

Beacon Lights

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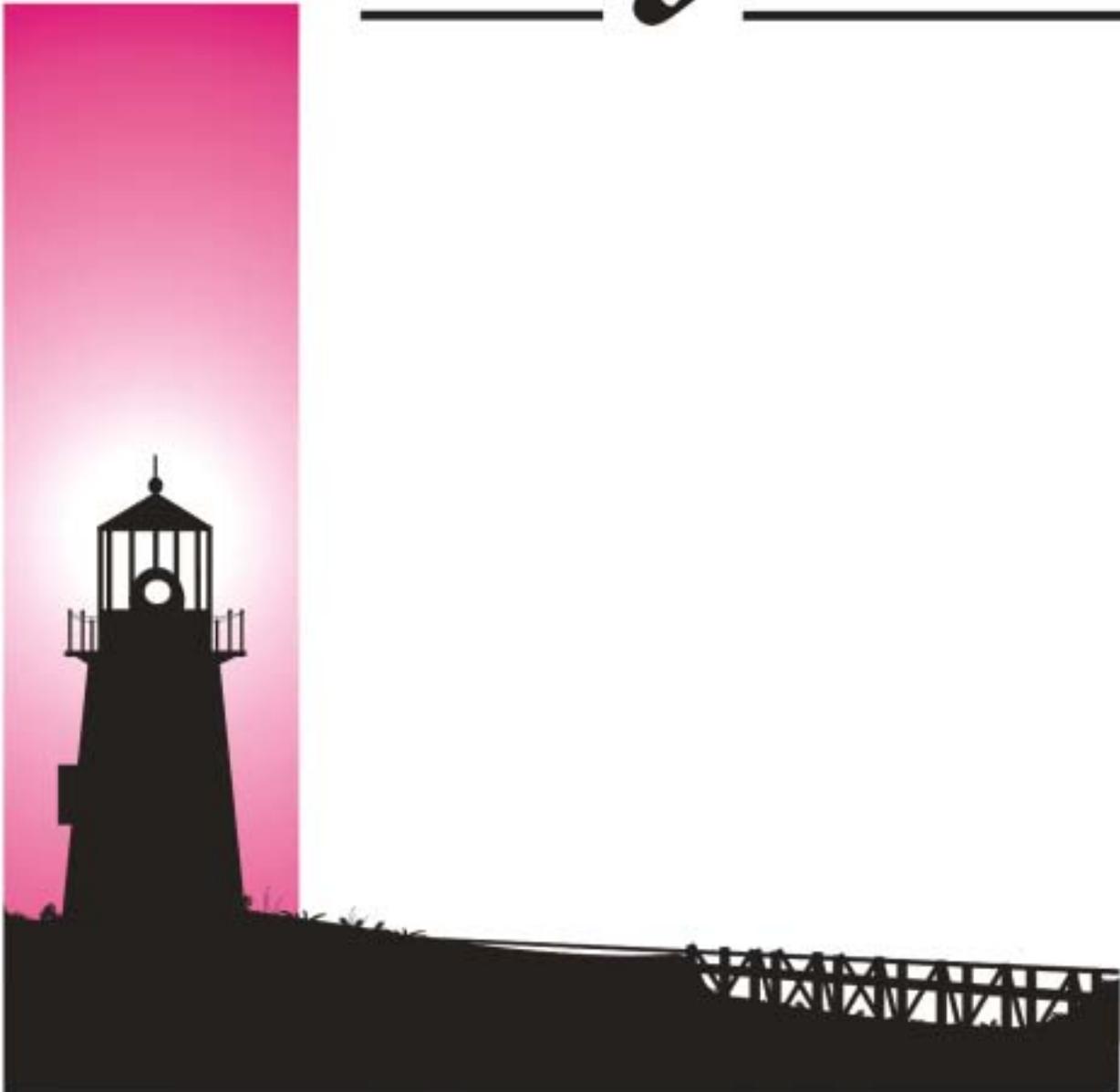


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Living Soberly

by Aaron J. Cleveland



Drunkennes is a sin against which the people of God are warned. This is a sin which is increasingly prevalent in our day. It is a sin into which both young and old fall. But it is the godly young people of the church who must especially be warned against drunkenness, for there are many pressures and temptations before them to conform to the ways of this world. Sadly, much of this pressure comes from worldly young people in the church and is directed against those who live godly in Christ. What is drunkenness? One who is drunken is one who has consumed alcohol beyond the modest amounts which God's Word plainly sets forth. To whatever degree this person has indulged, he suffers from the intoxicating and stupefying effects of alcohol in his body. One may be drunken occasionally or one may be a drunkard as defined in Proverbs 23:30, 35. To whatever degree one is drunken, or how often one becomes drunken does not matter. Drunkenness is sin. And it is a particularly dangerous sin because one is rarely drunken in isolation, but falls into many other sins.

When we look at Proverbs 23:29-35 we see the seriousness of the sin of drunkenness. Those who are drunken are in a terrible state. Alcohol has a profound psychological as well as physiological affect upon the body. (We will look at how this relates to the spiritual later.) Proverbs 23 lists these results of drunken behavior.

Beginning in verse 29 we see that the drunkard brings to himself "woe" and "sorrow." These may be woes and sorrows which he physically brings upon himself as a result of his drunken behavior, or they may be the product of his imagination which runs wild. The drunkard is contentious. He is looking for a fight and will argue and strive with those around him. The drunkard is a babbler who talks about nonsense. He freely shoots off his mouth on the most vain and foolish topics.

Further, the drunkard of Proverbs 23 has cuts and bruises as a result of his foolish behavior. He is wounded in a fight and is unaware of his injuries. "They have beaten me, and I felt it not," he says (vs. 35). He carelessly walks into a fire and does not feel the flames licking at his legs. He dives into the water, fearless of drowning.

Elsewhere in Scripture we find a further description of the results of drunkenness. We read of Noah (Gen. 9:21) becoming drunken in his tent and his son discovering his nakedness. As Isaiah 28:7, 8 tells us, those who are drunken "stumble in judgment." While this refers to the mental aspect of drunkenness, it is also true that a drunkard literally cannot walk straight. A drunkard walks "out of the way" (vs. 7). He easily goes off course. In addition to this, his vision is errant. He cannot believe what his eyes tell him. He walks along, stumbling and halting, suddenly coming upon objects his eyes have not detected. And finally, according to verse 8, the table he sits at is covered with "vomit and filthiness." He is surrounded by the filth of his own sin. What a spectacle drunkenness is.

Beyond the outward aspects of drunkenness, there are also mental or psychological aspects of drunkenness. These too can be found in the previously mentioned passages. A drunkard is one who "stumbles in judgment" and "errs in vision." His mind is not right. His thoughts are confused. His perception is dulled. His feelings and emotions are mixed up. His memory is scattered. His imagination runs wild. His thinking and reasoning become twisted. He can no longer apply knowledge to the situation at hand. Consequently, the decisions he makes are ill-conceived and sinful.

Another problem which plagues an intoxicated person is a certain fearlessness and lack of awareness to danger. Proverbs 23:34 states that a drunkard is as one “that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.” Due to the stupefying and numbing effect of alcohol upon the mind, the drunkard sinfully exposes his life to danger.

Beyond the sinfulness of drunkenness itself, many other sins often plague the drunkard. For good reason we read of drunkenness in Proverbs 23:32, “At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” Part of the sting and bite of drunkenness are the sins which go along with it.

Among those sins are adultery and fornication. The drunkards “eyes shall behold strange women” (Prov. 23:33). Gen. 19:33 records for us the history of Lot who committed great sins while drunken. A drunkard is also one who uses foul language. The drunkard utters “perverse things” in his heart, and no doubt speaks them with his mouth (Prov. 23:33). He violates the third commandment with rash swearing and cursing. He speaks proudly and lies.

Further, a drunken person may willfully expose himself to danger in violation of the sixth commandment. In doing so, he may also endanger those around him. Perhaps he is drunken while he drives a car. Quite often, drunkenness is related to other reckless and perverse behavior. We are admonished in Romans 13:13 to “walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”

We must also remember that a drunkard is forsaking his responsibilities. Any time we are doing that which we are not called to do, it means that we are forsaking that which we are called to do. A drunkard is not living soberly as he is called. Whether it is occasional drunkenness or frequent drunkenness, the fact remains that the child of God is called to continually live soberly.

This brings us to the spiritual aspect of drunkenness. It is possible to live in a state of spiritual drunkenness while being physically sober. This is possible because of the intoxicating effect the allurements of this world can have upon us. Just as a drunkard continually pursues after wine, so can we be constantly in pursuit of carnal pleasures. And, young people, the world has a thousand pleasures to pursue.

Sports. Clothing. Cars. Music. Amusement. All of these shout for our time, money, and energy. And when we continually seek them, and indulge ourselves in them, we neglect what we are called to do.

Just as physical drunkenness has stupefying effects, so does spiritual drunkenness. Because our thoughts are consumed with our earthly pleasures and pursuits, our spiritual judgment is clouded. Our spiritual senses become dull. We become unaware of the spiritual reality of sin surrounding us. False doctrine no longer strikes us as dangerous. Our spiritual walk becomes stumbling and wandering. Spiritually, we become more and more dead. The old man gets the upper hand.

The calling to physical and spiritual sobriety is indeed serious. We are called to live out of the new man. Out of that new man we live in sobriety. As we read in I Thessalonians. 5:7, 8a, “For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober.” John Calvin, in his commentary on these verses says, “For this is spiritual sobriety, when we use this world so sparingly and temperately that we are not entangled with its allurements.”

