

Beacon Lights

January
2003

Volume LXII
Number 1

*“Work out your own salvation
with fear and trembling.
For it is God which worketh in you
both to will and to do of his good
pleasure.”*

Philippians 2:12b-13

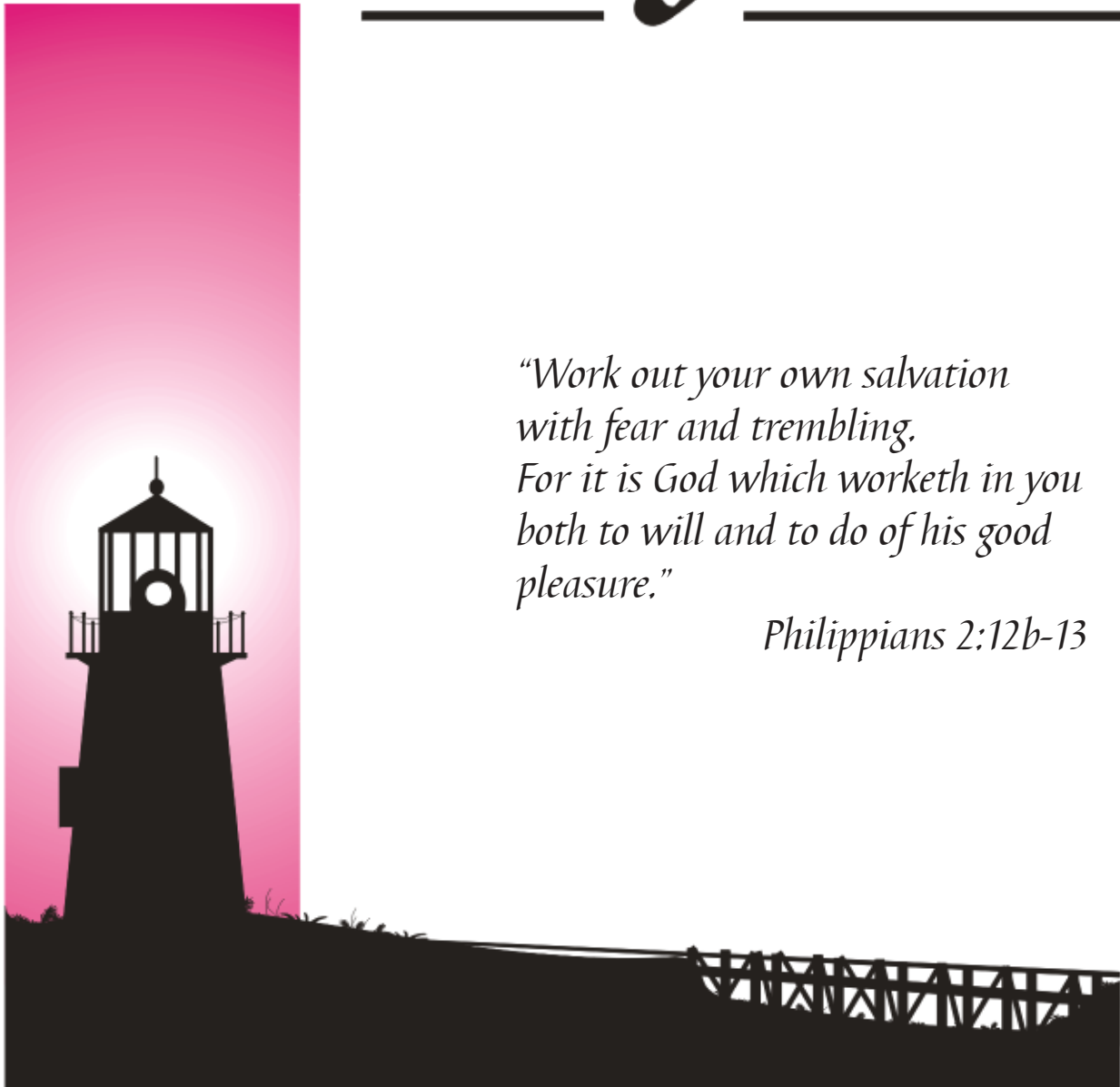


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	The Sand in Your Hourglass
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
4	Francis of Assisi
	CURRENT ISSUES
5	Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
6	Agates and Oaks
	GEM OF THE MONTH
8	God's Watchmen
	DEVOTIONAL
9	Watching Daily At My Gates
	MUSIC
13	Proclaiming Joy
	CHURCH FAMILY
14	The Effect of the World's View of Discipline
	WHERE WE STAND
16	How Does One Explain the Events of September 11, 2001 to a Child?
	CHURCH HISTORY
17	George M. Ophoff (2)
	LITTLE LIGHTS
19	The Eagle
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

EDITOR

John Huizenga

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Aaron Cleveland

Randy Vaalburg

SECRETARY

EDITORIAL STAFF

Jeff Kalsbeek

David Langerak

Kris Moelker

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

Trevor Kalsbeek (President)

Kevin Gritters (Vice-President)

Audra Bol (Secretary)

Brad Pastoor (Treasurer)

Jeanine Boeve (Librarian)

Rachel Kuiper (Vice-Secretary)

Brad VanderVeen (Vice-Treasurer)

Jim Holstege (Youth Coordinator)

Rev. Barry Gritters (Spiritual Advisor)

BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights

P.O. Box 144

Randolph, WI 53956

Phone: (920) 326-6186

Email: huizenga@powercom.net

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact

Sam Copple

659 Lincoln Ave. NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Phone: (616) 774-4132

Email: SamCopple@email.msn.com

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh

Email: dmb41101@hickorytech.net

BOOK SALES

Becky Kalsbeek

TYPESETTER

Robert Vermeer

PRINTER

James Huizinga

MAILER

Staff

Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the business office.

The Sand in Your Hourglass



by John Huizenga

Another year's worth of sand has poured through the neck of the cosmic hourglass. Very little is left. How many grains are left, only God knows. When God created the heavens and the earth, He filled it with just enough to accomplish His purpose with the earth. When the last grain drops, Christ will return on the clouds of heaven to gather in the harvest.

God also has a purpose for you and for me. He has given to each of us a carefully measured amount of time in which to live our lives. Each moment of the day, precious grains of sand pour from the top to the bottom. The time we have lived steadily grows larger, and the pile on top steadily shrinks. Once the sand goes through, it can never be returned and nobody knows exactly how much we have left up on top.

Measured amounts of time are often used for games or tests. The outcome of the game or test depends upon your ability, skill, or decisions. How is the hourglass of your life used? Is it used in the same way as in the games we play? The Arminian concept of the hourglass of your life is very much like such a game. It is a rather simple sort of game: at some point, you need to say, "I accept Jesus as my Savior," and you win. The trick is to say it before the last grain of sand falls through. If you are too late, you loose and go to hell.

Man has tried to play this imaginary game since the beginning of time. It has only been since the time of Jacobus Arminius that we have attached this particular name to it. This game is attractive to man because when he plays it, he imagines that he has some control over the outcome of the game. It is rather easy to win and it does not take long for anyone to figure out how to have a lot of fun with life before the life-shackling decision is to be made.

The Arminian game is purely imaginary, because the purpose of your hourglass filled with its particular amount of sand is not at all to give you a chance to accept Jesus. God has given to each of us a specific amount of time. It is just the right amount of time needed for us to become prepared for our place in heaven. It is just the right amount of time to prepare the reprobate for hell. Everyone is given the time appointed to serve God's purpose as He gathers His church.

When we think about the fact that we have only a certain amount of time, it is easy to fall into one of two extremes. We may become so obsessed with the passing of time that we worry and fret about time that is wasted. Fretting over the wasting of time is especially a problem today in our busy world with so many things to do, so much money to make, and a name and a place to establish in this world. Each moment of time that goes by that does not in an obvious way bring us closer to our goal makes us anxious. Waiting in slow traffic can drive such a person nearly insane. Even when we have clearly before us the goal to use every moment of time we have to grow in our knowledge of God, there is the danger of fretting when God sees fit to leave us stranded in an airport for a day and your Bible is with the luggage.

