life, death, what God has done for me, the infallibility of the Word of God, the sovereignty of grace, and the absolute inability of us to make any spiritual choices until God works in us." There are seven subjects, seven weeks, maybe seven months. Practice! It's going to take some work for your young people's leaders to prepare for that, because they're going to train you. They're going to have to set it up. But practice. You sit there, and he asks the questions.

"Well, that's so fake. That's so artificial. I'm not so sure that we ought to do that. That's just pretending." Really? I'd like to invite you up to seminary when seminary starts. In the room that they use for what? Practice preaching. And every minister knows that that's pretty artificial, and the pros sit there, and you preach, and you wonder whether anyone has heard a word you said. But they want you to do it, because you can't go out into the churches and preach, and you won't be a missionary, unless you've sat there in that room and practice preached. Well, we may too, young people. Practice.

Practice. Practice at home at the dinner table. When your dad and mom say, “What should we read next?” say, “Let’s read this book, and every time we come to a passage that’s important for witnessing, let’s memorize and let’s talk about it, and let’s discuss after the Bible reading is finished how we could use that text to speak to the neighbor.” The neighbor? “Oh, we’ve never talked to the neighbor before!” Well, let’s practice how we’re going to talk to the neighbor.

Number three: look for opportunities, please. They’re going to fall into your lap more often than you think, but look for opportunities. Keep your eyes open. Keep your ears open. Try to find a place that you can say something to the neighbor about what you believe. And don’t make excuses! Don’t say, “Well, you know, they’re going to think that I’m just a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon.” It’s not Jehovah’s Witness to witness. It’s Reformed to witness. Look for opportunities.

There’s an elder in our church at whom I just shake my head when I see all the opportunities he finds to witness. He’s *always* trying to find a place to speak the Word of God. He was in a bad car wreck a couple of months ago and was brought to the hospital in pretty critical condition. In the stupor and the blur of morphine he asked the nurse, “Well, what’s your name?” “Mary,” she said. And with a smirk, he said, in a funny way: “Oh, may I say ‘Hail, Mary?’” And you say, “What a stupid thing to say!” Well, in a morphine-induced stupor he was saying odd things. But it gave him an *opportunity* to speak about his faith. “Oh, are you Roman Catholic?” “No, I’m Reformed.” “Well, what does it mean to be Reformed?” And then while he was recovering and the nurse was taking his blood pressure she said something to another nurse about the conversion factors—I don’t remember the word—in his blood, and he said, “Oh, do you believe in conversion?” What a silly thing to say, you might think. But he was looking for opportunities! He was looking for them! And then, as soon as he was well enough to make a phone call, he said, “Rev. Gritters, bring me up a stack of pamphlets on the family, because there’s all kinds of people that I can pass these pamphlets to. The chaplain was up here, and I want to give him one. He’s going to come back. And the nurses are interested in it.” **Opportunities**. And 15 or 20 pamphlets went out from that one man. He was looking, he was seeking. He wanted opportunities.

Then **in the fourth place, be excited**. I went with one of my sons to buy a computer a couple of months ago. We went from store to store and finally ended up at

this store and bought a computer there. You know why? They had the very same computer that all the other stores had. Why then? Because the salesman met us at the door and, with a friendly look on his face said, “I’ll show you the computer I bought. I’ll show you the one I like. I’ll show you the one I use. It’s a good one.” And he knew everything about that computer, and he knew everything about all the other computers; and nobody else in the other stores even came up to ask us what we wanted. We bought his computer because he was excited about what he was selling. Be enthused. Be excited. How? By nurturing in your heart and your soul love for God. Not love for your name, not even love for the name of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Throw your name away. Say, “I’m concerned, and I love the name of God.”

CONCLUSIONS

And that brings up the most important questions, guys and girls: do you? Are you? What *has* God done for you? Is *this* life for you? Or this one: The *Lord*, the portion of my inheritance? Who are you? What do you think about yourself? Are you depraved? Do you realize it? Has Christ died for you? Do you trust in Him? Are you showing in your life now that you’re thankful? Be enthused, people of God, for there’s nothing worse than an artificial enthusiasm. There’s nothing worse than a phony salesman. There’s nothing worse than someone saying, “That’s the computer I use,” but it really isn’t. Have you found righteousness in Christ? Examine yourselves. Let me examine myself.

Then I assure you that God will bless that witness. He’ll always give fruit, because His Word doesn’t come back empty. Pray for positive fruit—but all of the fruit really is positive. God may harden that one, He may soften that one, but He’ll use it; He’ll always use it, I promise you. He says it. And He’ll use it only in the way of fervent prayer and in the way of a godly walk and witness that you show to them. Walk the walk, guys.