Living in spiritual sobriety also means that we continue to sharpen our spiritual senses, continually honing them by the reading and study of God’s Word. This means that we grow in our knowledge of the Reformed faith and of the doctrinal distinctives which we hold dear. We are attentive to the preaching and catechism instruction. Living soberly means that we grow in a sanctified walk, putting down the old man

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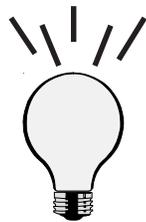
Living in spiritual sobriety also means that we continue to sharpen our spiritual senses, continually honing them by the reading and study of God's Word.

of sin. We separate from our own sins and from those who live impenitently in sin. It means that we are aware of the signs around us of the coming of the day of the Lord. We must watch and prepare.

When we are living in spiritual sobriety, putting off the sin of drunkenness, we will find that we have true joy. The way of joy and contentment is not through drunkenness and pleasure madness as the world holds before us, but true and lasting joy is found only in the Spirit. We find this distinction in Ephesians 5:18, 19. "And be not drunk with wine,

wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." When we are living in the joy of the Holy Ghost we have true peace and contentment; and it is impossible to drink excessively of this joy. ❖

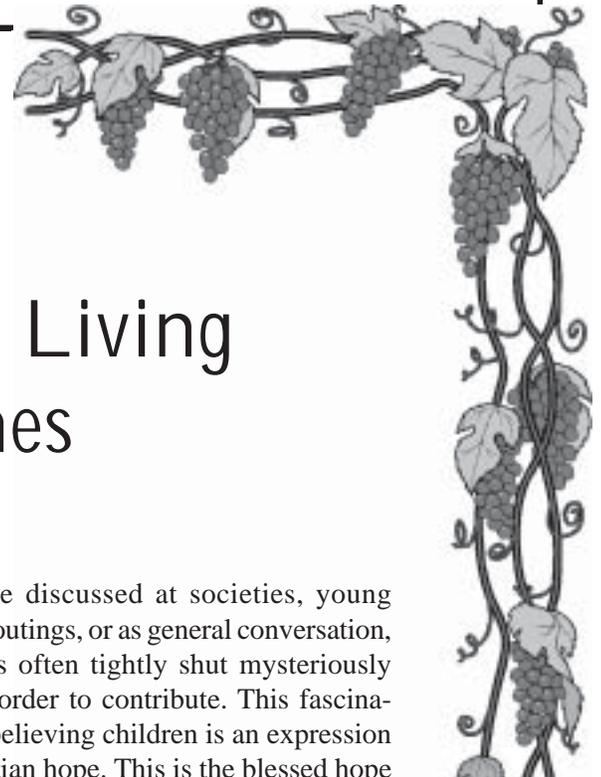
Pop Quiz



What is the relationship between drunkenness and false views of the end times? Three articles in this issue will help you formulate your answer.

An answer will be included in the next issue.

Fruitful Branches



Preparing Youth for Living in the End Times

by Bill Langerak

Scholarship Essay.

Covenant youth are fascinated with eschatology. Little prodding to "listen up" or "pay attention" is necessary when the family meditates upon texts such as Matthew 24, II Peter 3, and Daniel 7-12 during devotions. When the end

times are discussed at societies, young peoples outings, or as general conversation, even lips often tightly shut mysteriously open in order to contribute. This fascination by believing children is an expression of Christian hope. This is the blessed hope

of the believing child springing to conscious life by the Spirit of Christ as an eager anticipation for the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the body. However, this hope is not innately mature, but is mingled with fear, unbelief, trepidation, and error. This blessed hope must be cultivated and grown through solid instruction in the truths of Scripture. Only then will the covenant seed find comfort in the doctrines of the end times. Only then are they prepared for life.

Preparation for living in the end times is an aspect of godly covenantal education. Full-orbed covenantal education includes instruction in the end times in order to properly prepare youth for this life and the next. Covenantal education that teaches the youth their proper relationship in this life and world as the covenant friends of God through Jesus Christ, necessarily must teach the end times as the goal of that covenant relationship. The end of this present world and the triumphant return of Christ to gather his elect converge as the very goal of all history, as the reason why this world was created in the first place. This instruction in the end times represents

If the youth are not instructed properly concerning the end times as the fulfillment and goal of their covenant relationship to God, they are not prepared to live in this life at all.

then, a most fundamental component of covenantal education. If the youth are not instructed properly concerning the end times as the fulfillment and goal of their covenant relationship to God, they are not prepared to live in this life at all. In fact, they will not be able to live, but will die with the rest of world.

Preparation is the process of getting ready for some future event in order to either prevent negative or achieve positive results. It is the God-given means to preserve life. It is wisdom. Even the ant wisely prepares for the approaching winter by diligently gathering its food in the summer (Prov. 30:25). Preparation usually involves the revelation of a future event, assessment of its probability of occurrence, identification of negative or positive results depending on the level of preparation, possible courses of action, and a decision on the best mode

of preparation to achieve the desired result. For example, Mr. Van De Leren reveals a test will be given next Monday. The probability it will not occur is dependent on factors such as his health, etc. The man is never sick. You can figure on a test. Based on your past history, if you do not study you will get a D and Dad will react negatively. However, if you prepare by studying your notes and memorizing, you can expect a B (Mr. Van De Leren does not grade on a curve) and beaming parents. You decide to study, a wise choice.

Youth are prepared for living in the end times only when they are instructed in the wisdom of Scripture. Christ himself tells us that the future reality that we must prepare for is his imminent return and the resurrection of our bodies to everlasting life. This is our hope. Scripture alone provides the content and information that young people must be taught in order to be prepared for living in the end times. Only Scripture reveals the future events of Christ's triumphant return, the correct interpretation of the signs of his coming, and the resultant comfort for the child of God. All unbiblical speculation and human fantasies do not prepare youth with wisdom,

The majority of the Christian church world, rejecting fundamental teachings of Scripture, dreams and fantasizes concerning the end times.

but lead them astray into all sorts of foolish hopes and dreams.

The majority of the Christian church world, rejecting fundamental teachings of Scripture, dreams and fantasizes concerning the end times. Chief are pre- and post-millennialism. Just as we may not ignore the ungodly world's dictum of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die," so also preparation of the youth must include instruction in these major errors that present equally foolish presentations of future reality. It is not only the pagan who rejects Christ's words in Scripture. But, according to II Peter 3, scoffers within the church, willingly ignorant of God's past judgments, jeer at the imminent return of Christ: "Where is the promise of his coming?" False prophets among the people use the lusts

of the flesh to alluringly present a different hope than the bodily return of Christ to dwell with his elect in a new heavens and earth.

Post-millennialism dangerously presents such false hope within Reformed and Presbyterian churches. As with all doctrinal errors, it has developed. Over the past 30 years post-millennialism has taken the pernicious form of Christian Reconstructionism and has been accepted within conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches as an alternative eschatological viewpoint. It is an assault upon the only comfort and hope of the church.

Christian Reconstruction teaches that all the prophecy of the Old and New Testaments regarding the signs of Christ's return, including apostasy, tribulation, and the Antichrist, have already been fulfilled in 70 A.D with the destruction of Jerusalem. Belief by the New Testament church (including the apostles) in the imminent return of Christ is a terrible mistake that has prevented the church from "Christianizing" the world. This "Christianizing" involves bringing the whole world under the political and religious dominion of Christianity, which will rule the world for a "golden" thousand years by re-establishing Old Testament Jewish law. Only then will Christ return (if, as some maintain, he even comes at all.) The victory of the church is an earthly victory. The believer is "a conqueror" only after he places his foot physically upon the neck of the ungodly. And, Christ is only successful after the wicked world is made subject to a carnal "Messianic kingdom." The hope of Christian Reconstructionism is this future earthly kingdom of Christ. The youth are not prepared for the future reality which Scripture presents. Like the proverbial grasshopper, they foolishly fiddle away in the hope of a never-ending summer, while winter's icy blast lurks around the corner. The youth are not prepared for this world or the next.

Against this foolish dream, Christ reveals that he is victorious now. Christ has been vanquishing the kingdom of darkness in order to establish his own kingdom since his exultation. Christ has been spiritually successful gathering his elect from the sinful kingdom of Satan, sanctifying them through his Spirit, and preserving his church against all wickedness which would overthrow them. Christ's success is not measured carnally by how many accept the gospel, nor by counting how many are brought under its political and cultural influence. Christ teaches that he is victorious when each one of his elect are plucked from the kingdom of Satan while all others reject that same preaching. This victory is spiritual. The

church is "more than conquerors" even though they may lose their life in this world either at the hands of enemies or through old age. Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies (Ps. 60:12; 108:13).

Christ reveals he will indeed return again, that he currently sits in his resurrected body at God's right hand, and has been given all power in heaven and earth to direct all events in history toward his return which will be soon, i.e., the next great event in the history of salvation. When Christ returns he will raise the bodies of the dead, unite them with the already resurrected soul, and make them a complete and fit instrument for the eternal reward handed down according to the works done in them—the elect for everlasting life with Christ in a new universe resurrected out of the old, and the reprobate for everlasting death apart from Christ in hell.

Preparation of the covenant youth in these biblical truths that describe their relationship to their victorious Christ provides comfort in life and death. Therefore, this preparation for the return of Christ includes instruction in the biblical signs of his coming; the worldwide preaching of the gospel, increasing lawlessness in the world and apostasy in the church which rejects that preaching, the arrival of the Antichrist, floods, earthquakes, war, disease and famine. These signs, when taught in the context of the believers' right relation to the victorious Christ will not frighten the youth, but only confirm within their sanctified souls the sure coming of Christ. They will begin to yearn for his return and express this groaning desire. "Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

These biblical truths of Christ's return and the resurrection of our body, the church heartily confesses as its comfortable hope. We declare in the Belgic Confession, Art. 37, that "the consideration of this judgment, is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but *most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect.*" The Heidelberg Catechism commenting on the Apostles Creed in Q. 52 likewise teaches that biblical instruction in Christ's return brings comfort to the believer. It asks: "What *comfort* is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead?" This comfort is the confession of the covenant youth that I "both body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ," the same Jesus Christ who is returning for me.