The other extreme is to say to yourself, "If God has everything planned out, why bother thinking about how best to use time?" This thinking is what we find in Romans 6:1 where we read "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Applied to our use of time we might say, "shall we sit back and watch as God carries us through life so that we can enjoy life and get to heaven without too much work?"

The answer is "God forbid." Those who imagine that they can walk in sin all they want because God will graciously forgive them, fail to see that the new heart we receive can not help but live in newness of

life. Those who imagine that they can live a carefree lazy life because God has it all planned out to prepare us for glory, fail to see that God is pleased when we actively seek out that plan and praise Him for His wisdom.

We fail to give God the glory when we get angry at slow traffic and we think our time is being wasted because we fail to see that God has sovereignly planned this for our salvation. We fail to give God the glory when we become careless because we do not actively begin to live out that salvation He has given.

God has given to us each a set amount of time in which to live. Knowing this, however, is not what motivates us to use our time wisely. Our motivation to use our time wisely comes from the command of God to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12b). We busy ourselves with our daily work and activities always keeping in mind that God is using all these things to reveal to us His great love in Christ.

When it appears to us that the past year has been wasted with futile attempts at this or that we must not fret and become discouraged. Rather, we need to understand that this was best for us whether we see it now or not. The past year was a part of our salvation and growth in Christ.

If we look back at all the fond memories of good times and look forward to another year of fun and good times with little thought about working out our salvation with fear and trembling, we are missing the true joy of our salvation. Let us use our time wisely. We need not fret about wasting time, and neither ought we let the time slip by with little thought about its purpose. Get busy working out your salvation. Examine your life daily with a time of meditation upon God’s word and devotions. See the wonder of God’s grace as He leads you each step of the way that He has planned for you. ❖

Fruitful Branches

Francis of Assisi

by Derek Buteyn

Francis of Assisi was not a great reformer like Luther or Calvin. He did not make any great changes toward the doctrine of the church. Francis of Assisi was an important figure in church history because of his preaching the gospel to those who had not heard the truths of scripture, and because of his love for the poor.

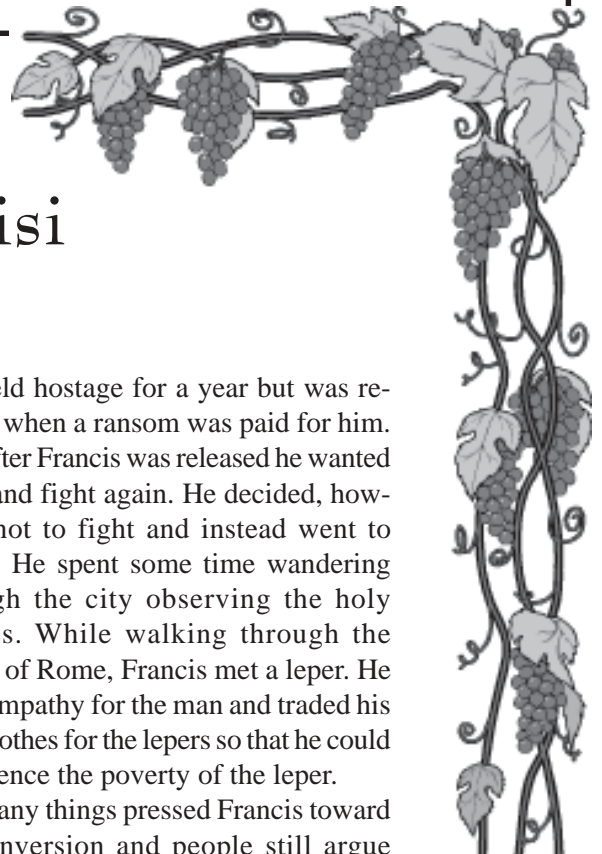
Francis of Assisi was born in 1182 to wealthy parents. His father was Pietro de Bernardone and his mother was Pica. Francis’ real name was Giovanni, but since his mother loved France so much she named him Francisco. Francis received a good education but was mischievous and received little from it.

At the time of Francis of Assisi, Italy was not a strong nation. There was much fighting between cities. When Assisi and Perugia declared war against each other, Francis naturally joined Assisi in battle. He was caught

and held hostage for a year but was released when a ransom was paid for him.

After Francis was released he wanted to go and fight again. He decided, however, not to fight and instead went to Rome. He spent some time wandering through the city observing the holy shrines. While walking through the streets of Rome, Francis met a leper. He had sympathy for the man and traded his own clothes for the leper’s so that he could experience the poverty of the leper.

Many things pressed Francis toward his conversion and people still argue which event it was. One step that led toward Francis’ conversion happened when he was still young. He was working in his father’s shop when a beg-



gar came to him asking for food and money. Francis's father came to him and told him to get away. Francis replied, "What wouldn't I have done if he had asked me in the name of some great nobleman? How much better should I have received him in the name of God?" Francis then raced after the man and shoved money into the beggar's hand. He vowed that from that day on he would always help the poor.

While praying in the church of St. Damian, Francis believed that he heard Christ speaking to him. He was told to rebuild the house of God. He thought that this meant that he had to repair the rundown physical church of St. Damian. Later he realized that he was called to repair the spiritual matters of the corrupted medieval church.

For his project Francis needed money, which he didn't have. He sold some of his possessions and secretly sold some of his father's possessions as well. When his father found out, he took Francis to the bishop. The bishop accused Francis of theft and ordered him to give the money back to his father and ask for forgiveness. In answer to this Francis stripped himself of his clothing, tossed his belongings into a pile, and told the bishop to give them to his father. When he was walking out, he told the bishop, "Up to this time have I called Pietro Bernardone my father, but now I desire to serve God and say nothing else than 'Our Father which art in heaven'."

After the incident with his father, Francis spent some time with the lepers and lived as a hermit. In 1208 he was listening to a sermon on Matthew 10:7-9 which called people to go out into the world and preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Francis believed this was a call for him to go out and preach and to live a life

of poverty. Francis went and lived at St. Mary of Angels chapel and began to practice asceticism. He nicknamed himself Poverello or "Little Poor Man." For three years he lived as a hermit preaching to the poor. He lived in total poverty, begging for his food and caring for the lepers.

Francis began a monastic order. The first to join him was a wealthy town councilor. After others joined, they named themselves the Little Friars. Upon a request to become a monastic order, Pope Innocent III told them to go preach to the pigs. They did this and came back to the pope with the same request. This time their request was granted. Francis insisted on absolute poverty in the Franciscan order. They were only allowed to do work with their hands. They could not accept pay, or worry about the following day. All that they did not need for that day they were to give to the poor.

When Francis was not preaching or helping the poor, one could often find him in the woods, talking to the birds and squirrels. Francis had a deep love for God and his creation. He expressed his love for God's creation in his poem, "Canticle of the Sun." When he was 44, he died in his favorite church after a life of poverty and preaching. His feast day is October 4.

Although God used Francis in many ways at it would appear that his way of life was very godly, we should not follow his example of fleeing all the earthly things God gives to us. We ought to use the earthly goods that God gives to us to seek the kingdom of God. ❖

Derek is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church and wrote this article for a 7th grade Language assignment at Faith Christian School in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Current Issues

Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem

by Gloria Doezema

I am writing this article because I am aware of the deep suffering and depression that being overweight causes in some people. They actually have a disgusted

feeling of themselves. This can lead to psychological stress. They want very much to lose weight but just can't. Again and again they decide to go on a diet but just can't

stay on it and fail once more.

Some have a psychological problem that causes them to overeat. Others have a low metabolism and can't eat much at all without gaining weight. If a person can eat 100 or 200 more calories than another person this can make a big difference. Exercise may help some.