Your walk. It’s not true that only our *walk* is witness enough, that all we need to do is show them how we live. We need to speak. But without our walk there isn’t any profit. Walk the walk. Walk it. What would you think if tonight when you were going back to your dorm up the hill, you saw the cook behind the cafeteria, sneaking out over the edge of the hill, puffing away on a cigarette? In a Seventh-Day Adventist camp? And they won’t allow us to smoke because they don’t believe in smoking? What if you saw the camp director in the back room, reaching into the cupboard for his private jar of instant *caffeinated* coffee? You’d say, “What in the world

is going on?” Or all the staff secretly cutting through their big steak after we’re finished eating those soy burgers. What would you think? What would you think!? But you haven’t, have you? You haven’t. Have you asked them to give you an answer as to why they don’t do those things? They’re walking their walk. I don’t care about their walk; I care about our walk. But their walk makes me want to ask them.

So I did today. Carlos there, the lifeguard by the swimming pool, was reading a book that said on the front, “Why Christians Get Sick.” That piqued my interest. So I asked him, “Why don’t you smoke? Why don’t you eat meat? Why don’t you drink caffeine? Why won’t

you put Mountain Dew in the soda dispensers?” He told me; it was interesting. Ask him! But let him ask *you*. Let him ask *you*. Please don’t, young people, ever let him ask you why you’re going over the edge of the hill to smoke, and why your mouth has words coming out of it that ought not come out of it, and why your dress doesn’t look much like Christian dress. Let them ask you, young people, please. Let them ask us a reason for what we have in our hearts and why we live the way we do. And God will bless it. I promise you. Thanks for listening. ❖

Rev. Gritters is pastor of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Church Family

Covenant Marriages (3)

“Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord”

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We may, therefore, define the earthly marriage relation as the union between one man and one woman for life, a union that is based on a communion of nature, on a communion of life, and a communion of love, which is a reflection of the covenant relation between God and His people and of the relation between Christ and His church; a union, moreover, that has its chief purpose in bringing forth the seed of the covenant.

The above quote comes from Herman Hoeksema’s *The Triple Knowledge* (vol. 3, pg. 353). It is the last part of that quote which we are interested in. Three times in the chapter entitled “The Covenant of Marriage” does Hoeksema write that the chief purpose of the union of marriage is the bringing forth of “the multitude which no man can number” (pg. 354). So important is this truth that Rev. Hoeksema ends the chapter with the words, “Well may it therefore be emphasized that the end of marriage is the bringing forth of the future generations of the covenant of God, the bride of the Lamb” (pg. 355).

We have seen in two previous articles that God forbids His holy people to marry those who are not of like faith and that, positively, the young people of the church

are the companions of those that fear God and marry those who are one with them in faith. We now move on in this article and see how God is pleased to save His children from among the children of covenant parents. It is Reformed to confess that God saves His people in the line of continued generations and that God is pleased to give to believing parents believing children. While it is not the case that all children of believers are elect children of God, it is the case that God saves His people from among children of covenant parents.

This truth is important to understand, especially as it relates to marriage. The young people of the church must be fully aware of this truth before they date and

Because God is pleased to use the marriages of His people to bring forth the seed of the covenant, it is important that these marriage are covenant marriages.

marry. Because God is pleased to use the marriages of His people to bring forth the seed of the covenant, it is important that these marriage are covenant marriages. Not only are parents called to bring forth children, according to God's will, but they must also instruct them in true doctrine. Not often mentioned in this regard by those who are dating or newly married are the questions that are asked to parents who bring their infants to be baptized.

The second question that is asked is, "Whether you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and perfect (complete) doctrine of salvation?" This is the same question that one answers "Yes" to when he makes a vow before the church at his public confession of faith. Every young person who has made public confession of faith and anticipates marriage, must with a clear conscience be able to answer "Yes" to this question with his future spouse before he gets married. This must be the case because both husband and wife must be agreed in the doctrine of the church before they can instruct their children in that doctrine. How can one

**...both husband and wife
must be agreed in the
doctrine of the church before
they can instruct their
children in that doctrine.**

in good conscience enter into a marriage with one who he knows is not one in doctrine with him? Before he gets married he knows that he, at the time of baptism, will not be able to answer "Yes" to the third question, "Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?" These are serious questions that those dating with a view to marriage should be able to answer. God saves his children from among the children of believing parents and God uses the means of the instruction of the parents to bring His children to faith.