This lends urgency to every opportunity to provide this instruction, whether in the home, classroom, or pulpit. What use is teaching and preaching Jesus to the youth,

if the fulfillment of his redemptive work is not included? What comfort will the youth have in this life, if we neglect to give instruction in the victorious Christ who as their covenant friend is returning to publicly vindicate them and live with them in perfect everlasting fellowship? What comfort do they receive if they see not that Christ and the church are victorious already now, regardless of earthly appearances? This biblical instruction,

therefore, is our calling as parents, educators, and pastors. Without it, there will be only despair, unbelief, and fear among the youth. How shall the young direct their way? Thy word, O Lord, will safely lead, if in its wisdom they confide. ❖

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

Story Time

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 8

At the Cattle Market

(Editor's Note: *The last chapter dealt with the birth of a new baby and the visit to this home by rough men looking for a drink to satisfy their craving for liquor. They received instead a cigar and a testimony of the wrongs of drinking. The scene now changes to the cattle market. Earlier in the book the author had made reference to the fact that a market day in Hilversum meant also a day off from school for the children. We meet a few new characters in this chapter, but renew also an old acquaintance, the fish peddler, Aalt Boer, whose wagon had been knocked over by Martin when he was running home from school.*)

The day of the cattle market, to which the boys and girls of the town eagerly looked forward, had a dreary beginning. All night long there had been a downpour. True, by sun rising the rain had stopped, but the sandy roads were filled with muddy pools.

Nevertheless, early in the morning many cattle dealers went with their cows and horses to Hilversum. The

cattle market, which was held on the first and second Tuesday of April and October, was too important to miss. The first Tuesday generally brought an especially large crowd. At the Kerkbrink, where the market was held, the market supervisor expected many cattle traders and, as they arrived, appointed a place for each.

Naturally he could not please every one with the place assigned to them, but with a joke or two he knew how to keep them all in a good humor.

Soon the old market square was full and the first buyers appeared.

With them came also a crowd of boys and girls, whomud or no mud—could not possibly have been kept home. The buyers muttered about whether their teachers had nothing to do, but often had no time to await an answer; the dealing had begun. With much clapping of the hands the seller and the farmer tried to agree on a price.¹ Sometimes the farmer would walk away in a pretense of anger, only to try again a little later. When the demand and the offer were finally agreed upon the buyer and the seller disappeared in “The Large Tavern” to settle the deal while enjoying a drink.

The boys took delight in the bidding; especially Dokkie² could not be driven away. He enjoyed immensely the colorful language and the studied grimaces

of the buyers. Also the dealers in horses drew a large crowd, especially when they let their horses gallop before the critical eye of the buyer.

As the morning progressed and business increased one had an opportunity to meet all kinds of acquaintances.

Priest Van Wijk³ walked between the cows. His parish belonged to the Old Catholic Church which had repudiated the authority of the pope with the appointment of a new bishop. Priest Van Wijk was too much of a friend of animals to stay home. He enjoyed the dealings of the cattle market, even as he handed out advice to cattlemen who had tied their cows too tight.

The pensioned Hussar Sergeant Manus Rebel from Naarden pottered about in his tattered uniform.⁴ He inspected each horse; no fault escaped his experienced eye. Many buyers sought his advice, although this enraged the dealers. However the dealers did not dare to object, for if they objected, a stream of tobacco juice would shoot past their noses. The old hussar was a sharp shooter.

The police, represented by the constables De Nooy and Van Huizen, kept a watchful eye on the sales. It was a remarkable sight to see both men walking next to each other. De Nooy was a giant, as strong as an ox, whose very eyes forced silence upon every one in a tavern. Van Huizen, on the contrary, was of small stature, and besides somewhat of an invalid, so that he soon received the cruel name of "the lame constable." The constables were just ready to enter the courthouse when the innkeeper came running to announce that a fight had broken out in his tavern between two young fellows of Hilversum and Bussum.

That appealed to De Nooy, who with giant steps crossed the market and disappeared in the tavern, followed by Ruwalda.

Van Huizen remained waiting on the porch of the courthouse.

At that moment an old acquaintance appeared on the scene: the fish peddler, Aalt Boer. He knew the markets in the area well and tried to earn a bit at each one. He soon discovered a vacant spot between the rows of cattle and without batting an eye stood there with his cart.

On the handle he placed a paper of doubtful color bearing the words, "Fresh sea fish."

After a minute or so the first customer appeared: Manus Rebel. The old sergeant eagerly rubbed his hand. "It will soon be time to forage;⁵ quickly give me a mess of flounder." "According to your order, lieutenant,"

chortled the other and began to weigh the fish which Rebel ordered.

"Mister, don't try to cheat me; I have seen more of the world than you and all your fish," scolded Rebel. "Then you likely can swim well," the fish peddler added, but he suddenly was uncomfortably silent, for his customer had snatched a small flounder from the scale and allowed the sun to shine on the watery fish.

"The gentleman sells fresh fish, does he not," Rebel said in an ominous and slow voice.

"Floundering fresh," Aalt Boer tried to act cheerful, "the tails are still wet from the Zuiderzee."

Then since when did a worm creep out of the head of a fresh flounder?" asked his customer, still seeming calm.

"Well, that's amazing!" Aalt said politely; "There is actually a retired fish among the young fellows. It's accidental. That little worm is included in the bargain, Lieutenant-colonel."

Splat! With a wild wave the angry hussar sergeant slapped the flounder against the head of the fish peddler, so that the scales stuck to his ear lobes. "You lying swindler! The fish stinks so bad that even the worms say "Foey on it."

Aalt Boer now also became angry. "And you pay me damages for that flounder," he growled, "or I'll call the police."

This pleasant discussion soon drew the attention of the market visitors, which quickly made up a crowd around the fish cart. The fish man now began to get very nervous and anxiously looked in all directions for help. Then he discovered Van Huizen sitting on the porch of the courthouse. "Police!" he shouted as loud as he could. The policeman saw that he could not ignore the call; and with slow steps he made his way to the place where the quarrel was going on. Because it involved two people from out of town, up to this point the viewers had remained neutral. They willingly allowed Van Huizen to make his way through the crowd. Rebel gave a description of the happenings in peppered language, while Aalt Boer strongly defended his wares.

Undecided, the policeman pushed back his cap, until he suddenly spotted the priest Van Wijk among the people. That gave him an idea.

"His honor, will you inspect this fish? It is said that you are an expert."

The priest laughed and bent over the cart. But immediately his face changed. "These fish are far from

fresh, even somewhat spoiled.” He spoke clearly and emphatically.

Van Huizen was most uncomfortable, but had to carry on.

“Rebel, go call the market master.” Now the flounder peddler was beside himself with rage. “I do not allow myself to be insulted by such a black pope!” he raged. Now there was no control of the situation any more.

The kind priest, as an old Catholic spiritual man, was deeply insulted by being called a “pope,” and became fiery red. The folk from Hilversum sided somewhat against Van Huizen, while a few of the town people stood with balled fists in front of the fish cart.⁶

In vain the policeman tried to keep the matter in hand. “Get out, folks; get back,” he said a bit illogically, when the crowd pressed forward.

In the meantime his colleague had removed the people of Bussem from the tavern, and he was now free to race to the tumult at the market. But Van Huizen did not see him. “I have to handle everything alone,” he angrily cried out, more to himself than to the people. “Even De Nooy left me on my own. O yes, when one is in need, his friends disappear.”

At the same time the voice of De Nooy grumbled behind him: “First of all, you are not in need, and secondly, I am not your friend. What is happening here anyway?” Van Huizen realized he was on the spot, but still told in a few sentences what had happened.

“Let me see your market permit,” demanded De Nooy briefly of the flounder peddler.

This man struck his forehead, “O no! In all my hurry I have completely forgotten that.”

“Accidentally,” mocked De Nooy. “So you stand on the market without a market permit, and besides that you are selling spoiled fish. We are going to put a stop to that at once!” Before the eyes of the chuckling audience he took out his little book. But the disturbance that began with an animal would also finish with an animal.

The gray tomcat of the innkeeper Ruwalda, which had been forgotten by its master on this busy morning, had decided to visit the market in search of something to eat.

Because it was constantly present in the noisy tavern, the cat was not afraid of people. Having come to the fish cart it first eagerly devoured the flounder that Rebel had used as a projectile and decided that this tasted like more.

No one paid attention to the tomcat, until it had jumped on the cart, taken the largest flounder, and like

an arrow immediately ran off with it until it sat safely in a high tree.

A roar of laughter arose from the crowd. Manus Rebel struck his knees. De Nooy let his little book fall to the ground and even Van Huizen forgot his anger. Only Aalt Boer stared in amazement at the tree.

“Get out of the town,” commanded De Nooy, still biting on his mustache; “I’ll let it go this time.”

So for the second time within a week Aalt Boer left the town with shamed face. But this time it was entirely his own fault.

The market day continued without incident. At quitting time a number of poor children came with wheelbarrows to put in them any gifts for the compost pile at home.⁷ When their wheelbarrows were full, they still had their handkerchiefs...⁸

The only one who looked back on the day with mixed feelings was policeman Van Huizen. His reputation had not improved. He longed for an occasion in which he could prove himself.

That desire would soon be fulfilled.