It is important to try to get this extra weight off as it is a health hazard. It could lead to painful joints, diabetes, hypertension, low self esteem, etc. But to those who just can't get that extra weight off, they should learn to be content—"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Tim. 6:6). While we are in this world there will be a lot of frustration. Some people are lame or paralyzed, minus a limb, diseased, blind, deaf or other things. Would one of these be easier to deal with than being overweight?

I once knew someone who would actually make a promise to God not to eat when something delicious was tempting her. This is taking advantage of God for superficial things. Some ask if it is all right to pray to God for help with the problem of overeating. We have to consider our motive.

Is our main reason for desiring to be thin so we can look nice? There is nothing wrong with this, but we can make too much of this. Is pride a factor here? "Favor is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman that fears the Lord,

she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30). Proverbs 31:10 to end the chapter tells us what is really important for a woman.

Now to those who don't have a weight problem, try to be understanding of someone who does have a weight problem. "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mine, meekness and long-suffering" (Col. 3:12). "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (I Cor. 3:14). "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:13). Children especially can be cruel to someone overweight. This ought not to be.

So let us be content and be thankful in all things. Make the most of what you have. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to the which ye also are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15).

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thes. 5:18).

KEEP TRYING!

"Do not be like those whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). ❖

Gloria is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

When I In Awesome Wonder... The Golden Coast Of Michigan Agates and Oaks

by Deane Wassink

Two of the most beautiful patterns in the creation can be found along the Golden Coast. One is the beautiful pattern of a rock called a Lake Superior agate. The other is the warm and symmetrical pattern of the wood grain of the trees.

Lake Superior agates were formed when minerals were deposited in small cavities of soft rock as water perked through the soft rock. Changing conditions caused the minerals to be laid down in a banded pattern not unlike an onion. However, this semi-precious stone has

a much wider variety of colors and delicate swirls. The outside of the stone doesn't have any particular beauty. Once these rocks are split open the many beautiful designs and patterns are revealed, with no two alike. Often it takes hours of polishing to truly bring out the color and design. These rocks were carried down by glaciers from the area of Lake Superior into the mid-western states and are often found along the shore of Lake Michigan.

The wood grain of trees has similar beautiful patterns with each kind of wood having its own particular type of pattern, though no two pieces are alike. The life cycle of a tree as it goes through the different seasons produces the growth rings of the tree. These rings are affected by the environment where the tree is growing. If you cut sideways through a tree trunk you will find rings like a bulls-eye on a target. If you cut sideways across the trunk, so that you peel off the rings in layers, beautiful patterns of wood-grain are revealed. Each kind of tree has its own particular pattern whether it is oak, birch, maple—or even blueberry wood. Sometimes conditions cause the development of the incredible swirling patterns of buns which are very valuable. It is the beautiful patterns of wood that are celebrated in paneling and high quality furniture making. The soft designs as they are brought out by stain and varnish create a gentle atmosphere when used in room decoration. One would never guess the beauty that lies underneath the bark of a tree.

I have often been struck by the gentle patience of a master woodworker who shapes the wood he has chosen into furniture and sculpture, and a devoted lapidary as he cuts and polishes rocks into items of beauty. A friend who loves to work with agates explained his motivation this way, he said that when he cuts open an agate he is the first person after God to see the beauty that was hidden there. Then, he can display it for others to see and appreciate. That motivation brings glory to the One Who has created these wonders. That motivation, I believe, is what drives the Christian writer, photographer, and teacher who contemplate the creation. How many wonders do most of us pass by every day which should give us pause to glorify our God?

With His fingers the Lord has wrought the incredible symmetry and design of agates and the warm flowing patterns of wood-grain to show the beauty of the order and structure He has created in the earth. If God can so carefully design the rocks and trees, how much more does he carefully shape each one of us.

Each of us has a beauty that comes from the Masters hand. Each one of us reflects our Maker in a special way. In fact, some of the most beautiful insides are surrounded by some of the most unlikely outsides. The point is: with our “beauty” do we serve ourselves or the One who has made us? It is God who takes a sinner and turns him into a saint reflecting His grace and love.

I am struck by the similarities between the work of a teacher or parent who faithfully seeks to uncover the talents and the abilities of the children in his care through much patient labor day by day, and the work of a wood craftsman, lapidary or jeweler. As a parent, I pray for the patience to see and develop the unique talents and abilities God has given to each of my precious children; that my sometimes rough and clumsy handling may not mar their beauty. Then, others might see and glorify God for the beauty He has created in them.

The Creator's Reflection

*Every agate has its own design.
Their swirls and colors are one of a kind.
Formed in the dark, completely out of sight;
They reveal the Creator when shown in the light.*

*The life of a tree in reflection is formed;
Exposed when a craftsman's work is born.
The beautiful patterns to each kind it's own,
The Creator's design reflects how it's grown.*

*Lord help me the special gifts to see,
In each of the children You've given me.
Help me to see what makes them unique,
Then I can help them as their callings they seek.*

*Make me patient as they sort out life.
Make me steady in faith through times of strife.
As layer by layer built up they form,
A reflection of God's Son to us born. ❖*

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

God's Watchmen

*Watchmen, Watchmen, that guard the truth,
From every evil turning,
Take courage from God's Holy Word,
All modernism spurning,*

*For wolves among the sheepfold
Would slay and rend and tear
The Church of God's own people,
For they would lay a snare,*

*Of half truths, human gospel
Designed by Satan himself
To seek to change God's Holy Word
The Bible gathering dust on the shelf.*

*After all they say, "nothing changed"
"All things continue as ever before"
And in their ungodly foolishness
God's word they disdain and abhor.*

*What cunning ways and devious
The devil does employ.
He even deceives himself
That God's counsel he can destroy.*

*So watchmen guard the word well
From all the "isms" turning
Arminianism, Modernism, Humanism, etc.
And those of "higher learning"*

*Who seek to make MAN God
And do away with election
Thinking that man in his own strength
Can seek his own perfection*

*But God always keeps His watchmen
To guard His Holy Word
And His faithful watchmen
Keep watching with the Sword.*

*The Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God.
In this he will not dissemble,
For even the devils know His Word
And in its presence tremble.*

*Sound the warning, loud and clear.
Oh, Watchmen sound the warning
That evil ones are found within
The Church of God's own choosing*

*That they may soon be rooted out
That she may be kept pure.
And ever study the Scriptures
To make her calling and election sure.*

*Not resting on her laurels
And ever the spirits trying
Rightly dividing the Word of God,
And never God's truth denying.*

*Then a crown of double honor,
O good and faithful one,
Is given unto you that day
In the presence of the Son.*

Jannet Moore

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 1 Read I Peter 1:1-5

We should read this greeting from Peter to those addressed quite often. This is because Peter is addressing these words to us. We are strangers in a strange land. We are scattered throughout this world. Did we act like that last night? Were we different? Did we carouse with the world or pray with the saints, "Come quickly Lord Jesus?" Did we give gratitude to God for our election, sanctification, and redemption? Did the words "Blessed be God" come from our lips in the night hours? We need to hear these words often so that we ponder our incorruptible inheritance. That inheritance is not here; we are strangers here. Sing Psalter 29.

January 2 Read Read I Peter 1:6-12

After considering the fact that we are strangers, Peter addresses the reality of the suffering of the child of God because he is a stranger in a strange land. God's people have suffered on this earth (review the life of the Biblical saints as well as the reformers) and will suffer up until the time that Christ returns. For what do we suffer? We suffer for salvation. We might ask, "Is it worth it?" Peter seems to think so. He says that it is "more precious than gold," "inquired into by the prophets," and "looked into by the angels." Is your salvation this precious to you, people of God? Are you suffering for it? Or do you try to not be a stranger so that you do not suffer? You cannot have both. Sing Psalter 329.