A young person of the church who knowingly marries another not of like faith tempts God concerning the salvation of his children. There are many examples from Scripture which show plainly the consequences of mixed

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marriages. David, the man after God's own heart, not only fell into the sin of multiplying to himself wives, but also the sin of marrying "strange" wives. His son Absalom, later his bitter enemy, was the fruit of his marriage to "Maacah the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur" (II Sam. 3:3). There were many bitter consequences to David's many marriages and as a result of marrying women who were not one with him in the faith. Read II Samuel 13.

Another example of Scripture is to be found in Nehemiah 13:23-25. We read from these verses that many of the Jews had "married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab." The children born to the parents in these mixed marriages "could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." It was not the case that these children knew and conversed in the language of the church, but rather they learned and talked the language of the world. The response of Nehemiah to this sin was swift and severe (read vs. 25). Along with the discipline which Nehemiah administered, he made mention of the sins of Solomon in this regard. Wise Solomon, as we read in I Kings 11:4-8, "went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites" (vs. 5). This did not happen when Solomon was an impressionable young man, but we read, "when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (vs. 4). Do not be tempted to think that there are no consequences to marrying one who is not of like faith. Even wise Solomon "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father" (vs. 6).

But just as God's Word warns us regarding improper marriages and their consequences, so does that Word show us the great blessings of living in accordance with God's will regarding marriage. Those who marry "in the Lord" God showers with many covenant blessings. Psalm 128 tells us of the blessedness of fearing the Lord and walking in His ways. The Psalm begins with the word "blessed," and that blessedness comes to those who

“fear the Lord” and “walk in His ways.” That blessing does not come in the way of always looking for another path alongside of the “way” of God.

Further into this Psalm we read that the man who fears the Lord has been given a godly wife. “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.” And to this man and his wife have been given many children. “Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” In this covenant home we find a wife who is fruitful not only in the sense of having many children, but she fills her day with the fruits of good works. And the center of her activity is in the home, for we read that she is a “fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.” Here she fills her days with the care and instruction of her children. She lovingly attends to the desires of her husband. As we read in Proverbs 31:27, and 28 “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.”

If there is a danger which threatens the covenant homes of many families in the church today, it is the danger that covenant mothers do not occupy their place in the home as God’s Word sets forth. Psalm 128 speaks of the blessings of God which come to parents and their children when they are faithful in the callings which God has given them to perform. When the husband and wife are faithful in their God-given callings they will see God’s blessing rest not only upon their families, but also upon the church. This is evident from verse 5 where we read that “thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.” And not only that, but God will continue to bless them in their generations, for we read, “Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel.” Not only do these verses refer to great spiritual blessings in this life, but also in the life to come. The husband and wife who “fear the Lord” and “walk in His ways” will enjoy eternity with their children and grandchildren.

The young men of the church must be careful to marry the young women of the church who desire to live according to God’s will for them. A Reformed young man ought to have great cause for concern when the young woman he dates likes to talk much about the job

she desires and the four-year degree she would first like to obtain. He ought to be concerned because these are not the desires of the godly women we find in Scripture. The young women of the church are those who desire to “marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (I Tim. 5:14).

That godly young women continue to come to maturity in the church depends very much on the godly aged women of the church. How often do the words of Titus 2:3-5 come to mind? One of the primary responsibilities of the older mothers and the mature women of the churches is to be “teachers of good things.” And what is to be taught? We read in verses 4 and 5 of Titus 2: “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” What is not found in this text is that the aged women are to go out in search of a career after their kids are in school,

neither are they to spend their time in the fulfillment of their own dreams and desires. No, they are to teach. Teach their daughters and daughters-in-law (as well as all the young women of the church) by word (God’s Word) and example.

This is the way of God’s covenant blessings resting upon marriages, families, and the church. Blessed is that young man, that young woman, that

family, and that church which fears the Lord. “The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.”

*Blest the man that fears Jehovah,
Walking ever in His ways;
By thy toil thou shalt be prospered
And be happy all thy days.
Thou shalt see God’s kingdom prosper
All thy days, till life shall cease,
Thou shalt see thy children’s children;
On thy people, Lord, be peace.*

Psalter 360, verses 1 & 5 ❖

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

Early Church History—

Montanism

by Rev. John A. Heys

The early New Testament Church, it seems, was to have no “breathing spell” at all. False doctrines were springing up in rapid succession. Indeed, this is just exactly what the devil desired. He favored no breathing spell for the church but instead marshaled all the forces at his disposal to attack the church from every direction which held the promise of destroying the faith of the newly converted Christians. Of course, when the time has arrived that God eternally pleased to bring a temporary halt to the terrific pressure that was brought to bear upon the church, the devil can do nothing. Even as he was not allowed to afflict Job beyond the measure God prescribed, so, too, the pressure the devil desired to exert upon the early New Testament church was decreed by God and was always under His perfect control.