¹ Both the buyer and the seller would offer his new price with a clap of the hands.

² Dokkie was one of Martin’s classmates, of whom we have not yet heard a great deal.

³ We met him in the last chapter when he was called to baptize a baby about to die shortly after birth. Some of the Roman Catholics in the Netherlands had declared their independence from the pope.

⁴ Manus Rebel is an interesting character whom we have not met before. He had served in the army in the Queen’s Hussars, but had now retired and was receiving a pension from the government for his years of service.

⁵ The old sergeant uses a word here usually applied to cattle who “forage” for their food. It was time to eat.

⁶ Although Roman Catholicism was still viewed with much suspicion, the Netherlands as a whole was more tolerant of religions other than the Reformed faith than almost any other country in Europe.

⁷ They came to collect the cow and horse manure that had fallen to the pavement; and perhaps to find a bit of food that had been dropped here and there.

⁸ The reference to handkerchiefs is to the fact that, when the wheelbarrows were full, the children could use their handkerchiefs to collect more manure to carry home. Women, even in the early years of the Dutch settlers in Grand Rapids (and presumably in other places as well), would collect horse manure from the streets and put the manure in their huge aprons to carry it home for their gardens. ❖

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

June 1 Read Genesis 9:18-24

After the tremendous salvation God had wrought for Noah and his family, we are reminded that this is only a picture of the salvation Christ wrought for the church, and will fully realize at His second coming. We see this as we see sin raise its ugly head into the world once more. The flood did not wash away sin. Like the water of baptism, it is only a sign of the washing that can only be found in the blood of Christ. Even though Satan knew that Christ would come and crush his head, he never quit attacking the seed of the woman. We must remember this as we are tempted to say that we cannot and do not sin. Sin is present in the world all around us. Satan will try to cause us to sin. We must wage a battle against sin. This is not a battle won with the weapons of man but only through the blood of Christ. Sing Psalter 202.

June 2 Read Genesis 9:24-29

After Noah's sin and his sons' reactions to those sins, we find Noah making prophecy concerning his sons and their seeds. Of Ham and his children we find condemnation. Of Shem and his children we find the Old Testament blessing which would be realized through the Hebrews. In Japheth we find the promise to most of us as we claim lineage through Japheth. In Japheth we find the Gentiles. In those Gentiles the gospel was proclaimed after Pentecost. From those Gentiles the Gospel has come to those of us who trace our ancestry in Europe. Let us give thanks for that Gospel even as we prepare to go to the House of God tomorrow. Sing Psalter 189.

June 3 Read Genesis 10:1-20

As we read the genealogies found in various places in Scripture, we may wonder why they are found in the Bible. We might think there is nothing edifying in them for us the church of the New Dispensation. But then we must remember that the Bible is God's Word to His church of all ages. He has given to us His Word for our edification. So before we dismiss these genealogies as nothing more than lists of hard to pronounce names, we had better take another look at them before we skip them altogether. We find in these twenty verses the account of Nimrod. It was this Nimrod who began the rebellion at Babel as we see in verse 10. We will learn more about Babel later, but we should see that its roots were found in Nimrod's mightiness. This was not a mightiness as is recounted in Hebrews 11, but rather it is the self-boasting found in the children of Satan. Let us look for instruction in these genealogies, and let us use them for our edification. Sing Psalter 156.

June 4 Read Genesis 10:21-32

This part of Genesis 10 continues the genealogies which give to us the family of Noah. We know that Noah's family had three lines. Those of Ham, Shem, and Japheth. It is the line of Shem on which the Old Testament primarily focuses. This is the line of the covenant though which God gave to the church all of the promises culminating in Christ, in Whom we find our salvation. We see also that in these lines are all the various culture differences found throughout the world. These are by not chance or caused by some evolutionistic principle, but rather these differences are ordained by God from eternity and carried out in time. The flood, contrary to most popular opinion, was real, and from that flood came history as we understand it today. To discount the flood is to discount the true history of the world including the history which gave to us salvation. Sing Psalter 237.

June 5 Read Genesis 11:1-9

In the account of the tower of Babel we find the true feelings of the world toward God and His ordained plans for salvation. Simply put—the world hates those plans and will do everything and anything in its power to stop those plans. This is so because Satan hates God's plans for salvation and uses the means of the world's people and leaders to try and frustrate those plans. God had commanded the people to spread out from Ararat and replenish the whole earth. Man did not want to do this, and so Nimrod and his henchmen tried to build a tower which would serve as a rallying point against God and His plans. God frustrated that plan by introducing many languages into the world. Today the world wishes to use technology to bring a one world society to stand as a rallying point against God and His plans. Let us not be caught up in the Babels of today but rather let us pray together, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." Sing Psalter 86.

June 6 Read Genesis 11:10-26

As we read the genealogies found in this chapter do you see a difference found in the preceding genealogies? Notice the word "begat." We see that the sons of Shem were obedient to the command of God to be fruitful and multiply. In accordance to God's command and with an eye to the covenant promises given to Adam and Noah, they bore covenant seed. From these covenant seed we come in verse 26 to the name of Abram. We will talk more about this name in coming devotionals. But for today I want us to think about this. Are we obedient to the command to be fruitful and multiply? Are we faithful to the covenant established by God for His people? The children of Shem were; what about us? Sing Psalter 89.

June 7 Read Genesis 11:27-32

In this chapter we see a branch of the line of Seth. This branch was headed by a man by the name of Terah. We do not know much about him except for some of his children, his hometown, and some facts about his moving. Originally he was from Ur of the Chaldees. This place was between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the area known as Mesopotamia. For some reason almost unknown to us, Terah and his family moved to Haran which is north of the land of Caanan. I say almost unknown to us because we know that God called Abram out of Ur. His father's moving was part of God's plan. God was moving His covenant people to Caanan, the covenant picture of heaven. Like Terah's family we, too, are pilgrims looking to find our final abode. Our final abode is heaven. Are we longing for it? Sing Psalter 211.

June 8 Read Genesis 12:1-9

Yesterday we looked briefly at Abram's call from Ur. Today we find more details about that call. He was not only called to go into a strange land, he was called to leave all that he knew behind him. Terah and other relatives went with him to Haran, but except for his wife, nephew, and some servants, Abram went alone to Caanan. We read in Hebrews 11 that this was done by faith. Abram knew that his home was not to be in Mesopotamia. We must know that our home is not to be found anywhere on this earth. We may be called to leave our relatives for the cause of the kingdom of heaven. By faith we will be able to do that and to live as a pilgrim and a stranger in this world while we wait for a better life in heaven. Abram received word about the covenant promises; we have that word for us in God's Word. Let us believe and obey Him Who is faithful. Sing Psalter 289:1-4.

June 9 Read Genesis 12:10-20

In this portion of Scripture as well as in many others we see the truth that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Abram, even though he was called by God to establish the covenant line through Isaac, was not sinless. Abram, like David, Peter, Noah, Moses, and every other saint, was a weak, sinful human being. We can and must learn from these falls. First of all, we must learn that sin can take even the strongest of God's people. Sin and Satan are roaring lions seeking to devour us at any time. Secondly, we can learn of the strength of the preservation of God's grace. No matter what the sin, He will deliver us from that sin. This is because salvation is not of works or anything connected with man. Salvation is of God alone. Let us cling to the promises of God and not depend on our works. Sing Psalter 289:5-7.

June 10 Read Genesis 13:1-11

In this world the child of God is called to make choices. Even the youngest of our children will have to choose between obedience and disobedience. Our teenagers are constantly called to make a choice in the way that they will live their lives. We as adults know only too well that choices must be made. These choices are often very hard. These choices may cause us to be ostracized by family and friends. These choices may cause us to lose status in the circle of acquaintances that we have. What will we do? Will we fall as Lot did and choose the world of Sodom to pitch our tents? It may seem alright at first. We may think that we are strong enough to withstand the evils that may be present. But just think back to chapter 12. Abram could not stand; can we? Let us choose as Joshua did to serve Jehovah. Let us never make a choice in which the church of God is left out. Sing Psalter 371.

June 11 Read Genesis 13:12-18

In the remainder of chapter 13, we find further explanation of the covenant promise given to Abram and his seed. First of all he is promised all the land that he could see. This was not just a temporal promise. This was a picture of the promised land which Abram and his seed would inherit in heaven. Secondly, he was promised many seed. This, too, was not temporal. Oh, it had great meaning for Abram because he was old and had no children as yet. But to have seed more than the dust of the earth meant more than earthly sons and daughters. This was the covenant promise which includes us and our children. This is the promise on which we base our belief of baptism. Finally, Abram believed this promise because he built an altar of thanksgiving to God at Mamre. Let us cast our cares of this life upon these promises which we know to be sure even as we heard and confessed them in church yesterday. Sing Psalter 350.

June 12 Read Genesis 14:1-12

It had been some time since Lot had left Abram and had pitched his tents near Sodom. We find in this chapter that Lot and his family did not stay near Sodom but had moved into the city itself. Sodom was known in the world as a very wicked city. Lot may have felt uncomfortable about what he did but he did this nonetheless. We know from later history that this was the cause for his family's departure from the truth. God did not leave himself without witness however. God caused Lot and his family to be captured as Sodom was in war against another city. This was God's way of chastising Lot for his sinful decision to leave Abram and the place where God was worshiped. People of God, do not leave the church and its influence. To do so will only bring grief if not to you then to your children or grandchildren. God is only pleased by a true worship; to do anything else is to displease Him. Sing Psalter 213:1-4.