January 3 Read I Peter 1:13-16

A hymn writer penned the words, "Take time to be holy." These words are not Scriptural. Scripture says "Be ye holy." There is a huge difference. Taking time to be holy implies that there are times when you do not have to be holy. "Be ye holy" is a command. We must always be holy because this is the will of our heavenly Father. Being holy means we do not return to the lusts of the flesh. Being holy means that we do not try out the lusts of the flesh. Being holy means that we must walk a sanctified walk; being enabled by the Holy Spirit to glorify and praise God in all that we do. Be holy tonight, young people as you seek entertainment. Help your children and young people to be holy, parents, by bringing them up in the fear of the Lord. Sing Psalter 76.

January 4 Read I Peter 1:17-21

Today is preparation day. For the working man, we may say that it is a day to catch up around the house and the yard.

Children and young people may look at is a day to be free from the confines of the school room. But today we must prepare for calling upon the name of our God on the Sabbath. We must prepare ourselves to give thanks for our redemption wrought by Christ on the cross. We must see that this day is to be used for looking toward the day that we prepare for the eternal Sabbath. This does not mean that this is a holy day like Sunday. The Fourth Commandments tells us that we must labor for six days. But we must also be ready for the Sabbath. We must make sure that our week is ended in a way that prepares us for the Lord's Day. Sing Psalter 112.

January 5 Read I Peter 1:22-25

Notice the two aspects of the Word that are preached unto us. First of all we have the Word of the gospel which is salvation by faith alone. We must hear this Word in every sermon that is preached. If we do not hear Christ something is wrong with the preaching **or** with our hearing. Secondly we must heed the commandment to love our neighbor. This is a necessary result of the preaching. As we take up our daily lives tomorrow are we consciously thinking about loving the brother? Children and young people, is this your desire as you return to school? Men, will you earnestly seek to love those who are employed with you or by you? We must not only hear Christ's love, we must live in Christ's love. Let us seek to do that each day of our lives. Sing Psalter 278.

January 6 Read I Peter 2:1-5

In these verses, Peter travels from the doctrinal to the practical, though, as we know, there is not a real separation. Practice is doctrine, and doctrine is practice. After putting off the old man of sin and taking on the clothes of righteousness, what then? We must seek the pure Word of God all of our lives even as a baby seeks the mother's pure milk. We do this because God has made of us His church. We are not dead membes in that church but rather living members. We do not sing the songs of Zion lifelessly. We praise Him with our whole being. Our conduct with those around us must show that we are a living stone not a rock of offence. Sing Psalter 333.

January 7 Read I Peter 2:6-10

We see that Peter is speaking to people of God who know the Scriptures. In other words, he is speaking to converted Jews. But we also see that he is speaking to converted Gen-

tiles. God's Word today still comes to both kinds of people. We, the people from the line of the covenant, must not be surprised when someone uses Scripture and we do not seem to understand him. We also must see the calling to preach the gospel to the nations. God's church is made up of people from many backgrounds and walks of life. We have been called into a marvelous light. Do we hide from that light? Do we hide our children from that light? Sing Psalter 320.

January 8 Read I Peter 2:11-17

Is obeying authority a difficult thing? Children, do you have a problem keeping rules, whether they be your parents' rules, your school's rules, or anyone else's rules whom God has put in authority over you? Young people, do you have trouble with this idea? Parents and other adults, what about us? What is our attitude to those in authority—the boss, the policeman, the consistory? Do we ignore those whom God has put in authority over our lives. The Holy Spirit indicates that this is a necessary part of the life of the Christian. Peter was writing in an era in which the government was openly antichurch, but yet he says "submit." Let us make this our desire and goal in our every day life. Sing Psalter 223.

January 9 Read I Peter 2:18-25

Peter continues the thoughts about obeying those in authority. He also continues the thought of doing that when the authority is antichristian in nature. He speaks to those whom God has made slaves to wicked masters. He speaks to those who had to endure abuse unjustly. He calls them to suffer patiently for Christ's sake. This is what we must do. We must learn to suffer patiently for Christ's sake even when we are doing good. Peter gives us the example of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Reread Isaiah 53 if you need to. Go back over the life of Christ and realize that the example of Christ which we must follow is to suffer patiently for following Him. Sing Psalter 341.

January 10 Read I Peter 3:1-7

In these verses the Holy Spirit teaches us how to act as wife and husband within the place God has put us. Some would think the truths taught here are old-fashioned, out-of-date, and not relevant to today's life style. Is this your feeling, people of God? Do we want wives who are other than those described here? Husbands and young men, are you a tyrant over her given to you by God? Marriage is honorable, God has used it to show us our relationship with Him. Each of us must be the husband or wife found in these verses. Young people, do not get caught up with this world's marriage philosophy. It is fraught with evil and will lead to sadness. Sing Psalter 360.

January 11 Read I Peter 3:8-13

The words of these verses need to be read each day and taken to heart. To have compassion for the brother or sister in Christ is a very admirable thing. But because it goes against the world's "I'm number one" philosophy, it is not often adhered to. Children, are you caring at school? Young people,

what about you? Do you scorn those who are not part of your "group"? Adults, what kind of example do you give our children and young people? As we see this sin is often carried out by the tongue. We may think we do this in secret, but the omniscient God knows our sin. Let us strive to love one another and in loving one another love God. Sing Psalter 371.

January 12 Read I Peter 3:14-17

People of God are you ready to give an answer of the hope that lieth within you? Are you willing to tell someone of what church you are a member when you know that that will bring scorn upon you? Children, do you tell other children that you will not participate in their sins because God will not allow it? Young people, do your friends know that you believe in God by the life you live when you are among them? Adults, what do you teach your children about God's laws with a movie pouring from your television or VCR? Yes, these are a lot of questions. They need answers. We must know that the only way to give an answer is by having the Word of God in our hearts. This takes study, and this means to put away the world's entertainments. We can begin today to be ready to give an acceptable answer before God. Sing Psalter 185:1-5.

January 13 Read I Peter 3:18-22

People of God, do you experience the comfort wrought for us by Jesus Christ? Quite often this is the testimony of the elderly as they wait for God to prepare their place in heaven for them. They can wait in patience because they know that He will fulfill what he has promised. But what about the not so old? Children, young people, other adults, do we wait with patience comforted by Christ's Spirit? At Pentecost He sent to us the Comforter. Let us wait patiently on His way in all of our busy lives. Even though this world is busy and we get wrapped up in its busyness, we have comfort to know that Christ is in heaven for us. Sing Psalter 185:6-9.

January 14 Read I Peter 4:1-5

Young people do you walk an antithetical walk? That is, do you walk as someone who is in the world and not of the world? Do people who see you know that you are a Christian, and are not left scratching their heads because of some of your actions? This is what these verses call you to do. Earlier in the book we were told that we were a peculiar people. Do we show that? Jesus did, and He would have us to do that too. We must not be found taking pleasure in the world's wicked entertainment. We must be known for a Christian walk and lifestyle. Parents, is this how you are leading your children? Sing Psalter 120.

January 15 Read I Peter 4:6-11

Two weeks ago we celebrated entering a new year. This meant that we were another step closer to the final judgment. Peter wants us to consider our lives with the final judgment at hand. He wants us to remember that we will face our Savior at the end of time. As we remember this we see that it should affect the way we live our lives. Yesterday we saw one side of a sanctified life; today we see the positive. How

do you treat fellow saints, people of God. Are you hospitable to them? Are you kind to them in school, children and young people? Do you see their needs and try to meet them? Do you use your gifts and talents for God's glory among His church? Are you ready to face His judgment in this matter? Sing Psalter 28.