In the early history of the New Testament church it plainly was the devil’s desire and attempt to destroy the faith of the church by multiplying the false doctrines of that day. Ebionism, we have seen was propagated with a view to seducing, if it were possible, the Jewish converts to the Christian religion. Gnosticism had for its devilish aim the tempting away from the truth of the Gentile converts. And now appears a third heresy which sought to capture the hearts and minds of both the Jewish and Gentile converts by an entirely different appeal. This time it was Montanism.

Montanism was founded by a certain Montanus who lived in Phrygia in the middle of the second century. Since he lived in Phrygia, his followers were also often called “Phrygians.” The heresy, unlike Ebionism and Gnosticism, found a ready place in the church because of corruptions which were present in the church. It seemed to be a return to the true faith, but instead it was simply a departure in a different direction. But a departure from the truth it surely was. And it was as dangerous to the true faith of the church as Ebionism and Gnosticism, and perhaps even more dangerous than those.

Ebionism had its origin in Judaism. In fact it was Judaism with a mixture of those Christian truths which

best served to cover up its evil nature. Gnosticism was Paganism with a varnish of Christian truths. It had its origin in Pagan mythology, and, like Ebionism, professed to believe some of the truths of Scripture in order to lure the believers away from Christ. Montanism however did not have its origin in either one of these. It originated in the minds of those who professed Christianity’s truth and condemned the error of Ebionism and Gnosticism. In this respect it was therefore more subtle and dangerous for the truth than Ebionism and Gnosticism. In fact even such a capable leader as Tertullian, as we said before, embraced Montanism in the latter part of his life and accepted it as the proper reaction to the corruption that was setting in amid that early church of the New Dispensation. It seemed to be the answer to the growing worldliness in the church.

**It (Montanism) seemed to
be the answer to the
growing worldliness in the
church.**

One of its chiefest characteristics was that it claimed continued revelation through the church of all ages. It denied that the canon of the Scriptures was closed with the death of the last Apostle, and instead it maintained that even after the death of the last Apostle, God continued to reveal the truth to the church, or rather even to the believer *directly*. Of course God reveals the truth to the church today, but He does so through the Scriptures. Montanus claimed that God revealed it directly, without the use of the previously inspired Scriptures. He taught that he himself received such revelation from God. In fact, he even maintained that he, Montanus, was the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth whom Jesus promised to send after He had gone to heaven. The truth in regard to the Spirit is not clearly understood by many even today. In the day of Montanus the knowledge was even less

understood, and many followed Montanus as the prophet of God to lead them into the truth.

An interesting fact in regard to the movement is the fact that these Montanists already denied infant baptism. We often think of this heresy as being of recent origin. It was taught here already, a little over 150 years after Christ's birth. Another fact is that the Montanists—believing as they did in direct revelation and prophecy—predicted an early return of Christ. They even predicted dates, only to be proven to be wrong, and they lost many followers because of such practices.

You might ask, "How could Tertullian embrace such a religion?" He did especially because it taught asceticism, that is, a strict life of self denial. As we stated, the

church was becoming increasingly worldly, and this emphasis upon self-denial had its appeal for many of the more serious-minded in the church.

The danger of this heresy was that it placed experience, in the form of what it called "revelation," above the Scriptures. It was mystical. Besides this, it denied the special offices in the church, and due to its belief in this direct revelation, insisted that all believers were pastors, teachers and prophets. This latter stand was a reaction to the worldliness in the church. It was also a reaction to the worldliness in the clergy. ❖

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

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:

Kristin Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kaiser—Byron Center, MI

Meghan Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Zevenbergen—Doon, IA

Jordan Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Hoekstra—Doon, IA

Jeremy Martin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Daling—Faith, MI

Seth Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Terry Kooienga—Faith, MI

Reece Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric VanDyke—Faith, MI

Carson David, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Meulenberg—Grace, MI

Clayton David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Ritsema—Georgetown, MI

Erika Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Griess—Loveland, CO

Riley Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Moore—Lynden, WA

Suzanna Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Smit—Redlands, CA

Nicholas Philip, son of Mr. & Mrs. Victor Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Olivia Lindsey, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Pipe—Southeast, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