June 13 Read Genesis 14:13-24

In this part of Scripture we see that God remembered "righteous Lot" and used his uncle to rescue him. But that is not what we wish to focus on today. Today we want to look at a man named Melchizedek. By using a concordance you can find more about this man in the books of Psalms and Hebrews. Here we see that this man was king of Salem and priest of the most high God. Melchizedek knew that Abram was godly, Abram joined him in worship and was blessed by Melchizedek. Abram also gave tithes to him of the spoils that he had taken. Melchizedek, we read later, is a type of Christ. He typifies Christ in both his kingly and priestly office. We also want to notice that Abram wants to make sure that the wicked king of Sodom could not glory in Abram by refusing to take any gift from Him. We, like Abram, must make sure that all glorying is in God alone and not in some worldly person. Sing Psalter 305.

June 14 Read Genesis 15:1-6

One of the great truths that God has given to us is that of the covenant of grace which He has established with His people. In this chapter we find how that covenant is established, and that it is not of man or his works but is totally from God. When God told Abram of the promise, Abram had difficulty believing because he had no children. God reassured him that not only would he bring forth children but also that his children would be numerous. In verse 6 we find that Abram believed and in that believing, which was by faith, he was justified. Abram had only a small understand-

ing of the covenant. What about us who have been exposed to the covenant in its full extent? Do we believe? Do we believe that the covenant is only of God and not of our works? Do we live that way? Sing Psalter 354.

June 15 Read Genesis 15:7-11

Notice in this chapter the use of the word LORD. This word, as it is printed in our King James Version of the Bible, is the word which means Jehovah. Jehovah is God's covenant name. It is by this name that God made known to Abram the blessings of the covenant. It is this name by which God also makes known to us, the saints of the New Dispensation, those same blessings. Do we use that name with awe? When we say "Hallelujah" do we really mean praise the LORD the covenant God? Let us keep this name precious in our lives and when we take this name upon our lips let us not do it in vain and sin against the third commandment. Sing Psalter 378.

June 16 Read Genesis 15:12-21

This is a continuation of the account of God's establishing the covenant with Abram. First of all we see that God did it in the way of a picture. He used a commonly known way of establishing a contract in that part of the world. But there was something different! Usually both parties in a contract would pass between the halves of the animals. Here only God does. It was not even done while Abram was awake, but as he was in a deep sleep induced by God. He also left with Abram the prophecy of his children going to Egypt for a long time. This prophecy would aid Abram's children to know that their sojourn in Egypt was but for a time. We, too, must cling to God's covenant promises and know that our sojourn on this earth is but for a time. We will go to our fathers in peace even as Abram did. Sing Psalter 362.

June 17 Read Genesis 16:1-6

People of God, are you tempted to take matters into your own hands sometimes? Do you think that you know better than God? Abram and Sarai made that mistake. They tried to help God to achieve the covenant promises that they desired. First of all they fell into sin. Then they brought trouble to their house. Finally they had to learn the hard way that God works all things out in His own time. What about us? Has this been our experience in life? Sadly enough it probably is. We seek to satisfy our desires and wills and forget about God's council and providence. God will chastise us for either not waiting for Him or for placing our wills over His. Let us stop and consider our ways and see if they are God's way for us, which is glorifying to Him. Sing Psalter 359.

June 18 Read Genesis 16:7-16

Trying to decide the eternal reward for Hagar and Ishmael has caused much disagreement in the church. Let us not worry about that right now. Let us concentrate on the confession of Hagar in verse 13 when she says, "Thou God seest me." Do we make the same confession when we fall into troubles? Are we convinced that God's eyes are in every place beholding good and evil? We should. His omnipresence is one of the truths that we confess. We must not just confess this with our mouths but we must also confess this with our lives. The things that we do, the words we say, and thoughts that we think are under His all-knowing scrutiny. Do we live that way? Children, do you think you can hide from God? Teenagers, do you think darkness is your ally? God sees all and will bring all into judgment. Sing Psalter 248.

June 19 Read Genesis 17:1-8

When it seems impossible with man, all things are possible with God. This is the truth found in chapters 17 and 18 of Genesis. Abraham was 99 years old. Even in those days of advanced age this was usually past the time of having children. God teaches Abraham and us patience in this account. Once again God reiterates the promise of the covenant with him. God also gives to him a token of the sureness of that covenant. This token is a new name. The name Abraham means "father of many nations." In the covenant that's what Abraham would be. In that covenant, we too, are blessed because Abraham is called the father of many nations. One more point for us to consider in Abraham's new name is that we will also receive a new name in the heavenly Canaan. Let us long for the day in which we receive our new names. Sing Psalter 425:4-6.

June 20 Read Genesis 17:9-14

Another token of that covenant was given to Abraham at this time. That was the sign of circumcision. Circumcision was a bloody sign signifying the bloody death of our Savior Christ Jesus. It was a sign that was only for the Old Testament Church. That sign stayed with them and signified them as different from the world around them. Baptism has taken place of circumcision. It too is a sign of God's grace upon His people. Young people, does the world know that you have been baptized? Do they know that you live a life that is cleansed by the blood of Christ? Those around Canaan knew that Abraham's seed were the circumcised ones. Do your friends know you in the same way? The covenant is precious to us. Let us live out of that covenant day by day. Sing Psalter 65.

June 21 Read Genesis 17:15-22

We need to stop and think a little bit about Abraham talking with God. We do not know how this theophany took place, but it did happen, of that there is no doubt. When we read of the Old Testament saints talking with God we may be a little jealous. We may wish that He would appear to us with the promise of His coming. But the fact of the matter is that He does talk with us! He talks with us through His Word. We all have many copies of the Bible. Are they in good little-used condition or are they worn-out waiting to be replaced? If it is the latter, we can rest assured that God talks to us. If it is the former, well, we know that He is talking, are we listening? Sometimes Abraham did not listen very well either as evidenced by his laughing. God reminded him that he did not listen when he named his son Isaac. Let us listen not laugh at what God says to us. Sing Psalter 360.

June 22 Read Genesis 17:23-27

Abraham obeyed God and carried out the ceremony and sign of circumcision with all who were in his house. Even though this may have seemed strange to him, he carried out this part of God's law. Those in his house obeyed God also. This shows us that Abraham was a man who did not hide his obedience of God nor his worship of God. His whole house accepted this sign as it was given by God. Are we as obedient to the law of God? Are we willing to do all that God has commanded in His Word. This is our part in the covenant. It does not give to us the covenant, but it is our way of expressing gratitude for what God has given to us in that covenant. Sing Psalter 328.

June 23 Read Genesis 18:1-8

Tomorrow you will attend church, the Lord willing. Will there be any strangers in church? If there are will you go introduce your-

selves to them? Will you make them feel welcome so that they may return if they do not have a permanent church home or are seeking one more faithful to the Word of God? If they are from out of state, will you make sure that they have a place for meals on the Lord's Day? Abraham was commended for his hospitality in the book of Hebrews. In that same reference we are reminded to be hospitable. Christ told us that when we are hospitable to the least of all people, we are hospitable to Him. Let us follow Abraham's example and be hospitable to those strangers in our midst. Sing Psalter 24.

June 24 Read Genesis 18:9-15

Through all of this waiting for the promise of the son we read little of Sarah. We saw that she encouraged Abraham to marry Hagar, and we saw that she regretted doing that. In today's passage we again see that Sarah, too, had a hard time believing the sure promises of God. When the birth of her son is announced, she laughs and then she tries to hide from God. God then speaks His word that nothing is too hard for Jehovah the covenant God. He who can save a people dead in sins and misery can surely give a child to any living woman. As we listen to His Word today let us remember that nothing is too hard for Jehovah no matter what the circumstances we may be in. Let us trust on the covenant promises which He has given to us. Sing Psalter 161:1-5.

June 25 Read Genesis 18:16-22

For today let us look at but one verse of this section of chapter 18. That is verse 19. We will look at the other verses as we consider the rest of the chapter tomorrow. In this verse we see that God knows that Abraham will bring up his children in a God-fearing way. Remember, this is before Isaac is born. But yet God knows Abraham. He knows him because He is the all-knowing God. What God knows will come to pass. Parents, our school year has ended. During the summer the bringing up of the covenant seed which God has given to us falls squarely in our laps. We receive no help from covenant schools if God is pleased to provide us with them. This is an awesome calling. Summertime is not a vacation from this calling and responsibility. If we think we can vacation from the demands of the covenant, Satan will rub his hands in glee. Let us teach our children to keep the way of the Lord this summer and always. Sing Psalter 325.

June 26 Read Genesis 18:23-33

As the angels leave Abraham, one of them lags behind. This angel is none other than the Old Testament Christ. His appearing to men of the Old Testament is never without significance. Here we find that he brings to Abraham notice about the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This was not because there was any love of God found for these cities. This can never be, for these cities were consumed with all sorts of evils. God showed to Abraham what would happen for righteous Lot's sake. With this notice Abraham could plead for the life of his nephew. He knew that his nephew had sinned, but he knew that God was gracious to forgive the sins of his people. Do we share Abraham's sense of corporate responsibility? Do we plead with God for those who may be in trouble? Let us bring all the cares of God's people to Him in prayer. Sing Psalter 91.

June 27 Read Genesis 19:1-11

What a mess Lot had got himself into when he moved to Sodom. Yes, Lot was righteous as is testified by Peter in his second epistle. Yes, Lot, like his uncle, knew how to be hospitable to strangers

even protecting them from the evil men of the city. But Lot was weak, in fact, he was very weak. Not only did he leave the church, not only did he ignore the chastisement of God, but he also would have given his daughters to the beasts which waited outside his doors. Some might say Lot knew that they would not take his offer, this might be, but Lot had no way of knowing that for sure. It was only by the grace of God that Lot was delivered from that awful mess that night. It was God who blinded the citizens of Sodom in their sins and saved Lot. Let us remember this and take warning from Lot's weakness and not follow his example and leave the sphere of the covenant-the church of the Most High God. Sing Psalter 146:1-6.