January 16 Read I Peter 4:12-19

In the past few days we have been discussing the coming day of judgment. This day will come not without its difficulties for God's people. Before Christ returns we will suffer persecution for our faith in Christ Jesus. Are you ready for it? Are you willing to face it? Will you be persecuted or will you escape it by hiding your faith? The Holy Spirit is holding these things before us in order that we may learn to watch and ready ourselves for Christ's return. We must be willing to suffer, having the faith that Christ will care for His own as He has promised. Are we ready, people of God? Are we willing to die for the faith delivered to the saints? Let us pray for the grace to live in the last days as true children of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 103.

January 17 Read I Peter 5:1-5

Peter begins this chapter with an exhortation to elders that they be faithful within the office to which they are called. After doing this he admonishes those who are under the elders to submit to them. This submitting like all the submitting upon this earth is because it is God's commandment. God gave to us elders to have oversight of our spiritual lives. How do we receive them? Young people, are you respectful in speaking to or about your elders? Is it your desire to submit to them even as you confess your faith before them? They have a weighty responsibility concerning you. We must submit to them as they are ministers for good in our lives. Sing Psalter 49.

January 18 Read I Peter 5:1-7

I wish to call your attention to the seventh verse. After reminding us about the duties of elders, Peter again calls us to humble ourselves before God in this life. Sometimes we feel that the cares and burdens God places on us are too much for us to bear and we lash out at those in authority over us. God then reminds us to cast our care upon Him because He careth for us. Notice the words here. Not He will care for us or He did care for us. He careth for us! These is present tense. This means He cares for us in whatever circumstance He places us. People of God, we need this admonition. We cannot do anything of ourselves. Let us cast our cares upon the One who cares for us. Sing Psalter 5.

January 19 Read I Peter 5:8-14

Peter continues his series of commands with "Be sober, be vigilant." These two commands go together. You cannot be vigilant if you are not sober. Sober means to be watchful, alert in spiritual things. There is a connection to the sobriety of not giving ones self to alcohol. If we wallow in earthly pleasures, we will not be sober, watchful, and vigilant over

our spiritual lives. We learn to be sober as we listen to the preaching of the Word today. We need to be sober because Satan lurks around us all of the time seeking to make us fall and bring despoil to the faith. This is not something that we face alone. Our brothers, too, are afflicted by Satan. Let us make use of the communion of saints to fight our common foe. Sing Psalter 362.

January 20 Read I Peter 5:8-14

In the final verses of this chapter we find a comforting doxology and a testimony that our standing in the midst of affliction in hope is not ours alone, but saints all over the world face the same dangers. God has given to us those of like faith. Let us not forget our brother no matter what his race or nationality. Let us pray for one another and bring the needs of all of God's people before the throne of grace. While this epistle emphasizes hope in affliction it has much comfort for us. Take the time and read it again often. Sing Psalter 369.

January 21 Read II Peter 1:1-8

In the Peter's second epistle to the saints on this earth he again focuses on life on this earth. He again reminds us that we are called by God and that the way of salvation is only in Him. Because of this election we have received many precious promises. Because of these promises we have the assurance that throughout our life no matter what the difficulty we can prevail through Christ. In the last three verses of this section, Peter shows us how the way of the life of sanctification must go. It would do will for us to examine each of the characteristics of this life. The end of this life is a fruitful life on this earth and a blessed eternal home in heaven. Sing Psalter 25.

January 22 Read II Peter 1:9-15

Peter continues in the examination of the Christian's assurance in this life. How can we be assured that we are truly a child of God? What about our doubts? Does verse ten call us to salvation by works? These are important questions. The testimony of Scripture is that salvation is by faith alone. Peter had to learn this the hard way as he was sinking into the water and into his own despair as he denied Christ. Now Peter, like Paul, can tell us that assurance comes in exercising the faith that is freely given unto us. Peter encourages us to live the life of sanctification which follows our justification. Let us take heed to these things and walk in the salvation to which we are called. Sing Psalter 234.

January 23 Read II Peter 1:16-21

People of God, what do you believe concerning the Bible? Do you believe that it is completely true or only partially true? Do you believe that it is the Word of God or just some of Paul's thoughts? Are you willing to die for it, or will you easily let it go to save your life or life style? Even in Peter's day the inspiration of Scripture had been called into question. He had to defend this truth against those who would call into question the Bible's veracity. Many would take our Bible from us and give us another one containing man's words or

thoughts. Be not deceived people of God. Hold that Bible precious. Do not depart from the doctrine of inspiration, for to do so is to leave your inheritance. Sing Psalter 325.

January 24 Read II Peter 2:1-5

Here we see the reason that we must hold the Bible precious. There are those who would turn us from the faith. There are those that would try to take from us the faith once delivered to the saints. We need to be able to recognize heresy for what it is. This can only be done if we know the truth. We can only know the truth if we study the Bible. We see the end of those who make a mockery of God's Word. We must not fall into their traps. We must be ready to give an answer to the hope that lies within us. Let us pray for the grace to be delivered from the temptation to change the Word of God into the word of man. Let us pray for the preservation of the saints in this evil time. Sing Psalter 182.

January 25 Read II Peter 2:6-9a

What a comfort it is to know that God will deliver his people out of temptation. Oh, chastisement will come to those who put themselves in temptation's way. This is plain from the history of Lot. But God is gracious to His people and will lead them out of temptation and deliver them from the evil one. Temptations will increase many-fold in this life until the great tempter comes and asks us to take the mark of the beast. Will we be ready to stand? Will we be found faithful when Christ comes again? Let us pray for that grace. Sing Psalter 202.

January 26 Read II Peter 2:9b-16

The second part of verse 9 deals with the other half of judgment which Christ will bring upon the world. First of all we have the judgment of the righteous that we will be delivered from sin. Now we have the final judgment upon the evildoers on this earth. As we read their description we see that if it were not for grace it could be us. We fall into the same sins as the vilest man on this earth. We see this picture of judgment for our edification as well as our comfort. We must avoid sin and walk in the newness of the life of Christ. Let us pray for this grace in our lives. Let us not forsake the right way today as we go to God's house and worship Him. Sing Psalter 13, verses 4-7.

January 27 Read II Peter 2:17-22

Peter continues to expose those who bring false doctrine for what they are. This is not very popular in the day in which we live. The favorite doctrine is love all men and say nothing bad about anyone. Peter would have trouble getting along in this world, wouldn't he? What about us? Do we try to get along, or do we expose false doctrine for what it is? Anti-christ will find room for everyone in this world except for the people of God. We must prepare ourselves for the last days when being popular will mean to hide the faith. Let us prepare ourselves by knowing the truth and ask the Holy Spirit to be with us even as Christ promised us. Sing Psalter 266.

January 28 Read II Peter 3:1-4

As we prepare for the last days, we will see that even among the church world today the idea of last days is not popular. In much of the world the idea that God will destroy this place is scoffed at. It is thought that we can redeem this world and make it a place with no suffering. This is Satan's goal with the child of God as well. He used the lie in Paradise and he will continue to peddle that lie in the church. If he can discredit God in our eyes, he will lead us to hell. We must stand strong in the evil day. We do not need to worry, however, because Christ has sent to us the Spirit, the Comforter. Let us rest assured in His promises that He will keep us to the end. Sing Psalter 143.

January 29 Read II Peter 3:5-9

People of God, do you doubt the promises of God? Are you tempted to fall in with those who say that God will not destroy this earth? This is a grave mistake. Those who mocked as Noah was building the ark were left outside as the water rose around them. Those who mock the promises of Christ will feel the fire which destroys this world as well as the eternal fires of Hell. God will come when this world's cup of iniquity is full. He will come when every elect saint has tasted of the grace of repentance. Let us find comfort and strength in this promise and let us watch earnestly for the day of Christ's return to this earth. Sing Psalter 241

January 30 Read II Peter 3:10-13

We sing in Psalter 200, "Christ shall have dominion over land and sea, earth's remotest regions shall His empire be." This is our hope as we wait for the day in which He will return. No matter how many governments establish themselves over this world, we know that Christ the king of glory is coming. The looking for Christ's return is not an idle looking. This is the active looking of those who await dear ones to return from a trip. We have been given His Word to tell us what we must do and how we must watch. We must search the Scriptures daily to see what we must do as we wait. We must also pray that He will come quickly. Sing Psalter 58.