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

Ronda Karsemeyer—Faith, MI

Rachel Vander Waal—Grace, MI

Eric Westra—Hull, IA

Peter Westra—Hull, IA

Craig Van Briesen—Hull, IA

Alex Bylsma—Hull, IA

Kurt Hoksbergen—Hull, IA

Laura Cleveringa—Hull, IA

Melissa Lenting—Loveland, CO

Linda Brands—Loveland, CO

Amanda Hekstra—Southeast, MI

Joel Kooienga—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Terry Kaptein and Miss Pam Kuiper—Faith, MI

Mr. Matthew Dykstra and Miss Jessica Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Antithesis (4)

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

"It's a spiritual battle," affirmed Father.

Yes, I thought, it is a spiritual battle—not with flesh and blood. But what about the spiritual armor? You can put a helmet on your head and pick up a sword in your hand, but how do you put a *spiritual* helmet on and how do you pick up a *spiritual* sword? Before I was able to ask the question, though, Sally stated a question of her own.

"What does it mean that the battle is spiritual?" she asked.

"It means that it has to do with what's inside you, your thoughts and desires," Father said. "It has to do with things that are invisible."

Sally thought for a moment. "So when I think of doing something naughty, but I don't want to do it, and I try not to do it, then I'm fighting in this battle?" she said.

"Exactly," Father said with a smile. "What a soldier you are already!"

Sally beamed. I could imagine the helmet on her head and the shield on her arm! Then I looked down. Where was my helmet and my shield? "How do we put the armor on?" I finally spoke my thoughts out loud.

"Let's look at Ephesians again," Father said, and he turned to his Bible once more. "Right after the list of spiritual armor, it says we must *pray* and *watch*. That must be the answer, to pray and watch. Watch, be alert, study. That's what a soldier must do. And pray. Spiritual armor can only be put on in a spiritual way, and prayer is part of that. Righteousness, faith, knowledge—God gives those things to us."

I nodded. I understood at least a little more.

"We fight our sin. We fight being worldly. And we fight to uphold the truth of God over against the lies of Satan," Father said.

"And to do all that," I added, "we must pray and watch to put the armor on."

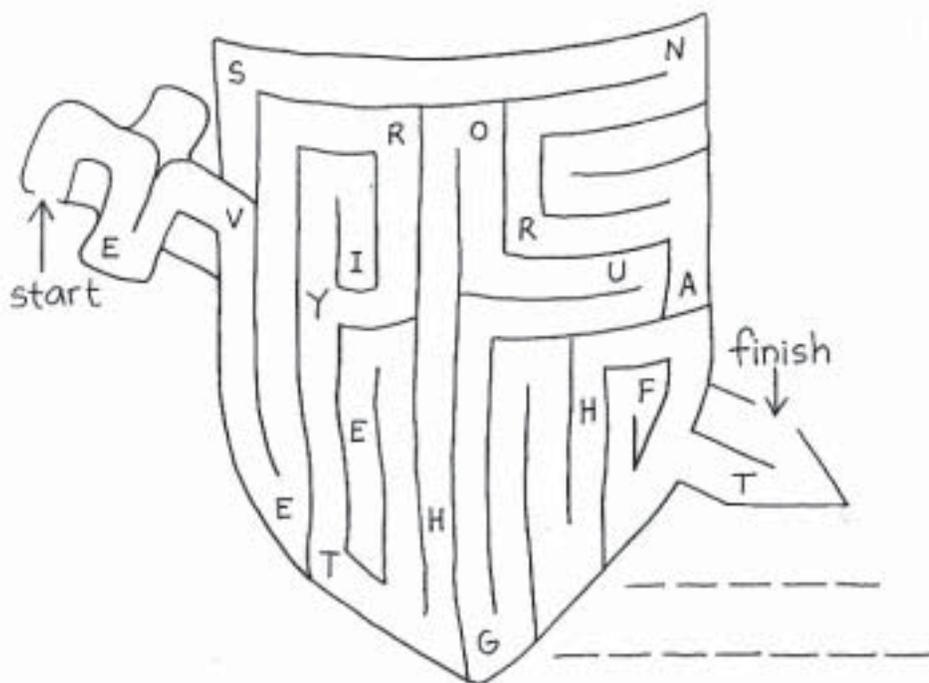
Father patted my shoulder. "A soldier you are indeed."

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

Puzzle

Read II Corinthians 10:3-5. What must we bring into captivity?

Follow the maze (finding letters on the way) to discover the answer.



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