June 28 Read Genesis 19:12-22

Here in this section of God's Word, we see how longsuffering God is with his people. After the ugly night before Lot was slow to leave the city. This we read in verses 14 and 15. Lot's family did not want to leave. Lot left sons-in-law behind. It is very likely that he left sons and daughters as well. His wife was holding him back. He lingered in the city until the angels took him by the hand and pushed him out of Sodom. Then he felt too weak to flee to the mountains and he asked to go to the little city of Zoar. Do we let earthly cares and concerns keep us from obeying God? Do we let our concern for family members detract from the obedience which God commands? If we do, we can only hope that God will be merciful to us. We must know that we must obey God or He will not bless us. Sing Psalter 398.

June 29 Read Genesis 19:23-29

We notices two truths in this short section of Scripture. First of all, we see God's judgment on Lot's wife. Lot had not married someone who was one with him in the Lord. For that he had to pay the price of seeing her turned into a pillar of salt because she longed for the wickedness that could only be found in Sodom. She hated God and all that God meant for Lot. Young people, as you seek a mate, do not seek one whose character is that of Lot's wife. If you do, you will only be disappointed. Secondly, we see the answer to Abraham's prayers. He prayed for his nephew and God answered that prayer. No, at this time Abraham did not know what happened to Lot, but he did know that God was faithful. This should encourage us to pray for family members who are weak and walking in sin. God is full of mercy and will show His lovingkindness to His people. Sing Psalter 20.

June 30 Read Genesis 19:30-38

We come to the end of this sordid chapter in Lot's life, and it does not get any better. After seeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot does not throw his care upon God but rather he flees to the mountains for safety. Then his daughters make the devilish plan to keep their line alive. They feared that Lot would never go near any people again, and so they take matters into their own hands. They cause Lot to become drunk. He did not learn from Noah's sin, did he? Then they commit adultery with him. Lot did not bring up his children as Abraham did, and he was paying the price. All of his problems can be traced to his leaving his uncle's home and the place of worship which had been established in Canaan. Let us learn from this and let us fear God and keep all His commandments. If we do, He will most surely bless us. If we do not, our sins will rise up against us. Sing Psalter 5.

When I In Awesome Wonder...
The Golden Coast Of Michigan
The Changing Shore

by Deane Wassink

Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. The movement of the sand upon the shore, blown by wind and carried by waves, is a constant reminder of the changeableness of this life; of our need to rest upon a firm foundation.

Working day after day at the same site along the golden beaches, I am amazed at the drastic changes that occur in a short period of time. When walking down the beach, the surface inland is dry and very difficult to walk in. Along the water's edge, it is damp, hard packed earth. At times this hard area is broad and flat. Other times, in the same spot, the waves tickle your feet when you walk between the water and a small cliff up to three feet high. The cliff has become the boundary between the soft dry sand and the water's edge. In a single day, thousands of cubic yards of sand can be moved in just a hundred feet of beach.

Over the years, tremendous changes can occur. Once forested dunes can be washed into the lake. Or, new dunes can form up to several hundred feet tall. In fact, the largest are nearly five hundred feet tall, like the Sleeping Bear dunes west of Traverse City.

One of the most fascinating examples of these changes is the movement of a stream bed as the water flows into the lake from inland. It can build a channel parallel the shore for hundreds of feet. Then the dike between the stream and the shore can break and combined with the wave action cause the stream to flow completely the opposite direction.

When a group of fathers and sons from our church hiked along the shore, we all enjoyed looking for fish and driftwood along this stream. The next day, the stream

flowed into the lake nearly 300 feet north of where it had the day before.

Only a few people have the opportunity to build upon the shore. Some do not like to admit it, but building upon the dunes can be a very risky and expensive proposition. In a ten year period during the sixties and seventies the width of the *shore* went from the widest in recent memory to completely disappearing, with waves lapping at the base of the dunes. Some places the lake moved inland over three hundred feet. The houses and goods of the owners fell into the lake. We find pieces of the houses buried in the sand when the eroding winds reveal them.

There are only two ways to be completely sure that a house will stay in place. Either one must build way back from the edge of the dune in an area not susceptible to erosion, or, one must put pilings down to the bedrock clay to support the house.

By this time you see the application very clearly. Jesus is the Rock upon which we must build our house, our spiritual house. Our lives are filled with constant change: birth, death, friends, mistakes, accidents, sin, pain, suffering, riches, poverty.... We have nothing stable in our lives apart from Christ. We may not build our house upon the sand, like the foolish man. Instead, we must build upon the Rock, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is our sure foundation. We know Him through His word, written and preached. Through His word and by His gift of faith we are tied to the Rock. Thus we are made wise. And when the final great storm of life buffets us, that is, when we face death, we will be unmoved. We will stand sure. Praise to God! We will stand Rock solid with the waves swirling around us. We will be saved. God give us that faith, we pray.

*When the winds of pain buffet me,
When sickness lays me low,
In bed when Thy mercy I cannot see,
And it seems that friends all did go,
Be Thou my protection.*

*When the storms of life are raging,
When friends and loved ones forsake,
In loneliness and sorrow,
When it seems there is no tomorrow,
Be Thou my strength.*

*When temptation seeks to corrupt,
When daily cares my meditations interrupt,
In times when no light in the tunnel I see,
If waves and waves wash over me,
Be Thou my foundation.*

*When death stands at the door,
When on life's sea I'll be no more,
When I my last breath do take
So I on earth no more awake
Be Thou my hope.*

*In Thee I find my strength and song.
In Thee my comfort all the day long.
In trial Thou art my protection.
In Thee is my hope and my foundation.
Thou art my God.*

*In Thee will I find my joy in that great day,
When in brightness all my sins are washed
away. ❖*

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

Gem of the Month

Home

by Cheri Rutgers

Through our days in hope we live
For Jesus Christ, our Lord did give.
And when our days on earth are past,
Our heavenly Saviour we meet at last.

When our days in number quickly pass
How much we realize our days are as grass.
When troubles and trials seem to increase
To Jehovah we look, to find our peace.

He taught us daily in his commandments to walk.
When we enter glory we will with Him talk.
His shining face in radiance we'll see
And worship Him on bended knee.

In heaven's dwelling place we'll be.
The mansions He prepared we'll see.
And then in glory with the saints we'll sing,
Bringing honor to our King.

God's covenant children He always calls home
And then no longer on earth we'll roam.
How we long to enter the Eternal rest
With Christ we'll live, that will be best.

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Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Preaching (1)

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.

What is preaching? Is it just another form of teaching, the only difference being that the Bible is taught? If it is just another form of teaching, why does Scripture emphasize so strongly its importance? Is preaching, perhaps, something unique?

To understand why preaching is of vital importance, we must understand what it is and that it *is* unique. The Bible tells us what preaching is, and tells us a great deal about it, in one of the words the New Testament uses for preaching.

One New Testament word tells us what the content of preaching is. That word is really the word “gospel,” in Greek the word from which comes our English word “evangelize.” The other word, the one we are talking about, shows us instead what preaching is all about.

Translated, that word means “to be a messenger.” The reference, though, is not to *any* messenger, but to the kind of messenger once called a “herald.” A herald was a messenger commissioned, usually by a king or great ruler, to bring a specific message to the people in the words of the king himself. A herald was not allowed to add anything to, to leave anything out of, or to “interpret” the message. He had simply to say, “Thus says the king!” He was, then, very similar to an ambassador (cf. II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20).

Applied to preaching, this word teaches us, first, that anyone who preaches must be commissioned or sent by the King of kings, Christ Jesus. No one has any right to appoint himself a preacher or to take up the work on his own (even Christ did not do this—Heb. 5:5). If he does, his message has no official weight and no one is obliged to hear it.

An illustration may help here. As a private citizen, I may have some knowledge of what my (American) government’s plans are, and living here in the UK may take it upon myself to inform the British government of these plans. Even if my information is correct in every particular, what I say has no authority and no one here is obliged to pay any attention to it. Only if the American ambassador or some other official representative of that government brings the message is the British government obliged to recognize it.

Thus Scripture tells us that those who preach must be sent (Rom. 10:15). If they are not sent, no one is obligated to give any heed at all to what they say. And this sending is done *by the Holy Spirit through the church* by means of ordination or the laying on of hands, as Acts shows so clearly in the case of the Apostle Paul himself (Acts 13:1-3).

This implies, too, that the minister is accountable not only to God, but to the church or churches that send him (cf. Acts 14:27). Calling always means accountability. Even as Christ uses the church to send a minister, so He also uses the church to call him to account with regard to the message he brings. For these reasons, therefore, we believe in an ordained ministry, contrary to Brethrenism. For the same reasons we also do not believe that lay “preaching” is Biblical, and insist that men like Billy Graham, who are sent by no one and accountable to no one, are not true ambassadors or heralds of Christ. But more next time. ❖

Rev. Hanko is missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Federation Board Nominee Profiles

This coming August will bring about another annual Young People's Convention and in the flutter of the convention activities, time is usually reserved for the Delegate meeting. Some of this meeting time is devoted to voting on the future members of the Federation Board. In an attempt to inform the young people of who has been nominated, the Federation Board presents the following:

Vice-President Nominations

Kent Deemter, a 20-year-old, is a member of Faith PRC. He is a son of Vern and Marcia Huber and has an older brother Darrin and a younger sister Sherri. He is enrolled in the Engineering program at Grand Valley State University. He would like to see the Federation Board inform the young people about the duties they do.