January 31 Read II Peter 2:14-18

As we come to the end of our examination of these two letters to the saints, we, too, must be diligent in our lives. We must be diligent to learn, study, and use the truths of God's Word to us in our lives. We must have confidence that He will preserve us even to the end as He has promised. We must mark those who would lead us out of the way and have no fellowship with them. Finally we must grow in grace so that we have the knowledge to give to God all the glory that is due His name. As we do this in this life we will be more assured that we will glorify Him in heaven. *Sola Deo Gloria*, as the reformers confess; glory to God alone. Sing Psalter 53.

Proclaiming Joy

by Melissa Van Baren

How do you feel when someone gives you something? Not just anything, but something you **DESPREATLY** need? Most of us don't even know what it means to desperately need something. Most of us are quite well off. A good portion of us have never *truly* felt a *need* for something—or have we?

Let's think back to the Depression Age. This was a time where people were in **GREAT** need of things to keep themselves and their families going. Many of us have heard the stories of what they went without because they didn't have the money.

Just think now how they would have felt if not only did someone take a group of them from their present state, but gave them clothing and fine linens: silks for beautiful dresses, brand new leather shoes, an abundance of food, tables and tables of wonderful pastries and tasty morsels of meat. The clothing that was given was not left over in the closets. It was not clothes that no longer fit, but dresses and suits fit for queens and kings. The food was not just a loaf of bread for a day but enough food to feed an army!

How do you suppose that would have made these poor families feel? Thankful? Joyful? Excited? Perhaps they would even exalted the person to a certain degree and regard that person with awe.

My friends and fellow Christians, God has done such a wonderful thing to us! God has pulled us from the depths of sin and has put us in a place crowned with everlasting life and glory! **WHAT A THOUGHT!**

We don't often see this and lift our voice in praise to God. We tend to mumble through our Psalms and Psalter singing, our mouths barely open, when our first reaction should be *excitement* and *yoyfulness* and *thankfulness*! These are all words to show that our hearts are **OVERFLOWING** with love for the Savior Who did this for us! It should be so that our hearts want to **BURST!** You should want to *shout* for joy to sing His praises. What a horrible thing if we should not want to do such a thing or use our mouths in ways to praise our Savior. It would be just as

if those people from the Depression age had not expressed their gratitude to that person that gave them all those things. What a sad, sad thing! Almost as if a slap in the face.

The Psalms speak mightily of God's people showing praise to God for all that He has done. A few examples are as follows:

"Ye righteous, in the Lord *rejoice*: 'Tis comely that with *joyful voice* God's saints His Name should *praise*. With harp and hymn of *gladness* sing, Your gift of sweetest music bring, To Him a new song *raise*" (Psalter 85:1).

"Then will *praise my God with song*, to Him my *thanks shall rise*, and this shall please Jehovah more than offered sacrifice" (Psalter 186:2).

"It is good to *sing Thy praises* and to *thank* Thee O Most High, *Showing forth* Thy loving kindness when the morning light the sky, It is good when night is falling of Thy *faithfulness to tell*, While with *sweet, melodious praises songs of adorations swell*" (Psalter 251:1) (emphasis mine MVB).

If you go on to read in these Psalters and in the Psalms you will notice the thankfulness and all the different words characteristic of **RAISING** our voice to God. When we praise God we are not to mumble our words and keep our mouth partially closed. We are to open our mouths and sing to God for that is our way to praise Him. We, as God's people, are to teach our children how to sing this way. We are to tell them of the thankfulness that we are to have for God and because of that we sing out. The person who gave those people in the Depression age all those things above and beyond what they needed would have wanted some thanks as well. He wouldn't have been happy, I don't think, with just a mumbled thanks. The benevolent giver would not be disappointed if the thanks was croaked back in a hoarse voice so long as it came with gladness from the heart. Do you think the person with the hoarse voice would have cared what he sounded like when he thanked that person? So, are we not to care what we sound like when

we thank God. God cares much more for the thanks than for the actual voice that is singing.

Fellow Christians saved by His grace, join in one voice and lift your praise to Him. Teach your children to lift their voices in praise. For we are His workmanship

and thankful obedience pleases God more than “offered sacrifice.” Sing the psalms with joyful voice!

“I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1). ❖

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

Church Family

The Effect of the World's View of Discipline

by Andy Lanning

“We believe that discipline makes children miserable without offering them any genuine benefit, because punishing children whose behavior is out of control actually interferes with their ability to learn self-governance”¹

Parents of the world understand that disciplining children can be a difficult and confusing task so they seek out the advice of experts to help them in this job. There are many places to turn for advice because there are nearly as many child-rearing methods as there are doctors and psychologists who study children. Each doctor has his own idea of the most successful way to discipline so it seems there is no end to the advice that parents can get when raising their children. However, most of the advice boils down to the quote given above. The worldly psychologists and doctors come to the conclusion that a child will naturally turn out just fine if only the parents will keep their big, bumbling selves out of the way.

How strange that the people who have devoted their whole lives to studying children can come to the conclusions that children are naturally good and that children aren't sinners! Even the world's parents and the world's teachers see that children are plagued with sin. They see the heavy, rusty, abrasive chains of sin that shackle their

children. What is more, they understand that those same chains shackle themselves. So it's no wonder that they deny such chains exist. To admit that a child is a sinner worthy of death is to admit that they are sinners worthy of death. In order to remain blind to their own sin, they must make themselves blind to the sins of their children. So every time a child sins, the sin is explained away as a mere phase that the child is going through and will soon outgrow. By passing the blame for sin away from children to phases, the world fools itself into thinking that children are free from sin.

**By passing the blame for sin
away from children to
phases, the world fools itself
into thinking that children are
free from sin.**

This view is really a denial of total depravity. The world maintains that children are born good and it scoffs at those who hold that children are born polluted with

original sin. The world scoffs at this confession that we make in the Canons of Dordt:

All men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation (Heads III & IV, Article 3).

Children are born naturally evil, not naturally good! But the world wickedly denies God and His Word and continues to pass the blame for sin away from children and away from themselves.

This takes away any need to discipline as well, since misbehavior and sin are simply indications of a certain phase in the child's life. If a child throws a tantrum when Mom or Dad says "No," parents are advised to speak more and more gently until the child is willing to listen to reason. No discipline is to be administered because the tantrum is just a phase and you can't very well discipline a phase. When the child bears no responsibility for sin, parents are unable to discipline. So parents are advised that their role is to "be there" for their child to help him or her through the phase but not to discipline their child.

This view of worldly psychologists and doctors about how to discipline a child is a plague on worldly parents who take their advice. The result is unruly children who refuse to accept responsibility for any of their misbehaviors and sins. But not only parents trying to raise their children are affected by this view. The church suffers from the same tendency to shy away from discipline. Individuals who live in open and unrepentant sin are allowed to remain members in good standing in the church. This is a plain failure of the office bearers to "watch for the souls" of their congregations. Hebrews 13:17 mentions this watching as the job of the rulers in the church.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.

When the office bearers fail to perform their duty, the blood of the members of the congregation is on the office bearers' heads (Ezekiel 3:17-19).

Not only do many office bearers today neglect to "watch for the souls" of their congregation by turning a blind eye to sin, but they go a step further by attempting to explain away sins and by making excuses for unrepentant members. The alcoholic and the homosexual are

not to blame for their sins because their sins are a result of their genes. The couple living in adultery because of divorce and remarriage is not to blame for their sin because they were the innocent parties. When no one is responsible for their actions, the office bearers can't exercise discipline in the church. How can a church discipline genes? It can't, and so the members of the church go on in their unrepentant sins without any hope of being corrected.

Does this sound familiar? The majority of churches today are doing the same thing that the worldly doctors and psychologists do! First, they blame sin on circumstances or phases or a host of other things, and then they deny that discipline is necessary. What a hopeless situation these churches place their members in, because ultimately these churches are saying, "You don't need Christ!" The members hear that nothing is their fault and they see that they can live uncontested in gross sins. This teaches them to think, "What need is there for the mercy of God in Christ if my sins aren't my fault anyway? Why should I repent for actions that I can't control anyway?" What a hopeless life if you're left to die in sin!

We can avoid falling into this view of discipline only by God's grace. Our natural inclination is to pass the blame away from ourselves too. Adam tried to blame his sin of eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil on Eve, and Eve tried to blame her sin on the Serpent. So we must pray for God's grace that He make us see our guilt and our wretchedness because of *our* sins. We must pray for God's grace that He cleanse us from our sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. And we must pray that if we are yet so stubborn as to remain unrepentant, that God use the means of discipline, administered by our parents and office bearers, to drive us to our knees in repentance. Then we will trust in God's mercy for forgiveness and we will see discipline as the blessing that it is. ❖

¹William Pieper, M.D. and Martha Heineman Pieper, PH.D. *Smart Love*. Harvard Common Press.

Andy is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. This article was written as a 2001 Protestant Reformed Scholarship essay.

How Does One Explain the Events of September 11, 2001 to a Child?

by Keri Haak

The teacher sits at her desk in the early morning of September 11, 2001, waiting for her third grade boys and girls to arrive at school. She thinks of the events that had just transpired, of the shock and horror she felt hearing that two planes had been hijacked by terrorists and crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, a plane had struck the Pentagon, and another had crashed in Pennsylvania killing all aboard. This day would be written in her class' history books. It would be a day that the world would never forget, a day in which thousands had lost their lives, loves, and hopes, and a day in which God had declared His sovereignty that He is our all in all. She felt the pressure of her unusual task as a teacher, to explain these terrible events to her class. Parents had entrusted this task to her. But how would she explain an evilness that might change the world forever to these little boys and girls? There was only one way. She must tell them of God's greatness, His purpose, and His amazing, everlasting faithfulness toward His people.

As the teacher waits for her class, a familiar event comes to mind, the story of The Tower of Babel, a period of history similar in many ways to the world now. Men, focused on themselves, their abilities, and their happiness, had decided to build a tower "that would reach to the heavens" to prove to God that they did not need Him. God had confounded their language, destroyed their tower, and shown them that without Him they could do nothing. Throughout history God had revealed His power to man countless times. This morning God had reinforced to us His control of our lives and our constant need of Him. She would tell her class that man was unable to stop the terrorist from taking over the plane and from crashing into the towers. He could not keep the build-

ings up or put out the fire, and he could not save all the thousands of people caught in the buildings. Oh yes, man had tried. He thought he had built the towers with sturdiness to resist the blow of the planes, with emergency exits, and firemen just around the corner. But it was God's will that this destruction had happened and man was unable to change God's will. Psalm 77: 9 came to her mind: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in his anger shut up His tender mercies?" She continued reading and found her answer in verses 13 and 14: "Who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God who doeth wonders." She would tell her class how despite the enormous devastation, sadness, and death, that God's power was greater than these things.

She pictured Peter, always talking and full of questions. He would ask, "Are we safe in America?" She would reply that yes, God has blessed us with a strong country, government, and military. "Are we going to have a war?" She would answer that these events were an act of war against the United States. Right now we are unsure of who these terrorists are. That, she would reassure them, we will find out in a couple days. President Bush and Vice President Cheney are figuring that out as we talk. Others would begin raising their hands. "Why would someone willingly take over a plane, crash it, and kill themselves?" She would respond by telling them how the wicked believe their works will get them to heaven. For them, as terrible as it was, flying planes into the World Trade Center was a "good work" and would give them eternal life. She would remind them that without the one, true God, man had no hope.

Peter would have another question. "Why would God do this?" She would respond by reading the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 10, which speaks of God's al-

mighty presence, that all things came not by chance, but by His hand. God was teaching us to be patient in the hard times, thankful for the good times, and in all times put our trust in Him continually. It was our calling as Christians to trust in Him for everything. By trusting in Him, we glorified Him. This was our calling in life.

Mary and Seth would sit silently at their desks, fear in their eyes. The teacher would gently ask Mary what she was thinking. “Is this the end of the world?” Mary might ask. The teacher would then take her class to Matthew 24:6 where Christ, speaking of the end times, said: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass...” She would tell her students that this day, these events, these murders and deaths, had to happen before Christ could return to take us to glory to be with Him eternally. This was God’s purpose for our lives, to bring us with Him into heavenly glory. We do not know the path that God would have us take. We do not know the pain that we might suffer for Him before we reach heaven. But we can rest assured that through faith noth-

ing can separate us from His love through Christ Jesus, our Lord. She would once again take them to the Scriptures in I Corinthians 15:24, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.. .For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death... And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

The classroom is now full of boys and girls reporting to each other what they had heard. Some looked frightened, others sad; some wanted to talk, others silent. The teacher slowly walks to the front of the room. With a silent prayer for extra strength to meet each child’s needs, she begins to speak. “Boys and girls, this morning God has again proved to us His everlasting faithfulness.” ❖

Keri is a member of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois. This article was written as a 2002 Protestant Reformed Scholarship essay.

Church History

George M. Ophoff (2)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

At this point I must say a little bit about what prompts this series of articles which will be appearing from time to time in our *Beacon Lights*.

The series of articles has its birth in a rather extended discussion between myself and a good friend of mine who is also a faithful member of our churches. We were sitting in my study and pondering, as I recall it, subjects related to the 50th anniversary of our churches. This was already the latter part of last winter or the early part of last spring (1975). This friend of whom I speak expressed the opinion that our churches have a unique and glorious heritage which the Lord our God has given us. He expressed concern that our young people especially were perhaps not sufficiently impressed with what a wonderful heritage it is that we have. He was referring not only

to the heritage of the truth, that is, as it has come down to us over the ages, but especially the heritage which is uniquely ours as Protestant Reformed Churches.

As the conversation progressed, we began talking about the point I was trying to make in the last article—that this heritage comes to us through men of God’s choice. We were talking about the fact that God has also given to our churches men who were “men of the hour,” precisely fitted for the work of the church, men who belong to our own history. These men were, of course, the Reverends Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff. To know our history and understand our heritage, we concluded that it is necessary to know the men whom God gave to us. It is necessary to know the kind of men they were. It is necessary to know what they did. It is



necessary to know what they thought and believed and how they fought for the cause of the gospel. History - our history - is not an outline of factual data and dates, but a flesh and blood history of men of God.

If our young people know these men, they will know also an important part of our heritage.

Our churches possess now, through the labors of Mrs. Homer Hoeksema, an outstanding biography of Rev. H. Hoeksema, but they have nothing which can be preserved of Rev. Ophoff, other than his writings. Gradually, the idea formed in our minds to write a series of articles which would attempt to bring before the consciousness of our people also this stalwart defender of the faith. We are the losers if the memory of what God did through Rev. Ophoff is forgotten. Many of our people, of course, remember him. They worked with him, were instructed by him, learned from him, heard him preach, knew him intimately, and could talk of him for hours with love and respect in their every word. Many of our people, particularly the new generation, do not know him - other than what they heard from others, here a snatch and there a story.

I am a poor choice to be the one to be writing this series. There are, no doubt, others who knew him more intimately than I and who could do this better than I can. I knew him when I entered the seminary and received in part my seminary instruction from him. I knew him in the last years of his life. I knew him primarily *officially*

as my teacher and sometimes as my pastor, but the *unofficial* Rev. Ophoff I knew only scantily.