Trevor Kalsbeek is a 21-year-old member of Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan. He is currently attending Davenport University under a two-year Computer Management Program and will graduate this June. He also works for Ron Miedema Contractors. In July he will be getting married to Sara Westra who is a member of Hull Church in Iowa. Trevor would like to see the Federation Board find more ways to get the Midwest churches involved in the federation.

Vice-Treasurer Nominations

Brad Pastoor is the oldest son of Dan and Lori Pastoor and attends First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is majoring in General Business at Grand Valley State University. He is also performing general maintenance at Twin Lakes Nursery. Brad would like to learn more about the Federation Board and would like to see the societies work in a closer relationship with the Federation Board.

Brad Vander Veen is a member of Hudsonville PRC and is a freshman at Grand Valley majoring in Engineering. Brad also works for Topcraft Metal Products in his

spare time. Brad mentioned he would like to see the Federation Board coordinate activities besides the annual convention for multiple young people's societies in which they could enjoy fellowship and possibly raise money for the convention.

Vice-Secretary Nominations

Jennifer Van Baren is a member of the Hope PRC congregation and is the daughter of John and Valerie Van Baren. Jennifer is 19 years old and attends Davenport University where she will soon be graduating with a license in the medical field. Her time away from school involves working as a secretary for Vibration Research and as a nurse's aid. Jennifer enjoys reading, skiing, and creative memories.

Audra Bol and her family are members of Faith PRC. She is currently a sophomore at Calvin College with a major in elementary education. Audra is also considering the possibility of a minor in Music or English. In her free time she likes to play volleyball and sing in the Faith PRC Choir. Audra would like to see the Federation Board become more actively involved in the planning of activities for our young people's societies as a whole.

Librarian Nominations

Jeanine Boeve is the oldest child of Randy and Susan Boeve. She attends Holland PRC where she has been involved in various committees planning for the Young People's convention. She is a full-time student at Chic University of Cosmetology and works part-time at Russ. Jeanine would like to see the young people of our churches become more familiar with the efforts and duties of the Federation Board.

Karisa Hassevoort is the second oldest daughter of Calvin and Christie Hassevoort and attends Byron Center PRC. She is currently a senior at Covenant Christian High School and works part-time at Family Fare. ❖

Personal Reflections on the Church Family

by John Huizenga

In this rubric we try to include articles that give instruction and some demonstration of the life of the church. Hoeksema writes in the *Reformed Dogmatics* concerning the church, “the church, according to the teaching of Scripture, is a living spiritual organism, of which Christ is the head, and all His people are members” (p. 573). Do you experience the church as a living spiritual organism? The Lord has given to me and my family a blessed opportunity to experience the life of the church especially in the past couple of years. It is my hope and prayer that you might be encouraged and rejoice with us in God’s faithfulness.

Two years ago, after teaching grades 1-4 at Faith Christian School in Randolph, my wife and I decided it would be best if I took some time off from teaching to complete my teacher certification. After searching for a college that would best suit my needs, I decided to attend the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater. It looked as though I could complete the required studies in one year including two summers of study. Faith Christian School granted me a leave of absence for one year and we calculated that we would be able to get through most of that year with the little amount of money we had in savings and a part time job. Since Whitewater was a 1½ hour drive away, we thought it best that we move into an apartment with our 1 year old daughter.

The carefully thought out plans were not the Lord’s plan, however. Between school and a decent part-time job, we figured that I would not have much time to spend with my family or to continue my work on *Beacon Lights*. The Lord did give me a part time job, a better job in fact than I had hoped for, one that provided me the opportunity to work close to home and to set my own hours. This arrangement gave me the necessary time to spend with my family and continue my work on *Beacon Lights*. The Lord also supplied a family to rent our home while

we were out and help cover the mortgage payments. It appeared as though we would do just fine on our own until it became clear that it would take more than one year for me to complete my studies. A few months before moving the Lord added a second child to our family, and a third during the course of my studies. Then our vehicle went bad and we needed a new van. And finally I would have to give up my job when it came time for student teaching. We also began to feel the spiritual loneliness of living some distance away from our family and church.

Having stripped us of our own plans and ideas, God began to show to us more clearly than ever before what it means to live as a member of Christ’s body. Our fam-

Having stripped us of our own plans and ideas, God began to show to us more clearly than ever before what it means to live as a member of Christ’s body.

ily was willing to help out as much as they could with our financial needs. The Lord also worked in the hearts of others to send us unexpected gifts and words of encouragement at the most appropriate times. The deacons also cheerfully came to visit us to let us know that the church was there to help us not only with our financial needs but more importantly to give us spiritual encouragement. They also ministered to us the importance of maintaining a godly marriage in a time of financial difficulty. It was a humbling experience, but we never had

to worry that the needs of our growing family would not be met.

The young people of the church were also willing to live the life of the body of Christ. Some were able and willing give of their time and energy in the way of helping us move. Others offered to baby-sit for free. Others members of the church were willing to come visit us even though it was a long drive, offer up prayers on our behalf, and were quick to give us a word of encouragement and support. We are very grateful for the help they gave to us and we want to encourage our young readers to be attentive to the needs of others.

We have grown much during this experience. We have been shown that financial concerns are not to be a deciding factor when following God's will for our lives. We have been shown that there are many ways to give support other than the giving of money. We have also seen how pride can threaten God's giving of his blessings to His people. We should not be too proud to let our family, friends, and church members see that we have spiritual needs that need to be met. We must not be too proud to let the church do it's work of giving comfort in our times of need and if necessary, give financial support.

I have illustrated some of the ways we have experienced the life of the body of Christ. Without this life, the church is dead. It springs from the life of Christ and it must be made known through our actions. There are a number of places in God's word where we are given instruction concerning our role in the church. One passage is Romans 12:4-13 where we read "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in

Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."

Now the time has come for us to move back into our home in Randolph where I intend, the Lord willing, to take up my teaching job at Faith Christian. As I finish up this article amid moving boxes and all the hassles of moving, I am inclined to think, "is this all worth it just to get a teaching certificate and teach in our Christian schools? Would not these years of study and uprooting of the family be made more worth while if I pursued a job with more clout and pay?" When I reflect on the life of Christ found in his body, the church, I can testify that the spiritual rewards of living within the sphere of a church are far greater than any earthly treasure. May we all pray for the grace to live humbly as servants of God and as active members of Christ's body, sensitive to the needs of every other member. ❖

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

Church History

John Wycliffe, The Modern Reformer

by Jim Kuiper

About seven hundred years ago in a village in the west riding of Yorkshire a male child was born. The child lived through the first

few days of his life even though many children did not. This child was providentially chosen to live, and in his life he would change a religion, transform a country, and

alter the lives of billions of people in time. From these humble beginnings we see the greatest reformer ever and even though we do not know the exact date of his birth it is believed to be on or about the year AD 1324. If you looked on a map now-a-days you would not find the town of Yorkshire, the name of the town has been changed to Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe received his primary education from the Balliol College and also from the University of Oxford. John Wycliffe received his doctorate of theology in AD 1372. His name can be spelled Wyclif or Wicklife and was also known as the morning star of the reformation. He received this title because the morning star appears at or before sunrise to announce the coming day and Wycliffe was there to announce the coming reforming of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Wycliffe preached Philosophy periodically during his mid-life but mainly served as a priest in the succession of parishes. He became very widely known in 1374 because of his lengthy dispute with King Edward III and the Pope about the sale of indulgences or the payment of money to clear the sins of ones self of the sins of a person in purgatory. Wycliffe is also quoted as reportedly saying that he thought that the Pope was or someday might be the anti-Christ. He said this in response to the RCC's use of penance to remove ones sins.

In AD 1376 while in his early fifties Wycliffe publicly made known his 'new' doctrine of "dominion as founded in grace" in which he said that all authority of the magistrates and the religious leaders is given directly from the grace of God and as a result of any major sin (i.e. fornication, adultery, theft, etc.) all God ordained power is forfeited and the committee is as guilty of that sin as any other person until he is forgiven by the grace of God. Although in his writings Wycliffe did not explicitly say that the RCC was guilty of any sins his implications were crystal clear to all who read and heard of his writings. Because of his doctrine, speeches and writings, Wycliffe was called to appear before the Bishop of London on February 19, 1377. When Wycliffe was interrogated, the man who was with Wycliffe, John of Gaunt, was involved in a fight with the bishop at this meeting. On May 22, 1377, Pope Gregory XI issued several bulls, or official documents, sent to all RCC churches stating that all of the doctrines and writings of John Wycliffe were heresy and were not to be adhered to by the people of the RCC. In the autumn of 1377 the British parliament made a law that banded the shipment of British riches to Italy, and even if the Pope requested the

shipment, it was still to be denied. Wycliffe eagerly promoted the lawfulness of such a prohibition and when the church officials heard of Wycliff's agreement to such a law they again summoned Wycliffe to appear before a counsel consisting of The Bishop of Courtenay and Simon of Sudbury, the archbishop. This hearing was overruled only because of the influence that Wycliffe had in this court. Had Wycliffe not had this influence, this could have been the end of Wycliffe, but God in His eternal ever-knowing plan gave him this influence and in turn spared the life of Wycliffe it this case.

Wycliffe is a great role model for the modern day church and his knowledge of the truth is a true witness to all who know him and his work. His zeal for and love of the truth at all costs is a true inspiration to all and a path that all Christians should try to walk in this world of the darkness of sin. After the his death on December 31, 1384, the teachings of Wycliffe spread all over the globe and in 1388, when the Wycliffe Bible appeared, the followers of Wycliffe copied it and the gospel was made known to more people than ever before.