My friend was his son—Herman Ophoff. So, as the idea grew to write a series of articles about him, I told Herm that he would have to do the leg work. This he did. He spent a large number of weeks talking to people, speaking to his own brothers, recalling what he remembered from his own life in the parsonage, digging out data which even he did not know, collecting pictures of interest, and handing it all over to me. Much of the material has now been collected. We have pored over it together and have talked hour after hour about Rev. Ophoff, and gradually there has emerged what we think is a fairly accurate picture of one who was a leader among us.

The manuscript of these articles was originally given to the members of Rev. Ophoff's family and was read by others—older men in the churches, for their perusal and criticism; and from this emerged a series of articles which will give to those of our readers who never knew George Ophoff, a bit of an idea of the kind of man he was and the role he played in our history. We have tried to present him, to use the words of Oliver Cromwell, with his "warts." We have done this for a very specific purpose.

That brings me to what we hope to accomplish with these articles. We are not interested in a mere character sketch. This in itself might be fascinating and interesting. There are many stories which are still told, perhaps by this time with many embellishments, of Rev. Ophoff's "absentmindedness." There have been few, if any men like him in the history of the church, but this is not our purpose.

Nor is our purpose to bring our readers to worshipful reverence before the shrine of a mere man. He himself would have detested this and it would be an insult to his memory to engage in this kind of "hero-worship."

We are interested especially in two things. The first is to give our readers some insights into how God prepares and uses particular men with individual gifts and characters for his work. The second purpose is to renew in our young people an interest in and love for our heritage as Protestant Reformed Churches.

If these articles give an appreciation for what God has wrought, and if the zeal and love for the truth which characterized Rev. Ophoff seizes the hearts of his spiritual heirs, these articles will not have been written in vain. ❖

Prof. Hanks is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Eagle

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The shadow loomed large and swift over the grassy mountain meadow. Marmot and hare, mouse and mink all scurried to the cover of rocks and woods. Could there be any escape from the eagle?

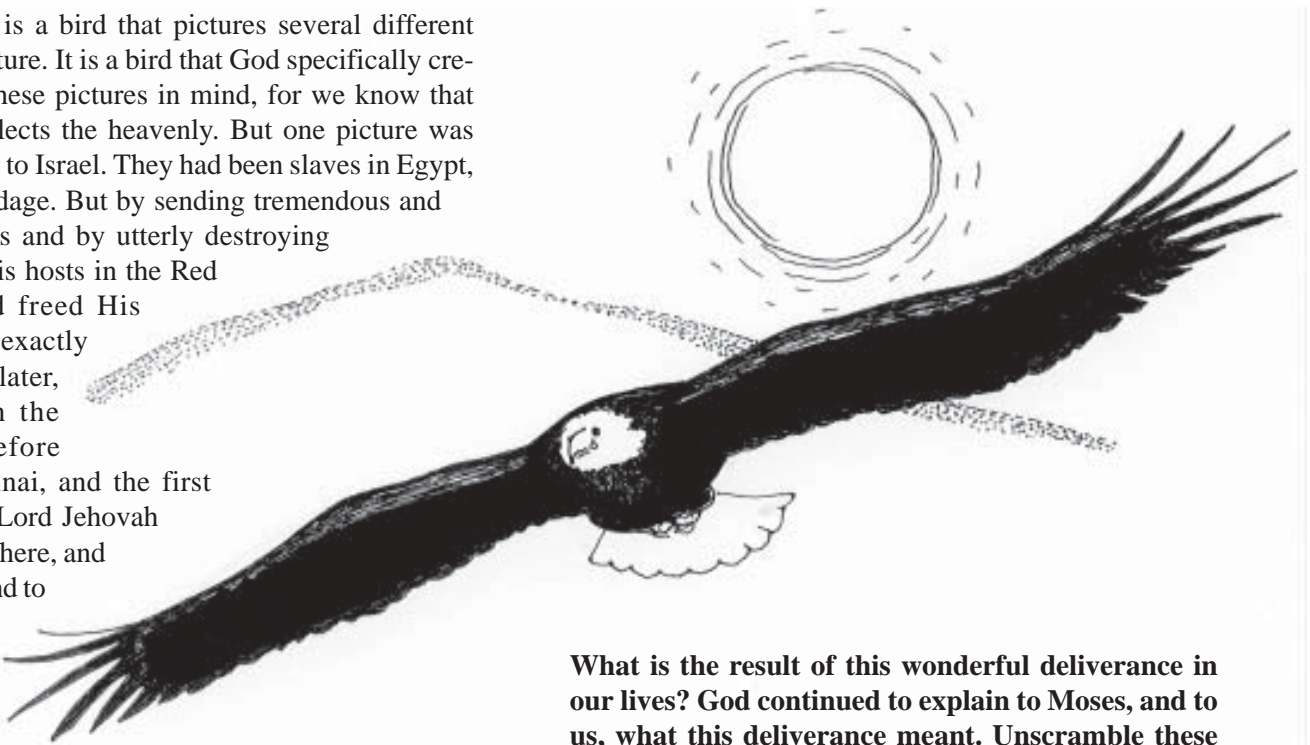
It soared above the trees, above the hills, and above the meadow with hardly a flap of its wings. As if by sheer strength, its presence cut through the atmosphere like a sure and steady knife. The white head gleamed in the sun, steering its seven-foot wingspan with unerring grace. Those same wings that carried its young as they learned how to fly, carrying them back up to the top of the cliff, back up to the safety of the nest. The power of those wings was incredible. The bird was nothing short of magnificent.

The eagle is a bird that pictures several different things in Scripture. It is a bird that God specifically created with all these pictures in mind, for we know that the earthly reflects the heavenly. But one picture was especially dear to Israel. They had been slaves in Egypt, in terrible bondage. But by sending tremendous and mighty plagues and by utterly destroying Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, God had freed His people. Now, exactly three months later, they stood in the wilderness before God at Mt. Sinai, and the first thing that the Lord Jehovah said to Moses there, and also to Israel and to us, was this: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself;" (Exodus 19:4).

What a sure and mighty deliverance they had seen! What a magnificent salvation they had experienced! It was as if God had picked them up and carried them on eagles' wings.

But this glorious deliverance is no less true for us. God breaks the stranglehold that the devil and the old man of sin have around our hearts. As if upon sure and mighty eagles' wings, he keeps us from falling to certain death and carries us up to the safety of His own covenant of grace. Our deliverance is nothing short of a miracle. Our deliverance is magnificent indeed! ❖

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



What is the result of this wonderful deliverance in our lives? God continued to explain to Moses, and to us, what this deliverance meant. Unscramble these words from Exodus 19:6:

ey lashl eb ount em a nmodgik fo spirtsedan
"....."
na loyh tinnoat
....."

BEACONLIGHTS

P.O. BOX 144
Randolph, WI 53956

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

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Jacob son of Mr. & Mrs. Colin Buchanan—Covenant PR
Fellowship—N Ireland
David John, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Holleman—Bethel, IL
Leah Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Vanden
Berg—Holland, MI
Austin John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Kraker—
Hudsonville, MI
Tyler James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Vander Meulen—
Hudsonville, MI
Lydia Kay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Holstege—
Hudsonville, MI
Levi Joe, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lyle VanRavenswaay—Hull,
IA
Luke Gabriel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bretall—Peace, IL
Isaac Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Darrell DeVries—
Randolph, WI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

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

Brian Kotman—Holland, MI
Tom Barnhill—Hudsonville, MI
Kerry Lanning—Hudsonville, MI
Rachel Nagelkerke—Hudsonville, MI
Renee Nelson—Southeast, MI
Brad Butler—Southwest, MI
Tammy Butler—Southwest, MI
Matt Kuiper—Southwest, MI
Michelle Kuiper—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Clinton VanderKolk and Miss Renae Karsemeyer—
Grandville, MI
Mr. Scott Hoekstra and Miss Michelle DeBoer—Hull, IA
Mr. Rick Poortinga and Miss Wendy Kooy—Peace, IL