The writings of John Wycliffe influenced Wycliff's fellow reformer, John Huss. Huss was known as the follower of John Wycliffe. Also the famous reformer Martin Luther gave credit to Wycliffe for the work that he had done, and for the references that Luther used of Wycliffe.

In May, 1415, the Council of Constance viewed Wycliffe's writings and said that they were damnable heresies and were to be disregarded by all of the RCC and all of its followers. Along with this condemning the RCC commanded that the bones of John Wycliffe be dismembered, burned and spread across the landscape thus showing that he would not have any exact eternal resting place.

Throughout this paper we have learned that the legend of John Wycliffe can live forever. Although the forms of persecution that we may receive may be a little different than being burned at the stake, we may know that the good Lord will deliver us in that great and fateful day of the Lord, and we will live forever with our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. ❖

Jim is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. This article was written in Church History class at Covenant Christian High School for Mr. S. Van Uffelen.

Left Behind

reviewed by Mrs. Debora Poortinga

“Left Behind” A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days. 468 pages, softcover. Co-authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Tyndale House Publishers Inc. (10.00)

Much interest and excitement greets one in the local Christian bookstores these days regarding the end of times. Special attention has been given to this particular book *Left Behind*. This is the first book in a series of 12 regarding the Premil view of the end of times. I have witnessed numerous displays and one in particular comes to mind of clothes on a chair displayed in such a fashion it appears as if one simply vanished out of them. A filmmaker from Hollywood, Cloud Ten Productions, who happens to be christian and would like to be viewed as such, has released a “Left Behind” movie based on the book. He has great expectations of making #1 on the movie charts. Already the “Left Behind” movie has sold over 3 million videos.

In the opening chapters of this book we see that the “rapture” has indeed become a reality and chaos which unfolds is horrific. The book focuses on how the lives of an airline pilot, and his daughter, a stewardess and journalist and intern pastor have been dramatically changed. They share each other’s personal loss and find comfort in knowing that they have been given a “second chance” to find Christ. Through these altering conditions they come to see and understand that the antichrist has come to power through the United Nations. They then take it upon themselves to form a Tribulation Force whose purpose is to do more than just survive the tribulation which is coming but also to fight against the enemies of God.

I found that this book, which exposes the teaching of the Premillennialism view at the end of times, to be nothing short of heresy. It saddens one to know that much of Christendom believes in this silent rapture and escaping of the coming tribulation and the opportunity to be given a second chance. The free will of man is also exposed in full force when it is believed that God is finally going to get your attention now by witnessing the effects of this stunning rapture, and for those who are “left

behind,” it is up to you to urgently accept Christ. The “left behind” tapes, which are what all raptured pastors have earlier prepared, are used as to bring others to the gospel. So these tapes are used to serve a higher purpose. The teaching that is also exposed is the belief that all children have been raptured, for all the children of the world are saved and therefore will escape the tribulation. The sad realization of all this comes to mind is when Christians, who thought they were believers, have been left behind and now are faced with the reality that something must have been missing from their lives. When one reads this it shows how the belief of Premillennialism goes hand in hand with freewillism and Arminism. The devil himself is “right behind” all of this nonsense.

I pray that Reformed believers are not swayed with the high drama which unfolds in this book. The devil purposes through this book to “dull” our senses into believing a silent rapture awaits and an earthly kingdom will be established. Our Amillennial view of these last days is biblical and does indeed keep our eyes focused on the heavenly kingdom. The Premillennialist view focuses on the earthly kingdom and escaping the tribulation. Our Amillennial position makes one pray for strength in order to bear witness of Christ and not to be deceived. Christ tells us to be watchful in I Thessalonians 5:2-8 in these last days. In our watching, we must not be taken in on the popularity of what sells these days under the name of Christianity. Christ will not be found there. Man is exalted to take matters into his own hands. We must then continue to educate ourselves in the truths of the Scriptures, looking for that heavenly kingdom. Read material that will benefit the heart and the mind. We must therefore, as Reformed, Protestant Reformed believers in particular, affix onto ourselves the breastplate of faith and helmet of salvation as given to us by His sovereign grace and fight the good fight of faith of defense of our Reformed heritage and thank God for opening our eyes to understand the truths, however small that understanding might be, of His glorious and powerful second coming.



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Triple Layer Leap (3)

The next day at school Karen saw Laurie before classes began. Karen held her breath. Would Laurie still talk to her? A pang of guilt smote her heart as she remembered how she had treated Laurie so cruelly the day before.

But Laurie saw Karen across the hall and smiled broadly. "Hi, Karen! How are you this morning?"

"I'm fine," Karen said with relief. "How are you?" They continued to talk until another classmate interrupted.



"Did you see what Jenny is wearing today?" said the third girl. "Her outfit is so ugly! She just doesn't have any sense of style."

Karen looked over where Jenny was standing and then she looked at the floor. Usually Karen was the first one to join in such a discussion, but today she spent some moments thinking before she looked up and said, "It may not be our style, but it's not that bad. She looks fine to me."

Before any more could be said on the subject, the bell rang to signal the beginning of class. Karen was grateful, not only for the bell, but also for the strength

that was given to her to say the words she said. Knowing how she had treated Laurie the day before, and knowing how she was forgiven for such a deliberate sin, now she could only look on the rest of her classmates in kindness. Yes, she was grateful. Very grateful. ❖

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

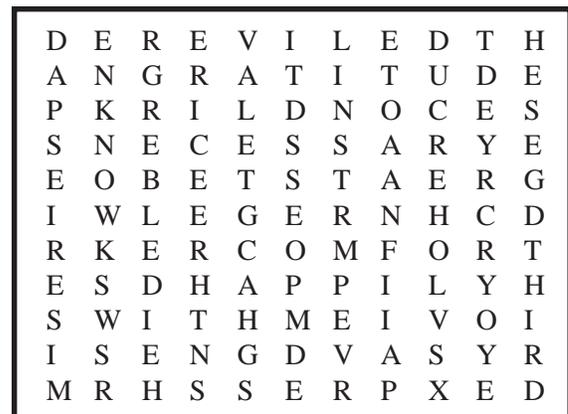
Karen made a "triple layer leap" in more ways than one! Read Question and Answer 2 of Lord's Day 1 to discover how. Find the underlined words from this Question and Answer in the puzzle below:

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 1

Q. 2. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

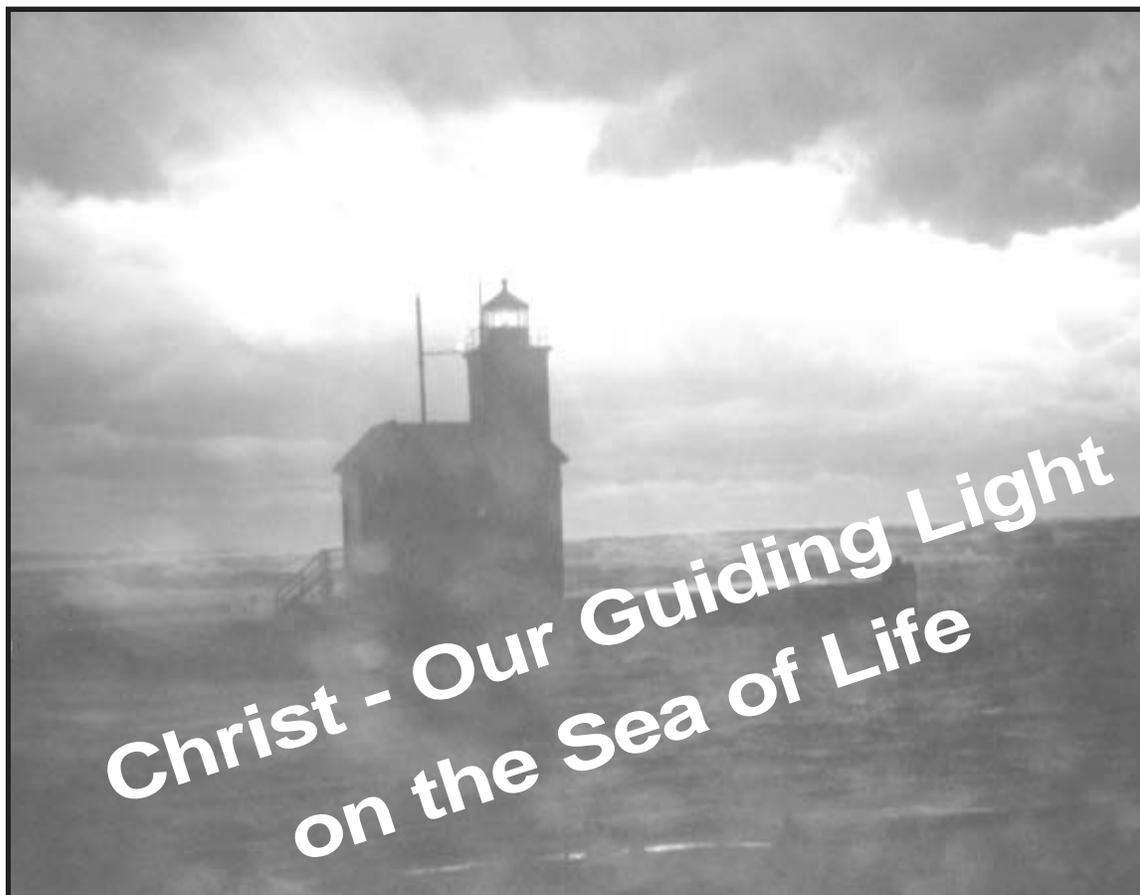
A. Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.



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Hosted by First Protestant Reformed Church
of Holland, Michigan Young People's Society

SPEAKERS: Revs. Bekkering, Eriks, & Van Overloop

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